

Rum River State Forest Trail Revisions

What is the purpose of this project?

In 2007, the DNR completed a forest classification and road/trail designation for all Minnesota State Forests. During this planning effort, the DNR classified Rum River State Forest as “limited” for recreational motor vehicle use, meaning off-highway vehicles may use all forest roads and trails signed as open for their use. However, no trails were designated within the Rum River State Forest during this process. The DNR is now reviewing the forest for trail connections and designations. This process will *not* change the limited classification.

Who manages the land included in this project?

The lands on which the trails are proposed are managed by the DNR Forestry Division. The Daily Pit area and ORV trail are on School Trust Lands. School Trust Lands are managed by the DNR as a trustee and for the benefit of the Minnesota’s public schools. DNR management activities such as mineral leasing, timber sales and surface leasing of the lands are the primary revenue sources and are deposited into the Permanent School Fund. The interest and dividends from the Permanent School Fund are distributed to school districts, on a per pupil basis, every year. For recreational trails, the Division of Parks and Trails leases land from the Division of Forestry and provides reimbursement in the form of lease rental payments from appropriated dedicated accounts.

What is the DNR proposing?

The DNR proposes to designate approximately 11 miles of new off-highway vehicle (OHV) trails within Rum River State Forest and an additional 1.1 miles is proposed on scattered lands. These trails will provide a series of short loop trails that will provide a variety of opportunities. ATV trails will be designated for class 1 ATVs only. Class 1 ATVs are 50” or less in width. Class 1 trails provide narrower, tighter trails that can provide additional challenges for the rider. Although some trails may seem short, the DNR considers “seat time” when laying out trails. Seat time is the actual amount of time someone spends on a trail. Factors that are used to determine seat time include trail length and trail challenge. A rider may spend considerable more time riding a 3-mile trail if it is narrow with many twists and turns than a 10-mile trail that is wide and flat. Increasing seat time also decreases speed, which increases safety and trail sustainability. The table below identifies the change in trail miles.

Trail Use Type	Rum River-Current	Rum River-Proposed	Scattered Lands-Current	Scattered Lands-Proposed	Total Proposed
ATV/OHM	0 miles	5.1 miles	0 miles	0 miles	5.1 miles
OHM-only	0 miles	5.9 miles	0 miles	0 miles	5.9 miles
ORV-only	0 miles	0 miles	0 miles	1.1 miles	1.1 miles
Total Proposal		11 miles		1.1 miles	12.1 miles

What are the benefits of designating trail?

Designation ensures the trail will receive funding for maintenance, signage and mapping. In a limited forest, such as Rum River, a motorized designation allows the trail to be open for motorized use. Designation of existing routes that have previously been used during the hunting exemption will provide an avenue for maintenance funding for the routes.

Where will the money for trail construction and maintenance come from?

The designated OHV trails will be funded through the dedicated OHV accounts. Funding in these accounts is appropriated by the legislature and comes OHV registration fees and a portion of the unrefunded state gas tax attributed to the on-trail use of OHVs. The DNR may also work with local clubs who may be interested to add the new trails to the Grant in Aid Program. The Grant in Aid Program is a cost-share program between the DNR, a local government unit and a club to provide maintenance on the trails.

What are the next steps?

Once the public review process is complete, the DNR will review all comments received and incorporate them into the final proposal. The final proposal will be submitted to the Environmental Review Unit within the DNR to determine if an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required. If an EAW is required, that will be completed prior to final designation by the Commissioner of Natural Resources. Trail construction and signage will be completed after final designation, as resources and funding allows.

How has the public been involved?

The DNR began this trail designation process in March, 2018 with a 30-day public scoping period. This included an information/listening session in Onamia. The intent was to get ideas for potential trail revisions in the project area. The DNR received 43 comments during this period. These comments were reviewed and incorporated into the trail revisions proposal. The public is invited to review and comment on the proposal during the 60-day public review period (currently occurring). Once the 60-day public review period is complete in October, 2019, the DNR will review comments received and make modifications based on the comments before submitting the final proposal for designation.

What did the DNR hear during the scoping process?

Many comments received during the scoping period identified support for trails in general. Some comments identified clubs that would be willing to assist the DNR in trail development and maintenance. Requests for opportunities for non-motorized trails were also received. Non-motorized users may use any trails designated during this process as well as trails in neighboring state parks. Some comments raised concern about trail sustainability in sensitive and wet soils. To address this, the DNR proposed using existing disturbed areas as much as possible. Certain areas of the Rum River State Forest were avoided because of sensitive soil and wetland issues.

Additional questions/comments?

For additional information, please contact Joe Unger, OHV Planner, Parks and Trails Division, MN Department of Natural Resources at 651-259-5279 or joe.unger@state.mn.us or Tim Edgeton, Area Supervisor, Parks and Trails Division, MN Department of Natural Resources at 320-223-7861 or tim.edgeton@state.mn.us.

Comments may be submitted to: Joe Unger, Parks and Trails Division, 500 Lafayette Rd, St. Paul, MN 55155. Or email to foresttrailplanning.dnr@state.mn.us.