

ROADS MANUAL UPDATE  
STATE FOREST ROADS PROGRAM  
DIRECTIVE

Effective Date: April 15, 2008  
Expiration/Review Date: January 2, 2010

**SUBJECT:** State Forest Roads and Access Routes

**PURPOSE:** To define and establish in policy the state forest road and route system including system roads, minimum maintenance roads, management routes, and temporary access routes so that Division personnel and other users of roads and routes have a clearer understanding of what roads and routes mean, what level maintenance is suggested for roads and routes, and the sources of funding for road and route maintenance.

**POLICY:** The State Forest Road system consists of two classes of roads and two types of routes. This State Forest Roads and Access Routes Directive establishes the matrix identified as 080407 as the version to be used to understand characteristics and funding for roads and routes. See attached matrix.

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**DETAILS:**

State Forest Roads

Definition.

- These are defined in statute, M.S. 89.001 subd. 14: "A road constructed, acquired, maintained, or administered by the commissioner for the purpose of carrying out forest resource management policy as set forth in section 89.002." Forest roads are generally open to the public for recreational use. Forest roads are not all on state land. They may cross a variety of ownerships.
- A forest road is not considered a public road and DNR is not a road authority. Forest roads do not provide "legal" access to private land or property. Roads are open to highway-licensed vehicles, off-road vehicles, all terrain vehicles, and off-road motorcycles unless the road is located in a CLOSED forest. In a CLOSED forest, only highway-licensed vehicles are allowed. A forest road cannot be open to some motor vehicles and selectively closed to others unless designated for specific limited uses by the Commissioner. State forest roads can be closed for "wildfire hazards" and during conditions that "render forest trails impassable by driving thereon during wet seasons" M.S. 88.22 subd.1.
- Adding a road to the forest road system requires a written designation order, signed by the Commissioner and published in the State Register (M.S. 89.71, subd. 1).
- With the exception of specific roads, which have an established history of snowplowing, or specific situations approved by the Regional Roads Program Leader, forest roads will not be plowed in winter. Loggers and other contractors are allowed to plow forest roads in order to complete work under contracts on State land. Private individuals who wish to

plow state forest roads to access private property will need an Access Permit, an easement, or a lease.

**Classes**

- **System Forest Roads** are usually well-maintained, with a gravel surface and generally capable of accommodating two-way traffic. Most of these roads are connected to state, county, or township public highways and are open to highway licensed vehicles, off-road vehicles, all-terrain vehicles, and off-highway motorcycles. System roads are maintained to accommodate low-clearance highway licensed vehicles.
- **Minimum Maintenance Roads** are forest roads that are used for forest management access on an intermittent, as needed basis. These roads are open to all motorized vehicles but not maintained to the level that low-clearance highway licensed vehicles can use them routinely. Minimum maintenance roads are generally narrow, with a surface of native material and seldom or never graded. A minimum maintenance road sign states, "Road may be impassable. Travel at your own risk".
- The decision to manage a road as one class or the other is made at the Area level.

## Routes

**Definition.**

- A generic term used to describe a corridor or tread way that allows machinery, vehicles, or people to traverse a property. Examples may include a firebreak, a reforestation management route, or a timber harvest haul route for use during dry periods or winter.
- Routes are not roads, as defined by M.S. 89.001 subd. 14, and can be closed at the discretion of the Area. Generally, routes are not available for public motorized recreation uses unless specifically designated or located in a Managed forest and not posted closed.
- Routes need no designation order from the Commissioner to be established.
- Routes can be preserved and added to the WHEELS inventory or used temporarily and then abandoned.
- Maintenance on routes should be limited to closure and signage, management access development, emergency repairs, and for activities to abandon/reclaim the route.
- Funding source would be limited to the Forest Management Investment Account (FMIA).

**Classes.**

- **Resource Management Routes** are routes that need to be preserved for future resource management activity and are listed in the WHEELS database. These routes have no specific level of maintenance. Closure methods will be initiated by the Area Forest Supervisor but are subject to the Forestry/ Wildlife Coordination Policy and can include gates, berms, rocks, and slash beds or piles.
- **Temporary Access Routes** are temporary, short-term routes established for resource management activities, such as fire suppression or timber harvesting. Access is not needed after completion of the management activity. This type of route is not available for public motorized vehicle use and should not be listed in the WHEELS database. Efforts should be made to reclaim or reforest the routes to a similar condition prior to the management activity.

