

# DOUGLAS COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND-USE PLAN 2021-2035

## CHAPTER 700 ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN

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## **CHAPTER 700**

### **ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

#### **700 GOALS OF THE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Access Management Plan (AMP) provides direction for access management in the Douglas County Forest. Plan goals include:

- (1) To ensure public safety for all users.
- (2) To ensure sustainability of natural resources.
- (3) To minimize conflicts between users.
- (4) To provide a range of opportunities for users.

#### **705 INTRODUCTION**

##### **705.1 Background**

Motorized recreational use on the Forest has continued to increase over the last decade and continues to do so annually. This increase in the demand for access opportunities has presented challenges for the DCFD in providing motorized users with Forest access while minimizing user conflicts, protecting resources, and safeguarding user safety. The DCFD has determined that a comprehensive approach to access management on the County Forest is necessary to ensure a wide array of recreational opportunities, including those for both motorized and non-motorized pursuits. The first Douglas County Forest Access Management Plan was completed and adopted as Chapter 700 of the 2006-2020 Comprehensive Land Use Plan. This second version of the Access Management Plan supplements the Comprehensive Land Use Plan to better meet current needs for the 2021-2035 planning period.

##### **705.2 Purpose of the Access Management Plan**

The purpose of the Access Management Plan is to address and provide field-level direction for public recreational use of motorized vehicles in the County Forest. The Plan provides a mapped system of the three area classification structure and description of routes and trails designated for specific uses. Considerations include different types of vehicles and their uses, seasonal use constraints, resource values, and the ever increasing public recreational access demands on the Forest. Also addressed are environmental protection concerns and those associated with fish and wildlife habitat.

The Access Management Plan provides the general public and those who use the County Forest with a field guide to motorized recreation. By noting where motorized recreation is promoted or restricted, the Plan also integrates this activity with those of non-motorized recreationists.

### **705.3 Access Management Planning Objectives**

Specific objectives of the Plan include:

- (1) To provide a balanced solution to the issues related to motorized vs. non-motorized recreational access on the Forest by integrating the different interests of users.
- (2) To establish a system that ensures continued sustainable access to users engaging in legitimate recreational access activities.
- (3) To address concerns related to the protection of wildlife populations and habitat, fisheries, land and watershed management, wildland and seasonal limitations associated with motorized recreational access.
- (4) To promote responsible motorized recreational access while respecting and protecting the rights of those who live, gain their livelihood and/or recreate in the area.
- (5) To afford opportunities for public input to the DCFD regarding recreational access.

### **705.4 Relationship to the Comprehensive Land-Use Plan**

The Access Management Plan is a component of the County Forest Comprehensive Land-Use Plan that covers the same geographical area. The Access Management Plan focuses on the resource and recreational values attributed to the County Forest and provides a policy framework from which access management can proceed on an integrated basis.

## **710 ACCESS HISTORY ON THE COUNTY FOREST**

### **710.1 Timber Harvests**

From the mid to late-1800's to the early-1900's, much of the timber in the County was harvested, providing raw materials for a thriving timber industry and a growing nation. In the process of harvesting and transporting these forest products to mills during this period, timber producers built many miles of forest roads across vast tracts of County Forest land.

During the past several decades, demand for and harvest of timber throughout the region has increased substantially, as has the need to ensure the long-term health of the County Forest, enhance wildlife habitat and protect water quality. In response, the DCFD has expanded its timber harvesting program and further refined timber sale establishment activities. These changes have increased the need for roads to access timber resources and resulted in more complex road location and construction standards. Today, DCFD staff highly regulate the location, design and construction standards for all new timber sale access roads through timber sale contracts. When establishing timber sales, DCFD staff consider the recreational access of the area before and after harvest, and balance these considerations with factors such as environmental and wildlife habitat protection, and aesthetics.

## **710.2 Motorized Uses**

### **710.2.1 Highway Vehicles**

Motorized vehicles that licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation for operation on public highways are the most common form of motorized use in the Forest. These highway vehicles (HV's) include very common everyday automobiles and trucks, including 4-wheel-drive trucks and sport utility vehicles. In today's market, full size, 4-wheel-drive vehicles are a major part of the U.S. automobile/truck market and are very popular in Douglas County. Typically, these vehicles are used for day-to-day transportation and only occasionally in off-road applications.

Currently, HV use is permitted on all non-restricted/open roads in the County Forest.

### **710.2.2 Off-Highway Vehicles**

Over the last several decades there has been a significant increase in the use of motorized off-highway vehicles (OHV's), including snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles (ATV's) and utility-terrain vehicles (UTV's) on the County Forest. ATV and especially UTV riding currently is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in Wisconsin. The Forest also has seen an increase in the use of off-highway motorcycles (OHM's), e.g. dirt bikes.

#### **710.2.2(a) Snowmobiles**

Since the late-1960's, people have been using snowmobiles on the County Forest as a way to travel across snow covered terrain. Early models consisted of a rough chassis with an engine that drove a rubber track which pushed the machine across the snow on skis. As technology progressed, advanced machines were produced and the popularity of this sport increased dramatically. Today's machines are larger, much faster, handle better, have larger motors, and are more diverse for a variety of riding conditions and user preferences. New snowmobile sales have somewhat stagnated over the last decade in Wisconsin as unpredictable winter weather and expensive equipment have hurt recruitment into the sport. Nonetheless, Wisconsin has more registered snowmobiles than any other state. The most popular snowmobile use in Douglas County is for recreational trail riding on the maintained trail system. Other uses include ice fishing, hunting, trapping, and exploring.

The current winter recreational trail system in the County includes about 338 miles of snowmobile trails that are maintained by the Northwest Trails Association through contractual agreement with the County.

#### **710.2.2(b) Off-Highway Motorcycles**

The two primary types of OHM's that have been used on the Forest since the 1950's evolved from street motorcycles following World War II. The motocross or dirt bike is designed for use entirely off paved roads and generally lacks the appropriate equipment to be licensed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation as "street legal." The dual sport or enduro bike has appropriate

equipment to be licensed as street legal.

OHM use has been minimal on the Forest but these machines have become more popular over the last decade. Current OHM riding opportunities are limited to the Straight Arrow Off-Highway Motorcycle Trail that was established in 2009. This trail offers over 5 miles of single track OHM trail in the Forest while connecting to over 45 additional miles of trail in Minnesota's neighboring Nemadji State Forest. In 2016, the WDNR's off-highway motorcycle program was created that allowed OHM's to be registered as recreational vehicles through the State. Currently, an administrative process is being drafted to ensure proceeds generated from OHM registrations are made available for trail maintenance and improvement projects. Once completed, the County will consider reassessing the potential of expanding permitted OHM use in the Forest and on the trail system.

Licensed ("street legal") motorcycle use on the Forest currently is limited to roads and trails that are open for motorized Highway Vehicle use. Exceptions are snowmobile, and winter and summer ATV trails. Motocross or dirt bike use is currently prohibited throughout the Forest with the only exception the Straight Arrow Off-Highway Motorcycle Trail.

#### **710.2.2(c) All-Terrain Vehicles**

The ATV emerged on the County Forest during the late-1970's and continues to be the most common OHV use. Also known as four-wheelers or quads, these machines have balloon-style tires and initially had a tread width of slightly less than 48 inches. Originally, ATV models had three wheels. These models were soon replaced by four-wheeled vehicles due to safety concerns. Today's models are much larger and more powerful, have high ground clearance, and can carry significant loads. They travel at fast speeds and many have 4-wheel drive. There are utility varieties and those more suited to trail riding, including youth-size models. The utility varieties can include numerous after-market attachments, can carry a variety of equipment and supplies, and can tow a trailer or other device. ATV's are commonly used in connection with activities such as trail riding, hunting, trapping, ice fishing, and exploring.

Currently, ATV use is permitted on any non-restricted/open road or trail in the Forest that can accommodate a licensed, 4-wheeled HV, any general forest access road or trail signed for ATV use, all County Forest Roads except for those within the Douglas County Wildlife Area, and the winter and summer recreational ATV trail systems. The current winter and summer ATV systems in the County include about 330 and 107 miles of trails, respectively.

#### **710.2.2(d) Utility-Terrain Vehicles**

Over the last decade, the popularity of UTV's has grown considerably. The UTV is now the fastest growing segment of the powersports industry. Also known as side-by-sides, these machines are larger than ATV's, typically have 4 tires, side-by-side seating for up to 6 or more passengers, and are very capable on land or ice. The recent shift in popularity from ATV's to UTV's can be attributed to the fact UTV's allow for multiple passengers, offer a more comfortable ride, and provide more safety with roll-cage like enclosures. Both sport and utility models are available and

many have crossover applications in agriculture, land management, and construction industries.

In 2010, a UTV pilot program was created by the Wisconsin Legislature. The purpose of the program was to test trail compatibility, safety factors, and other general interactions of UTV's with ATV's on trail systems. Douglas County quickly joined the program and UTV's were allowed to operate on the winter and summer ATV trail system.

Currently, UTV's are considered ATV's for regulation purposes in the Forest and on the trail system. In a general sense, UTV use is permitted anywhere ATV use is permitted.

#### **710.2.2(e) Other Off-Highway Vehicles**

Many other types of off-highway vehicles are available for consumer purchase and the off-highway vehicle and powersports industries seem to be continually evolving as demand increases. Currently, many of these other types of OHV's are not licensed by the State of Wisconsin and their use is therefore prohibited in the Forest and on the trail systems. Examples include, argos, rock crawlers, sandrails, buggies, golf carts, snowbikes, go-karts, and specialized 4 wheel drive trucks and jeeps.

### **710.3 Non-Motorized Uses**

Non-motorized use of the existing road and trail network throughout the Forest continues to be popular amongst users. The most common activities include, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, dog sledding, horseback riding, hunting, winter camping, mountain biking, and hiking. Many non-motorized or silent-sport recreationists are opposed to motorized recreation, particularly that which conflicts with their activities. Continued increases in motorized recreation, particularly ATV and UTV use, has sparked user conflicts and also has become a safety issue at times.

#### **710.3.1 Horseback Riding**

Horseback riding remains an occasional use on most of the Douglas County Forest. The Douglas County Wildlife Area contains about 14 miles of designated horseback riding trails and stable facilities that are available for public rental (see Appendix Z-I a map). All forest roads and trails, including those open and closed to motorized use, are open for horseback riding. Cross-country travel by horseback is prohibited.

#### **710.3.2 Fishing and Access to Water**

Fishing has been a very popular and traditional use on the Douglas County Forest. Improved boat launches have been developed to accommodate anglers and other recreational water users within the Forest. These sites include Mooney Dam Park Launch (Lower Eau Clair Lake), Gordon Dam Park Launch (Gordon/St. Croix Flowage), North Flowage Launch (Gordon/St. Croix Flowage), Lake Minnesuing Park Launch (Lake Minnesuing), Anna-Gene Park Launch (Lyman Lake), and County Highway L Launch (Amnicon River). There also are many undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats in the Forest. These points are used to launch boats or canoes by hand versus launching from vehicle trailers. These sites, including the roads and trails accessing them, are not



routinely maintained.

### **710.3.3 Hunting Access**

Hunters represent another major category of forest users. The Douglas County Forest offers abundant, quality opportunities for local hunters and those from across the State and beyond. Hunting is particularly popular during the fall black bear, ruffed grouse, and gun deer seasons; and spring turkey season. Hunters of small game and waterfowl and deer bowhunters also frequent the Forest each year. With the exiting, extensive network of forest roads and trails, hunter access is readily available on much of the Forest.

There is little data on the relative level of hunting pressure or number of hunters using the Forest. However, general observations suggest that hunting pressure per acre on the County Forest is greater than on many other Douglas County land ownerships due to the Forest's high visibility, familiarity, vast acreage, abundant quality habitat, and good populations of game species.

The primary issues affecting hunters are motorized/non-motorized user conflicts, crowding, and opportunities for solitude. While OHV's have made access to remote areas of the Forest and retrieval of big game much easier for many hunters, increased use has also created these problems, particularly among motorized and non-motorized users who are participating in the same activity.

- (1) **Hunter Conflict** – Conflict between motorized and non-motorized hunters occurs where one hunter's outdoor experience is disrupted by another. A common belief among hunters, is that avoiding other hunters and their activities will result in a more enjoyable outdoor experience. This requires accessing more remote areas of the Forest where few hunters are willing to travel without the aid of a motorized vehicle.
- (2) **Noise** – The repeated sound of a vehicle can alter game patterns and/or displace game from hunting areas. This creates hard feelings among the hunters who have invested considerable time and energy in learning game patterns and/or by those who use stealth and stalking skills only to see their efforts spoiled by a vehicle. An important component of hunting for many hunters is the wild or wilderness recreation aspect that emphasizes a quiet, solitary experience.
- (3) **Ethics** – With the more extensive network of roads and trails on the Forest, an increasing number of hunters are continuing to use vehicles rather than traveling on foot. This behavior raises ethical concerns that can reflect poorly on the sport of hunting and hunters as a group. Studies have shown that areas with high road densities can have significantly higher harvest rates, directly affecting game population dynamics.
- (4) **Off-Trail Use** – Cross-country travel with motorized vehicles to access hunting areas or retrieve game can create a network of new travelways that cause soil erosion, destroy natural vegetation, damage fish and wildlife habitats, and adversely affect forest aesthetics. OHV use can also introduce invasive plant species that once established can result in the loss of native species.

- (5) **Closed Areas** – Operating a motorized vehicle in areas where they are prohibited aggravates hunters who have carefully selected their hunting area to avoid these vehicles and their effects. This leads to conflicts between motorized hunters and those who walk into closed areas.

#### **710.3.4 Trapping Access**

Although the number of hunters far exceeds the number of trappers on the County Forest, trapping remains a common activity. However, overall trapping participation continues to slowly decline Statewide for a variety of reasons, including fur market prices and increasing trapping expenses.

The Forest provides excellent opportunities to trap fisher, beaver, otter, fox, coyote, bobcat, and other furbearers. Trapping for beaver continues to be the most common trapping activity on the Forest. Ponds and drainages that support beaver populations can be found relatively close to open roads but also in very remote areas. Most beaver trapping occurs during the winter months when ice covers ponds and the ground is frozen and snow covered. ATV's are used by some trappers but snowmobiles seem to be the OHV of choice for this activity.

Conflicts between trappers and other users continue to be minimal due to the small number of trappers and because trapping occurs primarily in remote areas during months when other users are not in the field. Likewise, soil damage and damage to upland and riparian vegetation due to trapping is minimal because this activity usually occurs in the winter months. Trapping of specific beaver populations has the added benefit of reducing forest infrastructure maintenance costs by removing beavers that are responsible for flooding roads and/or plugging culverts. Motorized access on restricted roads and trails for the purpose of trapping requires a permit issued by the DCFD. Requests for permits are considered on a case-by-case basis and only specific areas where beaver activity has threatened forest infrastructure will be considered.

#### **710.4 Need for Regulation**

As timber markets expanded throughout the 1970's and 80's, additional roads were constructed for logging access throughout the Forest. At the same time, recreational use of the Forest increased as motorized vehicle technology, especially off-highway vehicles, continued to advanced and become more available. These trends ultimately led to increasing conflict among recreationists, particularly motorized and non-motorized users. During the same time period, there was also heightened concern about soil erosion, water quality impacts, alteration of fish and wildlife habitats, and long-term scarring of the land.

In the 1990's, the first gates, earth berms, and professionally manufactured signs restricting motorized use were installed on roads and trails highly susceptible to damage. Certain routes suffering from sustained, annual damage through rutting and/or erosion were rehabilitated and reclaimed, and others that had been historically open to motorized use were closed to prevent further damage. These new standards and changes in historical use allowances were met with considerable controversy amongst many forest users and some members of the general public.

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As some individuals continued to access the Forest by motorized vehicle with little to no regard for these new changes, enforceable rules and regulations were necessary to protect forest resources and user experiences. In 1991, a “Land Recreation Ordinance” was established to regulate use of County Forest land. Since its initial installment, the ordinance has undergone numerous updates, including the addition of many provisions related to access and motorized use. Today, the ordinance includes extensive regulations for the use of HV’s and OHV’s and penalties in the form of forfeiture for violations. The most current Land Recreation Ordinance #7.2 is available on the Douglas County website.

To further protect forest resources and user experiences and assist with ordinance enforcement, in January 2000, the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department implemented a program that created a new Recreation Officer position to be occupied by a fully credentialed law enforcement professional. The position is funded through the snowmobile, ATV/UTV, Boating and Narcotic Prevention programs, and from annual County budget allocation.

The County Recreation Officer has a variety of duties, including routine patrol activities such as speed enforcement, traffic accident investigation, courthouse security, and warrants. The core of the job is working on recreational trails, parks, and County Forest lands. Activities include investigating illegal motorized vehicle use, timber thefts, illegal dumping, park patrols, and many other activities.

The duties of the Recreation Officer require that he or she develop a solid working relationship with other law enforcement professionals including, WDNR wardens, recreation officers from other counties, state narcotics and patrol officers, Superior WI police officers, and other deputies with the Douglas County Sheriff’s Department. The County Recreation Officer also works in close conjunction with DCFD staff on issues directly related to the Forest.

Despite the addition of the Recreation Officer, enforcement of forest rules and regulations remains very challenging for DCFD staff primarily due to the overall size of the Forest and vast amount of remote acreage. Individual users continue to disregard the ordinance because they disagree with the regulations and/or do not respect enforcement efforts. Other users have willingly accepted the risk of being apprehended because the benefits derived by ignoring regulations outweigh the cost of fines that may be imposed.

### **710.5 Access to Other Land Ownership**

There are thousands of acres of land under other ownership within the official County Forest Blocking Boundary and many more acres of lands adjacent to the Forest, which has, over time, led to an increase in requests for access to adjacent lands. This type of access, where County Forest land or other County owned land managed by the DCFD is used, requires an access permit. See Section 520.7 for additional information on access permits.

## **715 PUBLIC ROADS**

**715.1 County Highways, Town Roads, and County Forest Roads**

- (1) **County Highways** – All timber sales with direct access onto a Douglas County Highway will require coordination with the County Highway Department. This includes sales being accessed through existing forest roads and new forest roads planned for construction. Permits will be secured as necessary.
  
- (2) **Town Roads** – Over the last decade, many Douglas County towns have implemented a number of new policies aimed at protecting their investments and limiting damage caused by heavy trucks and equipment to their local town roads. The DCFD and FPRC have put forth great effort and time towards continuing to maintain and strengthen relationships with the towns to provide good roads for all public use, including forest industry use. Many towns routinely cooperate with logging contractors to provide opportunity for road use while fully resolving road-hauling issues. The DCFD is committed to facilitating open and cooperative communication between logging contractors and towns over road use concerns.

Every year, Douglas County also distributes to 13 towns, 3 villages, and 1 city, 10 percent of the gross timber sale receipts from the County Forest. Known as town road severance payments, these funds are intended to be used to help maintain public road networks accessing the Forest by offsetting costs. The amount that each municipality receives is based on the percentage of total County Forest land within its boundaries. In 2020, 10 percent of the gross timber-sale receipts totaled \$474,518.27, which was distributed as follows:

**Table 715.1  
Payments to Municipalities from Gross Timber-Sale Receipts  
off the Douglas County Forest, 2020**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Dollars</b>	<b>Percent of Land</b>
Town of Bennett	\$11,230.90	2.37
Town of Brule	\$11,299.70	2.38
Town of Dairyland	\$90,647.70	19.10
Town of Gordon	\$90,182.20	19.01
Town of Hawthorne	\$9,973.42	2.10
Town of Highland	\$4,928.82	1.04
Village of Lake Nebagamon	\$1,423.08	0.30
Town of Lakeside	\$67.86	0.01
Town of Maple	\$5,934.33	1.25
Town of Oakland	\$22,747.46	4.80
Village of Oliver	\$10.91	0.00
Town of Solon Springs	\$24,989.56	5.27
Village of Solon Springs	\$60.74	0.01
Town of Summit	\$110,514.83	23.29
City of Superior	\$70.23	0.01
Town of Superior	\$18,534.21	3.91
Town of Wascott	\$71,902.33	15.15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$474,518.27</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**715.2 County Forest Roads**

In the 1970’s, Wisconsin funded a County Forest Road system at \$100/mile annually (per statutory authority 86.315 (4)(a)) through the Department of Transportation to help defray costs incurred in improving and maintaining public roads within County Forests. The State later withdrew this source of funding and the County Forest Road system suffered accordingly. Efforts by the Wisconsin County Forest Association (WCFA) succeeded in restoring annual County Forest Road Aid funding for the system in 1988 at the rate of \$200/mile. In 1997, annual funding was increased to \$336/mile, and in 2018 to \$351/mile, the same level it still stands today.