/s/ Alan Jones

Alan Jones

Silviculture, Lands & Roads Supervisor

<b>080415</b>	<b>System Road</b>	<b>Minimum Maintenance Road</b>	<b>Resource Management Route</b>	<b>Temporary Access Route</b>
Characteristics	Designed and maintained to serve highway licensed vehicles Provide forest access where continued management is necessary Provide access to state land for recreational uses, forest protection and forest development Usually connected to the state, county or township public road system	Used for forest access on an intermittent, as needed basis. These roads must be open to all motorized vehicles. These roads will not be maintained to the level where low clearance licensed highway vehicles can routinely travel on them.	A timber harvest haul road for use during dry periods or winter. Route is not immediately needed after the cessation of the management activity. Route may be needed in the future for management activity, and the corridor needs to be preserved. Not available for motorized recreation users. Avoid issuing private permits and leases over these routes.	A temporary route established for resource management activities. Access is not needed after the cessation of the management activity. Not available for motorized recreation users.
Use	Used at least on a weekly basis and often used on a daily basis	Used for forest access on an intermittent, as needed basis.	Used only during on-going management activity. Generally not available for use under the big game hunting exemption but must be barricaded and signed to that effect in order to be enforceable.	Used only during on-going activity.
Old class	1,2,3	4,5,6	NA	NA
Designation Order	YES	YES	NO	NO
Road Inventory	YES	YES	YES	NO
Signing	As needed	MUST be posted with a "Minimum Maintenance Road" sign.	Information is required to be posted at point of closure using the following signs: Authorized Vehicles Only and 08.4.16 - Foot Travel Welcome, etc.	None
Min. Roadway width	14 feet	10 feet	No minimum	No minimum
Min. Design speed	20 MPH	10 MPH	No minimum	No minimum
Maintenance	Graveled and maintained to allow travel by highway licensed vehicles at	Rarely graded or graveled as needed for forest management purposes.	No specific level of maintenance is required.	No specific level of maintenance is required.

080415	System Road	Minimum Maintenance Road	Resource Management Route	Temporary Access Route
	the design speed from May to November. Blading done as needed to keep road in usable condition for a passenger car.	Major damage such as culvert washouts or other conditions that may pose a safety hazard to the public will be repaired as reported and budgets allow.		
Closure	The roads will be open to <u>all</u> motorized vehicles but can be closed temporarily to address seasonal road or fire conditions. Temporary closure will be at the discretion of the Area Forest Supervisor. Gates should be closed <u>only</u> during temporary closures.	The roads will be open to <u>all</u> motorized vehicles but can be temporarily closed to address road deterioration or fire conditions.	Routes will be closed to <u>all</u> motorized vehicles except for DNR vehicle and for any existing access permits. Closure method will be at the discretion of the Area Forest Supervisor and can include gates, berms, rocks, and felled timber.	Routes are abandoned. Method of abandonment will be decided by Area. No gates or signs are erected that will call attention to the existence of the corridor except if needed to aid abandonment. Gates should be temporary.
Funding	<b>Bonding</b> for major construction, culvert and bridge replacement, and gates. <b>Gas tax</b> for routine maintenance such as grading and spot graveling. <b>FMIA (18J)</b> for routine maintenance and to supplement bonding projects	<b>Gas tax</b> for routine maintenance such as grading and spot graveling. <b>FMIA (18J)</b> for routine maintenance and to supplement bonding projects. May be dual designated as both a road and a trail. This should be the exception and only be used where no other reasonable options or alternative routes exist. The Area Trails & Waterways Supervisor and Area Forest Supervisor will determine how maintenance costs will be cost shared by the two divisions.	<b>FMIA (18J)</b> for closure and signage, timber sale access development, emergency repairs, etc <b>Gas Tax Funds</b> may NOT be used on routes.	<b>FMIF (18J)</b> for activities to abandon/reclaim access route.