To qualify, roads must meet minimum design standards of a 16-foot surface width and a 20-foot roadway width, be located within a County Forest, be open and used for public travel, and not be a town road or a county or state trunk highway. County Forest Roads are not eligible to receive general transportation aid from the State.

Today, there are 38 County Forest Roads within the Douglas County Forest (see Appendix B-II for a map). Total 2020 mileage is 94.7 miles. Some of these roads double as winter snowmobile trails and/or summer ATV trail segments. All roads are reviewed annually by DCFD staff and certain routes or segments may be considered for new addition and/or removal.

**Table 715.2  
County Forest Roads within the Douglas County Forest, 2020**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Miles</b>
Amnicon River Road	0.5	Ole Larson Road	1
Bounty Road	8.3	Ox Creek Road	0.6
Buckley Break	1.4	Pikes Peak Road	3.2
Darwin's Loop	2.9	Pikes Peak West Road	2.4
Dewey Road	1.1	Pine Knob Road	3.4
Erickson Creek Cut-A-Cross	2.1	Pine Ridge Road	2.8
Erickson Creek Pit Road	0.6	Pine Savannah Loop	2.1
Erickson Creek Road	2.5	Raspberry Road	1.8
Fred Bear Ridge	4	Red Squirrel Loop	2.2
Golden Tail Road	3.2	Resinosa Road	3.6
Holmes Camp	2.5	Road 41	3.6
Hungry Bear Road	3.4	Shed Horn Road	1
Hunters Road	3.8	Spike Loop	1.4
Jackson Box Grouse Road	2.5	Spruce River Road	1.5
Kestrel Road	2.1	Strutters Lane	1
Leopold Lane	0.9	Twilight Road	1
Loop Road	2.5	Twin Bridges Road	3.7
Memorial Road	3.7	Wanek Road	3
Nanuq Road	2.6	West Crotte Brook Road	4.8

All Douglas County Forest Roads are regularly monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that the *Best Management Practices for Water Quality Guidelines* (BMP's) are being adequately met and drainage structures are functioning properly. Drainage structures are inventoried and recorded in a database and standardized inspections will be performed on a regular basis. Roads with greater risks for damage to occur or those with more intensive use will be inspected more frequently. Monitoring results and maintenance activity log will be documented on a road-by-road basis and filed annually.

Repair, maintenance, or restoration efforts of problem areas and/or failing drainage structures will be completed in a timely manner and documented to best protect water quality and ensure BMP standards are being met.

The DCFD will continue to work in close conjunction with the Wisconsin County Forest Association to pursue additional road aid funding for the County Forest Road network.

## **720 FOREST MANAGEMENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

This section provides direction on developing uniform administrative policy with respect to planning, analyzing, and developing the forest management transportation system, and outlines the decision making process in connection with the construction, reconstruction, or decommission of various infrastructure components. A uniform policy is necessary to ensure that the Douglas County Forest transportation system provides for safe access and travel, minimizes adverse environmental impacts, and meets current and future land and resource management needs.

The direction provided in this section pertains to all infrastructure components of the transportation system under the direct management authority of the DCFD.

### **720.1 Past to Present**

Most of the existing forest roads and trails on the Forest were developed as logging roads, forest fire protection lanes, or trails used to reach popular recreation areas. Historically, the forest management program has focused more on road development than any other activity. Over the last few decades, the need to access timber for harvesting purposes has substantially increased to meet increasing demand for forest products. As a result, further development and expansion of the forest transportation system followed.

Forest roads, skid trails, and landings constitute the primary infrastructure components of the forest management transportation system today and together connect the Forest with existing public roadways and provide for vehicle and equipment access. They also provide access for activities such as fish and wildlife habitat improvement, wildfire protection, and public recreation.

Forest roads that are poorly located, constructed, or maintained can be a significant source of non-point source pollution, adversely affecting hydrological processes in the soil and degrading fish and wildlife habitat. Roads over steep slopes, stream crossings, or erodible or fragile soils pose the

greatest risk to degrade water quality.

DCFD staff continues to plan and administer the construction and maintenance of all infrastructure components of the forest management transportation system within the Forest. Most of these construction and maintenance activities are carried out by DCFD staff and private contractors working under Douglas County timber sale contracts. The specifications for road, skid trail, and landing construction and maintenance vary with the frequency, duration, and planned use of each component. The four major types of road routes on the Forest are permanent primary, permanent secondary, temporary, and lowland roads.

### **720.2 Permanent Primary Forest Roads**

These are the primary roads in the forest management transportation system accessing the Forest. They typically originate directly off public roadways, access large blocks of the Forest, are designed for all-season use, and are used frequently. These roads are strategically located and routed to serve as essential access corridors for the transportation system. Many are constructed according to advanced design and engineering standards that require considerable time, effort, and cost expense. Others are graveled and routinely maintained. Access may be restricted periodically to minimize damage to the road. Some roads in this category qualify for funding under the County Forest Road Aids program.

### **720.3 Permanent Secondary Forest Roads**

These roads typically are the connecting routes or the feeder roads from landings and yarding areas to primary roads or to public roadways in smaller blocks of the Forest. They generally are used infrequently on a temporary basis so maintenance is minimal. These roads may or may not be constructed to the standards of a primary forest road but most are narrower and built to lower standards. Some of these roads are designed for use only when the ground is firm or frozen. Access may be restricted periodically to minimize damage to the road.

### **720.4 Temporary Roads**

These roads are designed and constructed for short-term use for a specific project; often as a single timber sale access route. When the activity is completed, the road is left to reclaim itself naturally and often restricted with a road blockage device. Most of these roads are narrow, constructed to minimal standards, not maintained, and are used only when the ground is firm or frozen. Forest management access is typically seasonally restricted to minimize damage to the road in heavier soils.

#### **720.4.1 Lowland Roads**

These roads are a type of temporary road and used only when the ground is frozen. Locating roads in lowland areas is avoided as much as possible, so the need for these routes is evaluated on a case-by-case basis, and their length and width are limited to the minimum required to meet forest management objectives. Lowland roads are constructed carefully to avoid restricting or altering the natural hydrological flow of surface and subsurface water. Special “freeze down” construction techniques such as snow, grass, and brush compaction are used to promote frost penetration.

During the planning stage of a forest management project, road construction costs, long-term maintenance needs, service life, and potential to cause non-point source pollution are all evaluated. DCFD staff are responsible for planning, locating, and designing all access roads according to objectives in this Plan. Design and construction requirements are incorporated into timber sale contracts administered by staff to ensure that all requirements are met.

### **720.5 Road Planning, Location, and Design Objectives**

- (1) In addition to meeting project objectives, consider possible future commercial and recreational uses of the road system during the planning and development stages. Locate and design roads according to objectives related to future use.
- (2) Develop a transportation system that limits the number of roads on the Forest so that the total area of disturbance is minimized.
- (3) Develop a transportation system such that primary roads constitute the main corridor foundation with branching secondary and temporary roads stemming from these routes.
- (4) Minimize the number of forest road access points that meet public roadways and, where possible, avoid access points that meet private roadways.
- (5) Wherever possible, locate access routes and sites where forest road access points meet public roadways on County-owned land to minimize private ownership use.
- (6) Use existing roads when they provide the best long-term access. Consider relocating existing roads if doing so would improve access and reduce environmental impacts.
- (7) Reconstruct existing roads as necessary to best meet current “Best Management Practices” standards and provide for adequate drainage and human safety.
- (8) Where possible, coordinate route development with recreation trail-program managers and increase communication and coordination between forest management and recreation program personnel to meet common objectives.
- (9) Where possible, locate road systems off existing recreational trails. Only use existing recreational trails when necessary or in an effort to enhance the trail program after coordination and approval from recreation program managers.
- (10) Construct and maintain all primary access roads to advanced design standards, including any combination of the following; permanent crossing installations, ditching, crowning, backsloping, graveling, and grading.
- (11) Construct and maintain all secondary access roads to an acceptable level for all recreational use designations, including any combination of the following; permanent crossing installations, ditching, crowning, backsloping, graveling, and grading.



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- (12) Where possible, locate road systems on well-drained upland soils and minimize road construction in riparian or lowland areas.
- (13) Locate roads, ensuring that drainage is directed from the road surface and road ditches.
- (14) Minimize the number of stream and drainage crossings and make crossings at right angles to stream channels and drainage directions.
- (15) Identify the best stream and drainage crossing locations before locating a road.
- (16) Approach stream and drainage crossings at the lowest slope possible.
- (17) Locate roads outside streamside management zones except at stream crossings.
- (18) Optimal road grades should be less than 5 percent and acceptable grades shall not exceed 10 percent. If steep grades are unavoidable, they should be broken into short segments and separated by segments of adverse grade.
- (19) When locating roads, follow natural contours and minimize cut and fills. Minimize the need for fill or to remove excess material.
- (20) If necessary, stabilize road ditches, backslopes, and crossing structures after construction by evenly covering them with natural debris, installing drainage-diversion structures, and/or planting cover vegetation.

### **720.6 Landing Planning, Location, and Design Objectives**

- (1) Minimize the number and size of landings to reduce environmental impacts and the loss of productive forest area.
- (2) Avoid all landing construction in riparian, lowland and wetland areas.
- (3) Locate and design landings to prevent sediments from entering watercourses.
- (4) Where appropriate, locate landings outside of areas excluded from harvesting and at sufficient distances from riparian management zones and other buffers.
- (5) If possible, locate landings in relatively flat, elevated areas where free drainage occurs at all times and with a low slope to reduce the amount of side cutting.
- (6) Locate landings in dry areas on ridges or benches to promote uphill skidding/forwarding to disperse runoff into stable surrounding vegetation.
- (7) Locate landings at sites that can accommodate the necessary skidding/forwarding patterns and directions.
- (8) Balance environmental impacts and site disturbance with skidding/forwarding distances.

- (9) Where appropriate, use authorized roadsides under the authority of the DCFD for product decking to minimize environmental impacts and soil disturbance.
- (10) Rehabilitate and stabilize landings after use by covering them with natural debris, ripping the surface, and/or planting cover vegetation.
- (11) Where appropriate, locate landings outside of areas established as wildlife openings.

### **720.7 Skid Trail Planning, Location, and Design Objectives**

- (1) Minimize the number and area covered by skid trails to reduce environmental impacts.
- (2) Locate landings before locating skid trails.
- (3) Locate main skid trails along elevated areas with drainage away from waterways and unstable areas to minimize potential damage to soil caused by skidding machinery.
- (4) Where possible, avoid locating skid trails in areas excluded from harvesting and promote skidding uphill or on flat ground in areas of good soil drainage.
- (5) Optimal skid trail grades should be less than 20 percent and acceptable grades shall not exceed 40 percent considering soil type and machine traction.
- (6) Minimize the number of watercourse crossing points. If necessary, cross watercourses at right angles and use elevated crossing structures where possible.
- (7) In locating skid trails, avoid damage to residual trees and vegetation. Where possible, use “sacrificial” trees that are to be removed when the majority of skidding has been completed.
- (8) If necessary, maintain corduroy on some or all portions of the trail surface to minimize soil damage. All corduroy should be removed after use.
- (9) If necessary, stabilize skid trails after use by covering them with natural debris, installing drainage-diversion structures, and/or planting cover vegetation.

## **725 THREE AREA CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM**

The Access Management Plan designates a mapped classification system for managing motorized recreational access on the County Forest. The Forest is divided into three areas for management and planning purposes based on motorized-access objectives (see Appendix A-II for a map). Forest resource management units, historical use, soil types, and landscape attributes were used to delineate the three areas.

### **725.1 Road Density and Distribution Objectives**

To provide resource managers direction with respect to access management planning and

designating road uses, quantitative road density objectives for total roads and roads open to public motorized HV and/or OHV use are established for each area as follows:

**Table 725.1**  
**Road Density Objectives by Area Classification within the Douglas County Forest**

<b>Area Classification</b> <i>Classification system for managing motorized recreational opportunity on the Forest.</i>	<b>RMU</b> <i>Identified units of Forest land.</i>	<b>Open Road Density Objectives</b> <i>Miles of road per square mile of County Forest land open to public motorized use (HV and/or OHV). Does not include roads under other jurisdiction.</i>	<b>Total Road Density Objectives</b> <i>Total miles of open and closed roads per square mile of County Forest land. Does not include roads under other jurisdiction.</i>
Low Motorized Area	3, 11, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28	0.0 to 1.0 mile/square mile. <i>(0.5 mile average)</i>	Up to 5.0 miles/square mile.
Moderate Motorized Area	1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20	1.0 to 2.0 miles/square mile. <i>(1.5 mile average)</i>	Up to 5.0 miles/square mile.
High Motorized Area	4, 16, 21, 22, 25	2.0 to 3.0 miles/square mile. <i>(2.5 mile average)</i>	Up to 5.0 miles/square mile.

The open road density objectives are goals that the DCFD plans to target for each forest resource management unit based on its overall area classification. The objectives are ranges of acceptable density measures with the density average, the overall target. For example, if an area falls under or above the objective average and the existing road density is still within the objective range, roads may or may not be opened up to motorized uses or closed to reach the objective average. However, if an area is less than the objective range, new road construction and/or opening roads will be explored. Conversely, if an area is above the objective range, road closures and/or decommissioning activities will be considered.

Although quantitative objectives are not included in the table, road distributions and proximities will also be considered along with the road density measures. Roads designated as open to public motorized use will be uniformly distributed throughout forest resource management units to the greatest extent possible given resource conditions and other unit objectives. The DCFD will target accessing the greatest amount of area with any given road density measure, thus minimizing area overlap between adjacent accesses.

**725.2 High Motorized Area**

This area consists of 49,071 acres (76.7 square miles) of County Forest land identified as the block that can best provide and sustain the greatest opportunity for motorized uses on roads and trails. This classification does not authorize the use of motorized vehicles over the entire block. Rather, it is defined as the area on the Forest where motorized-vehicle access is most readily available. Permitted motorized uses are designated on a road-by-road basis; one permitted use for a road is exclusive of that road alone and may or may not be permitted on any other individual road. The distribution of this block across the southern, southeastern, central, and northeastern region of the

Forest was identified as providing the greatest opportunity for users who seek this type of recreational experience. Of the three classifications, this area offers the greatest opportunity for motorized recreational use on the Forest.

Stands of aspen, jack pine, and red pine are the most dominant timber types in this block, followed by swamp hardwood, scrub oak, swamp conifer, and northern red oak. Timber harvesting is a significant commercial activity and occurs throughout the year. This block offers the most potential of any on the Forest for harvesting when the ground is not frozen. The primary management objective is to maintain timber production and enhance wildlife habitat through natural and forced type maintenance. Stands of aspen and jack pine are managed naturally for age-class and structural diversity through regeneration harvests. Artificial plantations and natural stands of red pine are aggressively managed for both fiber and sawlog production through selective harvests. Other considerations when managing timber in this block are protecting water quality in the many ponds and lakes, preventing erosion on sand slopes, and promoting forest aesthetics.

This block contains 3 of the County's 12 State Natural Areas (SNA's). Flat Lake SNA (94 acres) is located in the central portion of the block, Goose Lake SNA (67 acres) is located in the southeastern portion of the block, and the Five Mile Barrens SNA (1,699 acres) is located in the southern portion of the block. This block also contains 2 High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF's). Lower Ox Lake Conifer Swamp HCVF (214 acres) and the St. Croix River HCVF (1,382 acres). See Section 830 for additional information on exceptional resource management areas.

The topography in this block ranges from virtually flat to sloping hills; primary landform patterns range from nearly level to rolling outwash plains. The secondary pattern is undulating outwash plains and moraines. Due to its location and regional distribution, this block intersects many soil associations. The primary associations consist of excessively drained sand over sand outwash. The terrain also includes depressional basins and drainages, many of which contain ponds, lakes, creeks, rivers, bogs, or swamps.

The primary concern in managing access on this block is the potential for erosion on slopes and damage to native vegetation on unimproved roads and trails. Sandy soils are particularly prone to these risks. Most of the existing forest access roads and trails in the block have been constructed in sandy soils and are in nearly flat areas, and can support sustained motorized use throughout the year. Roads and trails that are associated with slopes greater than 2 percent, though minimal, are highly susceptible to erosion. Roads that intersect streams, drainages and low areas present significant potential for sedimentation, soil and vegetation damage, and scarring of the landscape. Most of the secondary public road system that provides access to the area requires considerably less maintenance than roadways in other blocks. However, occasional maintenance is required during most months.

This block includes the following Rivers: Ounce, St. Croix, and Totogatic; and the following Creeks: Buckley, Lower Ox, Sheosh, and Snake.

This unit encounters considerable recreational use on a year-round basis. Primary uses include large and small game hunting, viewing wildlife, nature photography, cross-country skiing, hiking,

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gathering, fishing, trapping, horseback riding, camping, and picking berries. A portion of the block contains the North Country National Scenic Hiking Trail footpath and 10.3 miles of DCFD-maintained cross-country ski trails. 22.9 miles of funded summer ATV/UTV trails and 43 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails intersect portions of the block resulting in a trail density of 0.86 miles of funded trail per square mile of forest.

### **725.2.1 Conditions**

- (1) This block is designated as a High Motorized Area for both HV and OHV use.
- (2) Both HV and OHV use is allowed on this block except where restricted.
- (3) All routes open to both HV and/or OHV use are open to motorized use as designated per type of use and time period.
- (4) All motorized uses are prohibited on closed roads and trails throughout the year or as seasonally designated.

### **725.2.2 Objectives**

- (1) Identify open and closed routes and designate restricted motorized uses on closed routes with appropriate signage and/or blockage devices.
- (2) Target the highest open-road density objectives on the Forest for open motorized HV and/or OHV use.
- (3) Distribute designated HV and/or OHV open roads as best possible across the block to disperse use patterns and where applicable, branch new roads off existing routes to minimize access points off public roadways.
- (4) Ensure that most of the open roads that have historically provided access remain open to HV and/or OHV motorized use.
- (5) Identify and close open roads where continued motorized use is damaging natural features.
- (6) In addition to closing, consider rehabilitating and “putting to bed” temporarily constructed (one-time-use) roads using various reclamation techniques, e.g., ripping, disking, barring, furrowing, and/or planting vegetation.
- (7) Where applicable, use advanced design standards and specifications when constructing new roads and/or improving existing roads, planned for open motorized use.
- (8) Examine existing dead-end and/or isolated roads for possible improvement with strategically located extensions open to motorized use, thus providing greater opportunity for destination travel.
- (9) Where feasible, avoid utilizing roads located on other ownership and reduce individual or group preference by minimizing open motorized travel from private land into this block.

- (10) Identify and eliminate locations of unauthorized motorized travel from private land into this block and enforce continued violations.
- (11) Continue partnering with the North County Trail Association and National Park Service in developing, establishing and maintaining the North County National Scenic Hiking Trail.

### **725.3 Moderate Motorized Area**

The largest of the three classifications, this area includes 157,238 acres (246 square miles) of County Forest land identified as the block that can best provide a combination of designated motorized and non-motorized uses. This classification does not exclude or permit the use of motorized vehicles over the entire block. Rather, on this area of the Forest, motorized-vehicle access is moderately regulated to allow for a blend of designated recreational opportunities. Permitted motorized uses are designated on a road-by-road basis; one permitted use for a road is exclusive of that road alone and may or may not be permitted on any other individual road.

This integrated access approach of both open and closed roads with varying uses has historically been the most popular management system offered. The distribution of this block across a significant portion of the Forest was identified as providing the greatest opportunity for users who seek a more restricted, but not severely limited type of motorized recreational experience. Of the three classifications, this area offers the most balanced opportunity for motorized recreational use on the Forest.

Stands of aspen, northern hardwood, and swamp hardwood are the most dominant timber types in this block, followed by red maple, white birch, northern red oak, and swamp conifer. Timber harvesting is a significant commercial activity and occurs throughout the year. Many stands can only be accessed during the winter months under frozen-ground conditions while others offer a seasonal opportunity.

The primary management objective is to maintain optimal timber production primarily through natural type maintenance. Stands of aspen are managed naturally for age-class and structural diversity through regeneration harvests. Stands of northern hardwoods, white birch, and northern red oak are managed for quality timber production through regeneration and improvement harvests. Other considerations in this block are perpetuating the white birch and northern red oak types, protecting water quality, preserving lowland hardwood swamps, improving wildlife habitat, and promoting forest aesthetics.

This block contains 3 of the County's 12 SNA's. Blueberry Swamp SNA (864 acres) is located in the northeastern portion of the block and the Empire Swamp SNA (1,570 acres) and Ericson Creek Forest and Wetlands SNA (2,505 acres) are both located in the central portion of the block. This block also contains 5 HCVF's. Amnicon River Pines HCVF (47 acres), Ericson Creek Pine Forest HCVF (43 acres), Moose Lake HCVF (291 acres), Mud Lake Bog HCVF (441 acres), and St. Croix River HCVF (1,382 acres). See Section 830 for additional information on exceptional resource management areas.

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This block contains one of the County's 3 special grouse management areas that are enrolled in the Ruffed Grouse Society's Special Management Area Program. The Empire Grade Grouse Management Area (8,200 acres) is located in the center of the block and partially overlaps with the eastern half of the Empire Swamp SNA. Under a cooperative agreement with the Ruffed Grouse Society, this area is intensively managed for ruffed grouse habitat through scattered patch timber harvests in stands of aspen. Public hunting is encouraged through foot access.

The topography in this block ranges from nearly level to steep. This area comprises many soil associations. The primary association consists of moderately well-drained sandy loam over loamy sand till or bedrock along with very poorly drained mucky organic soils. Scattered drainages and basins are common among the elongated and oval moraines. Streams, ponds, swamps, bogs, and marshes make up these lower features. Upland ridges have broad crests and gentle slopes and many terrain features generally are linear in nature and orientated from southwest to northeast, especially in the southwest region of this block.

The primary concerns in managing access on this block are rutting on fragile soils, damage to riparian resources on unimproved roads and balancing motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities. Many of the forest access roads can easily be rutted and damaged by both HV and OHV use due to a lack of soil strength and wetness, especially during periods of wet weather. Erosion also is a concern in areas with slopes. Roads that intersect streams, drainages, and lowland areas present significant potential for sedimentation, soil and vegetation damage, and scarring of the landscape. Many segments of frozen winter roads in riparian environments cannot support motorized recreational vehicle use during non-frozen ground conditions. Most of the secondary access roads require maintenance of varying degrees to make these routes accessible to HV use during most months.

This block includes the following Rivers: Amnicon, Black, Moose, Middle, Moose River, St. Croix, and Upper Tamarack; and the following Creeks: Arnold, Balsam, Bear, Beaver, Blueberry, Buckety, Casey, Cattle, Chases (Brook), Cranberry, Ericson, Garison, Little Balsam, Lord, Nebagamon, Rock, Sheosh, Smith, Spring, Thompson, and Toad.

The major recreational use in this area includes recreational trail riding and hunting large and small game particularly ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and black bear. Most recreational use occurs during the summer and fall months with recreational trail riding also popular during the winter season. Other uses include viewing wildlife, nature photography, cross-country skiing, hiking, firewood gathering, fishing, trapping, horseback riding, picking berries, and camping. This block contains a significant segment of the North Country National Scenic Hiking Trail footpath and over 5 miles of the Straight Arrow OHM trail system. 2.8 miles of funded summer ATV/UTV trails and 99 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails intersect portions of the block resulting in a trail density of 0.41 miles of funded trail per square mile of forest.

**725.3.1 Conditions**

- (1) This block is designated as a Moderate Motorized Area for both HV and OHV use.
- (2) Both HV and OHV use is allowed on this block except where restricted.
- (3) All routes open to both HV and/or OHV use are open to motorized use as designated per type of use and time period.
- (4) All motorized uses are prohibited on closed roads and trails throughout the year or as seasonally designated.

**725.3.2 Objectives**

- (1) Identify open and closed routes and designate restricted motorized uses on closed routes with appropriate signage and/or blockage devices.
- (2) Target a moderate level of open-road density objectives on the Forest for open motorized HV and/or OHV use.
- (3) Distribute designated HV and/or OHV open roads as best possible across the block to disperse use patterns and where applicable, branch new roads off existing routes to minimize access points off public roadways.
- (4) Ensure that most of the open roads that have historically provided access remain open to HV and/or OHV motorized use.
- (5) Identify and close open roads where continued motorized use is damaging natural features.
- (6) In addition to closing, consider rehabilitating and “putting to bed” temporarily constructed (one-time-use) roads using various reclamation techniques, e.g., ripping, disking, barring, furrowing, and/or planting vegetation.
- (7) Examine regions of the block that do not provide motorized access for possible development and/or improvement of strategically located primary and/or secondary access routes (dead-ends or loop-connectors) open to motorized use with select non-motorized spur components for walk-in access.
- (8) Examine existing dead-end and/or isolated roads for possible improvement with strategically located extensions open to motorized use, thus providing greater opportunity for destination travel.
- (9) Where applicable, maintain primary routes open to HV and/or OHV motorized use and promote walk-in access on secondary spur routes and on short, scattered dead-end routes.
- (10) Where applicable, use advanced design standards and specifications when constructing new roads and/or improving existing roads, planned for open motorized use.



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- (11) Where feasible, avoid utilizing roads located on other ownership and reduce individual or group preference by minimizing open motorized travel from private land into this block.
- (12) Identify and eliminate locations of unauthorized motorized travel from private land into this block and enforce continued violations.
- (13) Continue partnering with the North County Trail Association and National Park Service in developing, establishing and maintaining the North County National Scenic Hiking Trail.
- (14) Continue partnering with the Ruffed Grouse Society's Special Management Area Program and promote hunter access in the Empire Grade Grouse Management Area.

### **725.4 Low Motorized Area**

This area consists of 75,031 acres (117 square miles) of County Forest land. To maximize user opportunity, this area was further divided into six sub-blocks based on unique characteristics; Nedmadji River Block, Spruce River Block, Poplar River Block, Douglas County Wildlife Management Area Block, Coppermine Block, and St. Croix River Block. Each sub-block is categorized as a Low Motorized Area and strategically distributed across the Forest providing opportunity throughout.

The Low Motorized Area classification does not exclude the use of motorized vehicles in any sub-blocks, so a user may or may not encounter a quiet experience. Rather, in this area, motorized vehicle access is the most highly limited and regulated. Permitted motorized uses are designated on a road-by-road basis; one permitted use for a road is exclusive of that road alone and may or may not be permitted on any other individual road. This area offers users the greatest opportunity for a wild or wilderness type recreation experience with minimal exposure to motorized use.

#### **725.4.1 Conditions**

- (1) These blocks are designated as Low Motorized Areas for very limited motorized use.
- (2) Both HV and OHV use is allowed on these blocks except where restricted.
- (3) All routes open to both HV and/or OHV use are open to motorized use as designated per type of use and time period.
- (4) All motorized uses are prohibited on closed roads and trails throughout the year or as seasonally designated.

#### **725.4.2 Objectives**

- (1) Identify open and closed routes and designate restricted motorized uses on closed routes with appropriate signage and/or blockage devices.
- (2) Target a low level of open-road density objectives on the Forest for open motorized HV and/or OHV use. Promote foot travel.

- (3) Although open for some limited motorized use, manage these blocks as “quiet areas” to accommodate non-motorized recreational activities.
- (4) Strategically locate a select few designated HV and/or OHV open roads as best possible within the blocks to promote limited main points of motorized access with select non-motorized spur components for walk-in access.
- (5) In addition to closing, consider rehabilitating and “putting to bed” temporarily constructed (one-time-use) roads using various reclamation techniques, e.g., ripping, disking, barring, furrowing, and/or planting vegetation.
- (6) Where applicable, use advanced design standards and specifications when constructing new roads and/or improving existing roads, planned for open motorized use.
- (7) Where feasible, avoid utilizing roads located on other ownership and reduce individual or group preference by minimizing open motorized travel from private land into these blocks.
- (8) Identify and eliminate locations of unauthorized motorized travel from private land into these blocks and enforce continued violations.
- (9) Continue partnering with the Ruffed Grouse Society’s Special Management Area Program and promote hunter access in the Empire Grade Grouse Management Area and Poplar River Grouse Management Area.

#### **725.4.3 Nedmadji River Block**

This block consists of 12,739 acres (19.9 square miles) of County Forest land primarily consisting of aspen, lowland brush, swamp hardwood, fir/spruce, and lowland marshes. Secondary types include white birch, white pine, and bogs.

The primary management objective for this area is to maintain large blocks of aspen for timber production and wildlife-habitat improvement. Age-class and structural diversity is promoted through timber harvests of varying frequency, distribution, and size. A secondary objective is to protect water quality and unique natural community types of the Nemadji River watershed.

This block contains 3 of the County’s 12 SNA’s. The Nemadji River Floodplain Forest SNA (368 acres) located in the northeastern portion of the block along the eastern bank of the Nemadji River, the Pokegama Carnegie Wetlands SNA (1,206 acres) centrally located in the northern region of the block, and the Upper Nemadji Floodplain Forest SNA (753 acres) located in the southwestern portion of the block along the banks of the Nemadji River. This block also contains 1 High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF). The Nemadji River Terrace HCVF (926 acres). See Section 830 for additional information on exceptional resource management areas.

The topography in this block ranges from nearly level in the northern portion to steep river terraces in the southern portion along the banks of the Nemadji River. The primary soil associations vary from a moderately well-drained silty clay loam to excessively poorly-drained red clay with pockets

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of very poorly drained mucky organic soils throughout. Extensive lowlands in the northern portion of the block are predominantly made up of shrub wetlands. Stream drainages in the southern portion of the block are associated with deep cuts bordered by steep, towering river terraces containing mineral rich seeps. Between these deep drainages, the upper plateaus are relatively flat and contain scattered lowland areas made up of swamps and forested wetlands.

The primary concerns in managing access on this block are rutting on fragile soils, damage to native vegetation, potential for erosion on steep slopes in the southern portion, and damage to extensive riparian resources in the northern portion. Many of these features have prevented extensive road and trail networks from being developed in these areas. The majority of existing roads and trails cannot support motorized recreational vehicle use during non-frozen ground conditions. The few existing historical roads in the southern portion of the block that cross steep drainages present significant potential for sedimentation, soil erosion, and scarring of the landscape.

This block includes the following Rivers: Black, Little Amnicon, Little Pokegama, Nemadji, Pokegama, and St. Louis; and the following Creeks: Balsam, Clear, Copper, Little Balsam, Miller, Mud, Rock, Rocky Run, and Stony Brook.

The major recreational use in this area is hunting large and small game during the fall months. Fishing, canoeing, and kayaking on the Nemadji River is popular during the summer and trapping and recreational trail riding are also popular activities during the winter season. This block contains a 1.3 miles stretch of the North Country National Scenic Hiking Trail footpath and over 11 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail.

### **725.4.4 Spruce River Block**

This block consists of 42,304 acres (66.1 square miles) of County Forest land primarily consisting of aspen, lowland brush, lowland bogs, swamp hardwood, and lowland marshes. Secondary types include northern hardwood, white birch, and fir/spruce.

The primary management objective for this area is to maintain large blocks of aspen for timber production and wildlife-habitat improvement. Age-class and structural diversity are promoted through timber harvests of varying frequency, distribution, and size. A secondary objective is to promote stands of quality northern hardwood and white birch for timber production and diversity. Other considerations include increasing coniferous thermal cover for wildlife and sustaining the many wetlands in the area.

This block contains 2 of the County's 12 SNA's. The Black Lake Bog SNA (2,008 acres) is located in the northwestern portion of the block and the Belden Swamp SNA (1,795 acres) is located in the northeastern portion of the block. See Section 830 for additional information on exceptional resource management areas.

This block contains one of the County's 3 special grouse management areas that are enrolled in the Ruffed Grouse Society's Special Management Area Program in partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society. The Spruce River Grouse Management Area (17,668 acres) is the largest of the 3 special

grouse management areas and is located in the center of the block. This area is intensively managed for ruffed grouse habitat through scattered patch timber harvests in stands of aspen. Foot access public hunting is encouraged.

The landscape in this block has little local relief and terrain features generally are linear and oriented from southwest to northeast. There is little difference in elevation between uplands and lowlands. Drainage ways and basins are common throughout the block. Streams, ponds, swamps, bogs, and marshes make up lowland features. The upland ridges have broad crests and gentle slopes. The primary soil association consists of moderately well-drained sandy loam over loamy sand till or bedrock along with very poorly drained mucky organic soils. Slopes are mostly long and smooth except for the short slopes adjacent to lowland areas.

Primary concerns in managing access on this block are rutting on fragile soils and damage to riparian resources on unimproved roads. Many of the forest access roads can easily be rutted and damaged by both HV and OHV use due to a lack of soil strength and wetness, especially during periods of wet weather. Many segments of frozen winter roads in riparian environments cannot support motorized recreational vehicle use during non-frozen ground conditions. Most of the limited access roads require maintenance of varying degrees to make these routes accessible to HV use during most months.

This block includes the Spruce River and the following Creeks: Dingle and Hay Creek (East Branch).

The major recreational use in this area is hunting large and small game, particularly ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and black bear. Most recreational use in this unit occurs in late summer and fall. Trapping and recreational trail riding are also popular during the winter season. This block contains over 11 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail.

#### **725.4.5 Poplar River Block**

This block consists of 4,591 acres (7.0 square miles) of County Forest land primarily consisting of aspen, swamp hardwood, and lowland brush. Secondary types include northern hardwood, swamp conifer, and lowland swamp and bog.

The primary management objective for this block is to promote and maintain large blocks of aspen for timber production and wildlife habitat improvement. Other objectives include maintaining current timber species variety and enhancing age-class diversity. In areas with little to no aspen component, timber harvests focus on regenerating northern hardwoods, white birch, and northern red oak.

This block contains one of the County's 3 special grouse management areas that are enrolled in the Ruffed Grouse Society's Special Management Area Program in partnership with the Ruffed Grouse Society. The Poplar River Grouse Management Area (1,776 acres) is the smallest of the 3 special grouse management areas and is located in the eastern one-third of the block. This area is intensively managed for ruffed grouse habitat through scattered patch timber harvests in stands of

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aspen. Foot access public hunting is encouraged.

The topography in this block ranges from nearly level to steep rolling hills. The primary soil association in this unit consists of well-drained, moderately well-drained, and somewhat poorly drained soils with a sandy loam surface over sand till or loamy sand, very poorly drained mucky organic soils, and well-drained and excessively well-drained sandy outwash. In most areas, swells, hills, and ridges are interspersed with many small depressions and drainage valleys. Many of these depressions and drainage valleys contain ponds, bogs, or swamps.

The primary concern in managing access on this block is providing low motorized recreation opportunities in the northeastern region of the Forest for users who frequent this area during non-winter months. Throughout the winter season, numerous funded winter ATV and snowmobile trails intersect this block. Although many of the existing roads and trails may be able to support motorized use other than during winter months, this area has been designated as one of the low motorized access blocks for purposes of this Plan.

The Poplar River flows through the center of this block.

Partly because of its proximity to the Brule River State Forest, this area typically receives heavy pressure from large and small game hunters and winter recreational trail riders. Most hunting use occurs in late summer and fall, particularly by hunters seeking ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and black bear. Trail riding is popular during the winter months on the over 9 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail.

### **725.4.6 Douglas County Wildlife Management Area Block**

This block consists of 5,908 acres (9.2 square miles) of County Forest land that includes a 4,005 acre property commonly referred to as the Bird Sanctuary. Its official designation is the Douglas County Wildlife Area and is comprised of 3,011 acres of County-owned County Forest land and 994 acres of State-owned fee title land. The County Forest land is currently leased to the WDNR under an agreement that grants management authority to the State. A small, approximate 30 acre parcel, in the center of the area that includes County managed horse and clubhouse facilities, is not covered under the agreement.

Although most of this block is managed by the WDNR, their management of the property is generally consistent with Douglas County objectives for the low motorized area. Therefore, the WDNR and the County agreed that this area would be included as a sub-block in the low motorized area classification. However, it should be noted that any direction provided by this Plan with respect to motorized vehicle types and use designations does not supersede that prescribed by the WDNR. For additional information on the policies and regulations of the Douglas County Wildlife Management Area including permitted uses and use designations, contact the WDNR Douglas County Wildlife Area Property Manager at the WDNR Brule Ranger Station, 6250 South Ranger Road, Brule WI 54820 or (715) 372-4866.

The vast majority of the wildlife area is maintained as non-timbered grass/brush savannah, which is

representative of the historical pine barrens habitat. Aspen, upland brush, and grass are the most dominant cover types in this block, followed by cedar, swamp hardwood, red pine, lowland brush, and lowland marshes and bogs. Other areas contain small stands of young aspen and jack pine. Small areas of lowland marsh and scattered ponds also are present.

Prescribe burning is the primary method for developing and maintaining the pine barren habitat, followed by commercial and non-commercial timber harvesting. The primary management objective for this area is to maintain early, open stages of pine barrens habitat with scattered stands of young aspen and jack pine. A secondary objective is enhancing recreational opportunities and protecting aesthetic values.

This block contains 1 of the County's 12 SNA's. Owned by Douglas County and managed by the WDNR, the Solon Springs Sharptail Barrens SNA (227 acres) is located in the northeastern corner of the block. See Section 830 for additional information on exceptional resource management areas.

The topography on this block is nearly level to gently sloping. The primary soil association consists of excessively well-drained sand over sand outwash. This pitted outwash plain contains numerous glacial sags and depressions that are interspersed with small kettles, lakes, bogs, swamps, and marshes. A minor soil association within portions of this block consists of moderately well-drained and excessively well-drained sandy soils with a sand or loamy sand surface over sand outwash, and very poorly drained mucky organic soils.

Primary concerns in managing access on this block are protecting the pine barrens habitat and providing low motorized access opportunity in the central region of the Forest. The sandy, shallow soil and areas of rolling terrain make this block prone to erosion and vegetation damage by both motorized and non-motorized users. Other areas of this block contain fragile soils and riparian resources that can be easily damaged by both HV and OHV use due to a lack of soil strength and wetness, especially during periods of wet weather.

This block includes the following Creeks: Garison, Leo, and Spring.

This area encounters year-round recreational use, providing excellent opportunities for large and small game hunting, viewing wildlife, nature photography, cross-country skiing, hiking, gathering, trapping, horseback riding, camping, and picking berries. Over 6 miles of the North Country National Scenic Hiking Trail footpath intersects the entire block from north to south and includes a primitive campsite. 14 miles of horseback riding trails, 1.5 miles of funded summer ATV/UTV trails, and over 4 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trails intersect portions of the block. Each year, the wildlife area property hosts numerous, nationally recognized bird dog field trials. The County also maintains a clubhouse and horse area in the north-central portion of this block. These facilities are rented to the public for a wide range of activities during the spring, summer, and fall months. This block is of particular interest to the Friends of the Bird Sanctuary group, which was founded to help protect and preserve the Douglas County Wildlife Area.

In addition to the general conditions and objectives for the low motorized area (see Section 725.4), the following were provided by the WDNR for the Wildlife Area property.

**725.4.6(a) Conditions**

- (1) The access management signage system described in this Plan does not apply to this property. This State Wildlife Area is signed according to State standards.
- (2) HV use is allowed on this property except where restricted.
- (3) OHV use is prohibited on this property other than on the established summer ATV/UTV trail and winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail networks.
- (4) Horse use is allowed on designated trails and elsewhere as authorized by dog trial permits.

**725.4.6(b) Objectives**

- (1) Continue coordinating with and following WDNR direction in the management of the area.
- (2) Maintain this block for low HV and very limited OHV use.
- (3) Maintain the dog trial and horse trail for HV and horse use, and for foot travel.
- (4) Continue to encourage foot travel, especially on the North County Trail.

**725.4.7 Coppermine Block**

This block consists of 8,693 acres (13.6 square miles) of County Forest land. Aspen and northern hardwood are the most dominant types in this block, followed by swamp hardwood, jack pine, red maple, northern red oak, and red pine. Other types include lowland brush, bogs and marsh, swamp conifer, and hemlock.

The primary management objective for this area is maintaining blocks of aspen and northern hardwood for timber production and wildlife habitat. Much of the northern hardwood type is uneven-age managed for high-quality on some of most productive sites in the Forest. A secondary objective is to develop a mixture of jack pine and red pine stands throughout the block for timber production and cover type diversity. Another objective is to perpetuate the hemlock component, which is very rare throughout the entire property, and sustain the many wetland ecosystems present in this block.

The topography on this block is gently sloping. The primary soil association consists of moderately well-drained and well-drained sandy loam over acid loamy sand till or bedrock along with very poorly drained mucky organic soils. In most areas, swells, hills, and ridges are interspersed with many small kettles, bogs, swamps, or narrow drainage valleys. Slopes are mostly short and complex. Minor soil associations along the northwestern boundary of this block consist primarily of excessively drained sandy and loamy sand soils over sand outwash. The topography in outwash areas is undulating to rolling and includes knolls, swells, hills, and ridges. Depressional areas such as basins and drainages are common and many of these contain ponds, streams, rivers, bogs, or

swamps. The terrain is generally linear and orientated from southwest to northeast.

Primary concerns for managing access on this block are rutting on fragile soils, damage to riparian resources on unimproved roads and providing low motorized access opportunity in the southeastern region of the Forest. Many of the forest access roads, especially those in the central, eastern and southern portions of this block can be easily rutted and damaged by both HV and OHV use due to a lack of soil strength and wetness, especially during periods of wet weather. Roads that intersect streams, drainages, and lowland areas present significant potential for sedimentation, soil and vegetation damage, and scarring of the landscape. Although many of the existing roads and trails along the northwestern boundary and in the northern section of this block may be able to support motorized use, this area has been designated as one of the low motorized access blocks for purposes of this Plan.

This block includes the Ounce and Totagatic Rivers and the following Creeks: Cole and Haymaker.

The major recreational use in this area is hunting large and small game, particularly ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and black bear. Most recreational use in this unit occurs in late summer and fall. Trapping and recreational trail riding are also popular during the winter season. This block contains over 7 miles of funded winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail.

In addition to the general conditions and objectives for the low motorized area (see Section 725.4), the following objective also applies to this particular block:

- (1) Increase communication and cooperation with Bayfield, Sawyer, and Washburn Counties when regulating motorized access on routes that originate and intersect lands in those Counties.

#### **725.4.8 St. Croix Wild & Scenic Riverway Block**

This block consists of 796 acres (1.2 square miles) of County Forest land paralleling the St. Croix River. Swamp hardwood, open water, and lowland brush comprise the most dominant types in this block, followed by swamp conifer, fir/spruce, aspen, upland brush, and lowland bog.

The primary management objectives for this block are to protect the water quality of the St. Croix River, promote forest health, enhance recreational opportunities, and protect aesthetic values. All management within this area must meet requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and follow the objectives as outlined in the National Park Service's Master Plan for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. The DCFD has agreed to define the boundary of the Scenic Riverway Zone as no point less than 412 feet from the ordinary high water mark of the river. Timber harvesting will be prohibited within the initial 100 feet from the river's ordinary high water mark and all management activities within the remaining 312 feet will follow the WDNR *Forest Aesthetics Management Considerations and Technique* Publication's Class A Aesthetic Management Zone guidelines. All new road and trail construction within the Scenic Riverway Zone is limited to all but necessary routes and must meet standards and conditions prescribed in the Master Plan. For additional information on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and Master Plan for the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, contact the National Park Service St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, St. Croix River



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Visitor Center, 401 North Hamilton Street, Saint Croix Falls, WI 54024 or (715) 483-2274.

The topography on this block is generally level to steep. The primary soil association consists of excessively well-drained sand over sand outwash. During the last glacial period about 10,000 years ago, the St. Croix River Valley was a major drainage channel for glacial meltwater from the Lake Superior Basin. The river valley eroded the glacial outwash plains and exposed the basalt and sandstone bedrock. Slopes are short and steep, particularly those immediately adjacent to the river channel.

Primary concerns in managing access on this block are protecting its aesthetic, recreational, historic, and cultural values, improving and maintaining the area in a largely natural state, and maintaining and developing the block's scenic beauty.

The Cattle, and Sheosh Creeks flow into the St. Croix River on this block.

This unit receives significant year-round recreational use, providing outstanding opportunities for camping, wildlife viewing, canoeing, kayaking, nature photography, cross-country skiing, hiking, fishing, trapping, berry picking, and large and small game hunting. A few unimproved campsites and fishing areas along the river on County Forest land receive frequent use. Four landing areas that are maintained by the National Park Service (County Road T, Louis Park, Schoen Park, and Dry) provide users with basic offerings such as canoe/kayak access, restrooms, and primitive shoreline campsites. For additional information, including river maps, contact the National Park Service St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Namekagon River Visitor Center, W5483 Highway 63, Trego, WI 54888 or (715) 635-8346.

In addition to the general conditions and objectives for the low motorized area (see Section 725.4), the following objectives also apply to this particular block:

- (1) Avoid all new road development and construction within this block except for emergency purposes.
- (2) Coordinate with the National Park Service, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Master Plan for all land management activities.

### **730 FOREST ROAD AND TRAIL INVENTORY**

The initial forest road and trail inventory was completed in the early-1990's as part of the first digital stand delineation of the County Forest. Through the use of traditional orthophotography and GIS technologies, forest roads and trails were depicted visually on prints and manually digitized into digital format. This initial inventory focused on forest management applications and motorized recreational use designations were not identified or evaluated.

In 2002, as part of the planning process for the first Access Management Plan, the DCFD completed a second inventory of forest roads and trails that was more detailed and incorporated a use

designation process for all roads and trails on the Forest. Roads and trails, open and closed to recreational motorized use were identified according to established criteria, providing DCFD staff with a consistent framework for assigning use designations based on road/resource conditions, user conflicts, and illegal activities. A primary component of this inventory focused on the development and implementation of a process for continued updating of road and trail inventory data over time.

Today, approximately 1,100 miles of forest roads and trails have been inventoried within the County Forest. They occur at a density of approximately 2.51 miles of road and trail for every square mile of forest land. In addition, 160 miles of winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV and summer ATV/UTV trails that are managed by the DCFD but not within the Forest have been inventoried, along with 343 miles of State, County, and Towns roads that are within or directly adjacent to Forest holdings. Although the DCFD is not responsible for managing these roadways, they provide significant Forest access.

Table 730.1 is a summary of current road and trail use designations according to DCFD policy and direction prescribed by this Access Management Plan.

**Table 730.1**  
**Summary of 2020 Forest Road and Trail Designation**  
**for the Douglas County Forest <sup>(a)</sup>**

Road and Trail Classification	No. of Miles	Percent
HV and OHV use permitted	456.5	41.5
OHV use permitted <sup>(b)</sup>	252.6	23.0
HV and OHV use not permitted	361.9	32.9
Douglas County Wildlife Area <sup>(c)</sup>	19.0	1.7
Miscellaneous <sup>(d)</sup>	10.4	0.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,100.4</b>	<b>100</b>

- (a) Includes roads and trails managed by the DCFD located on County Forest lands.
- (b) Includes snowmobile, ATV, UTV, and/or OHM use.
- (c) Includes roads and trails managed by the WDNR located on County Forest lands within the DCWA.
- (d) Includes limited use designations not commonly used.

The primary goal in managing the on-going road and trail inventory program is to accurately depict the established routes and use designations that are available for access in the Forest. This information is the foundation for open road and trail density analysis for each area classification.

Table 730.2 is a summary of public roadways within or adjacent to County Forest land that are not managed by the DCFD but still provide Forest access. Use of these roadways is governed by statutes and regulations administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Douglas County Highway Department, or local town authorities.

**Table 730.2**  
**Summary of Municipal Public Roadways within or adjacent to the Douglas County Forest**

Public Roadway	Road Length	
	No. of Miles	Percent
US Highway	2.0	0.6
State Highway	6.3	1.8
County Highway	39.0	11.4
Town Road	296.3	86.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>343.6</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 730.3 summarizes the amount of County Forest land accessed by road and trail inventory data as reported in Tables 730.1 and 730.2. The figures represent the total amount of forest land within 0.25 mile, 0.50 mile, and 1 mile for each specific motorized road and trail classification. The area percentages are based on the total forest land base of 280,090 acres.

For example, the 0.50 area data can be interpreted as 58.7% of the total forest land base is located within 0.50 mile of a municipal road open to HV use. An additional 14.2% of the total forest land base is located within 0.50 mile of a forest road or trail open to both HV and OHV use. And an additional 9.8% of the total forest land base is located within 0.50 mile of a forest road or trail only open to OHV use. In conclusion, 82.7% of the total forest land base is located within 0.50 mile of a forest road or trail open to HV and/or OHV use.

The 0.25, 0.50, and 1 mile datasets are independent of each other. The data represents the total amount of forest area available for foot access from a road or trail in each particular motorized use designation. The data does not take into account landscape features such as potential obstructions or features that might impede foot access. However, the extensive number of such features were acknowledged in plan development.

**Table 730.3**  
**Summary of 2020 Forest Area Accessed by Road and Trail Designation**  
*(based on the total forest land base of 280,090 acres)*

Road and trail classification	Area within 0.25 mile		Area within 0.50 mile		Area within 1 mile	
	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent	Acres	Percent
HV use permitted <sup>(a)</sup>	96,675	34.5	164,415	58.7	240,188	85.7
HV and OHV use permitted <sup>(b)</sup>	53,407	19.1	39,829	14.2	14,664	5.2
OHV use permitted <sup>(c)</sup>	33,037	11.8	27,490	9.8	10,028	3.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>183,119</b>	<b>65.4</b>	<b>231,734</b>	<b>82.7</b>	<b>264,880</b>	<b>94.5</b>

(a) Municipal public roadway data from Table 730.2

(b) Forest road and trail data from Table 730.1

(c) Forest road and trail data from Table 730.1

## **735 ROUTE AND TRAIL DESIGNATION SYSTEM**

This Plan includes a route and trail use-designation system for balancing motorized recreational access on the County Forest. The four-type use-designation system is for management purposes only and does not replace any designation with respect to vehicle types or roadway classifications prescribed by State statute or local planning agencies.

The user-designation system is used by DCFD staff to determine specific, allowable motorized uses, if any, on individual roads and trails throughout the Forest. This system is closely tied to objectives in Sections 725 and 745 and facilitates the signage process for road and trail field identification (see Section 740).

Summer and winter recreational trail systems currently managed by the DCFD on both County-owned property and other ownerships are integrated with the use-designation system. Summer and winter trail systems that are managed by cooperating agencies are also integrated with the use-designation system.

State and County highways, town roads, and other roadways that are not under the authority of the DCFD will be classified separately and are addressed to a limited degree in this Plan. OHV access on those roads and maintenance responsibilities are governed by statutes and regulations administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Douglas County Highway Department, regional town authorities, utility corporations, or other local planning authorities.

### **735.1 Highway Vehicle Access (Permitted)**

This designation generally applies to highways and roads that are managed by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Douglas County Highway Department, or local township authorities. These are public roadways that are adjacent to or directly intersect County Forest land and that are open to HV traffic as governed by statutes and regulations. Motorized recreational OHV use of roads and routes under this designation is subject to prevailing legislation and regulations of the appropriate governing body.

### **735.2 Highway and Off Highway Vehicle Access (Permitted)**

This designation applies to roads and trails located on the County Forest where both HV and OHV use is permitted. Managed by the DCFD, these well-established routes generally are located on stable soils, have been built to higher construction standards, and have the ability to support frequent motorized use. These routes may be County Forest Roads, former logging roads, abandoned recreational trail routes, or other historic travel routes. They generally receive limited to moderate use. Restrictions regarding motorized recreational access considered as part of this designation include:

- (1) Seasonal restrictions related to time of year where the open and closed seasons will be assigned specific calendar dates in a given year.

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- (2) Use restrictions related to forest management operations or other purposes where the road would be closed temporarily for public safety concerns and/or to establish and/or repair itself once operations have been completed.
- (3) Existing recreational vehicle trails that are funded by the State and maintained for public motorized use for specific vehicle types during certain times of the year (e.g. winter snowmobile trail system and summer ATV/UTV trail system).
- (4) User-interpreted limitations related to environmental impacts and land capabilities to sustain various motor-vehicle activities (e.g. site sensitivity, erosion potential, and snowpack).

Other limitations are inherent of the conditions of the particular road or trail, type of vehicle being used and its equipment options, and experience of the operator. Roads and trails under this designation may or may not be maintained and their use is solely at the risk and discretion of the individual.

### **735.3 Off Highway Vehicle Access (Permitted)**

This designation applies to roads and trails located on the County Forest where motorized recreational access is limited to only OHV use. Two general categories of the routes included in this designation are the winter snowmobile and summer ATV/UTV trails and certain general woods roads and trails scattered throughout the Forest.

State-funded and non-funded club partnership recreational trail routes are designed to attract the majority of OHV use as opportunities for destination travel and may take the form of regional corridor trails or local loop trail systems. They have designated primary uses, are well-signed, monitored and maintained, and are advertised in local and regional OHV publications. User trail maps are published annually for these routes. Both State-funded routes and partnership club trails are incorporated into this designation.

The woods roads and trails included in this designation generally are located on sites that are more at risk to damage by heavy vehicles, have been built to lower construction standards, and/or are located on soils that cannot support repeated HV use. These routes can be former logging roads, abandoned recreational trail routes, or other historic travel routes. They often dead-end, generally receive limited use, and are subject to the following motorized recreational access restrictions:

- (1) Seasonal limitations related to time of year where the open and closed seasons will be assigned specific calendar dates in a given year.
- (2) Use restrictions related to forest management operations or other purposes where the road would be closed temporarily for public safety concerns and/or to establish and/or repair itself once operations have been completed.
- (3) User-interpreted limitations related to environmental impacts and land capabilities to sustain various recreational motor-vehicle activities (e.g. site sensitivity, erosion potential, and snowpack).

Other limitations are inherent of the conditions of the particular road or trail, type of vehicle being used and its equipment options, and experience of the operator. Other than the State-funded and non-funded club partnership recreational trails, roads and trails under this designation are not maintained and their use is solely at the risk and discretion of the individual.

#### **735.4 Motorized Recreational Access (Not Permitted)**

This designation applies to roads and trails that are not available for public, recreational motorized vehicle use as the result of DCFD resource management policy and direction prescribed by this Plan.

Motorized access on all roads and trails under this designation is prohibited with the exception for persons conducting official DCFD business and/or on-going authorized forest management activities, disabled persons with valid permit, or when motorized access is required for emergency purposes. Included in this designation, are older roads and trails not identified with any use designation that have naturally revegetated with shrub and trees species to the point where they are unable to reasonably accommodate motor vehicle use. In addition to a closed use designation, many roads and trails in this designation have a blockage device installed physically restricting motorized travel (e.g. earth berm, gate, etc.). Foot travel at the risk and discretion of the individual is encouraged on these non-maintained roads and trails.

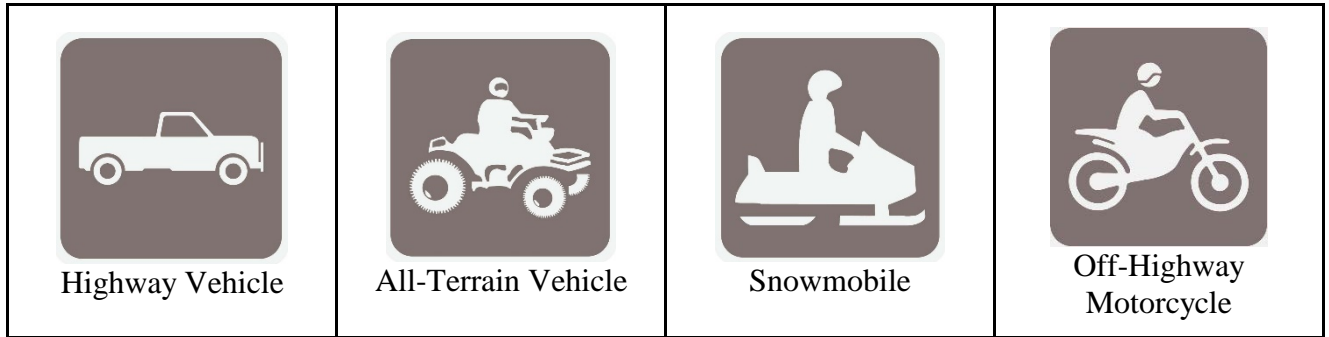
### **740 SIGNAGE**

This section describes the uniform policy with respect to use designation signing roads and trails within the County Forest. Also included are examples of the different sign symbols and sign design images. These guidelines pertain to all roads and trails under the direct authority of the DCFD excluding all funded and non-funded winter snowmobile and summer ATV/UTV trails. Signing on these trail networks is completed according to State statute requirements. The WDNR trail signing handbook shall also be consulted.

#### **740.1 Sign Information and Symbol Meanings**

The following symbols will be incorporated into use designation signs (Figures 740.1 and 740.2).

**Figure 740.1  
Designated Authorized-Use Sign Symbols**



**Figure 740.2  
Designated Unauthorized-Use Sign Symbols**



Information on use-designation signs will include one or more of the following:

- (1) The type of trail or route.
- (2) Symbols of permitted and/or restricted motorized uses.
- (3) Seasonal dates associated with permitted and/or restricted motorized uses.

Additional informational signs will be used where appropriate and in conjunction with use-designation signs (e.g. resource damage warning, illegal trail use, etc.).

#### **740.2 Signage Guidelines**

- (1) All trail signing activities shall be completed by DCFD staff or authorized designees.
- (2) All official road or trail use-designation signs shall meet standards for shape, color, size, and reflectorization.
- (3) All signs shall be affixed to a metal or wooden post when possible.
- (4) Posts may be upgraded to heavier metal, wood, or concrete posts and hardware may be upgraded at sites as necessary.

- (5) No road or trail use-designation sign should be placed more than 6 feet from the edge of a road or trail.
- (6) Signs and posts should be placed carefully with regard to brush line and line of sight to maximize visibility.
- (7) Road and trail signs should be placed to the right of the trail when possible to conform with the standard placement of public highway signs. Restrictive signs should be placed in the center of the road or trail when feasible.
- (8) All County Forest Roads should be signed with road name signs. Standard construction shall consist of wooden signs that have the name of the particular road routed into the face. The standard color scheme should be a brown sign with yellow lettering.
- (9) Global positioning technology will be used to locate signs for maintenance purposes and inventory records.

### **740.3 Road and Trail Blockage Devices**

Roads and trails on the County Forest that are restricted or closed with respect to designated motorized uses and/or seasonal use periods may have certain structures installed to further prevent unauthorized use. These structures include gates, berms, and any other devices to physically obstruct access. Most of these structures will be earth berms placed at that point on the road or trail where use becomes restricted. Berms covering the entire width of the road or trail are intended to obstruct all motorized access and close the road. Gates will be located and installed on primary access roads that are frequently used by DCFD staff where berms would be impractical and also on certain trails where access is restricted on a seasonal basis. As with berms, all gates on the Forest are used to obstruct all motorized access and close the road or trail. Sign identification is the primary method for providing clear user guidance with regard to closed motorized use designations.

## **745 CONDITIONS AND OBJECTIVES PERTAINING TO ALL AREAS**

### **745.1 Conditions for All Areas**

- (1) All recreation on the Douglas County Forest, including forest access, is regulated by County Land Recreation Ordinance #7.2.
- (2) Motorized travel on any permanently, temporarily, or seasonally closed road or trail or in any closed area of the Forest is prohibited. Foot travel is permitted on all areas of the Forest.
- (3) No cross-country motorized travel is allowed at any time for any purpose on the Forest, including for game retrieval or trail connecting purposes.
- (4) It is prohibited to construct, alter, re-route, or otherwise change existing roads or trails on the Forest. The use of illegally established, located or constructed trails by all persons is prohibited at all times.



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- (5) All official signs and road blockage devices will be installed by DCFD personnel or their agents. It is prohibited to remove, alter, damage, modify, or otherwise circumvent any sign, gate, rock, berm, or other device placed by Douglas County.
- (6) All vehicles not officially licensed or registered by the State of Wisconsin as a highway or recreational vehicle are prohibited on the Forest.
- (7) It is prohibited to block in any manner a forest access road or trail which obstructs access by others.
- (8) It is prohibited to operate a motorized vehicle with studded tires (excluding snowmobiles) on County Forest land.
- (9) Equestrian, mountain bike, dogsled, cross-country ski, ski-joring, and snowshoe travel are permitted on all roads and trails throughout the Forest unless posted and/or closed to a particular use.
- (10) No cross-country equestrian or mountain bike travel is allowed at any time on the Forest.
- (11) Authorized persons performing official work or conducting official duties may receive permission from the DCFD to use a HV and/or OHV on closed roads or trails.
- (12) Persons with disabilities can apply for a disability access permit with the DCFD for HV and/or OHV access to specific closed roads or trails.
- (13) An access permit is required to use County Forest land to gain access to other land ownership or for commercial access purposes. See Section 520.7 for additional information on access permits.
- (14) It is prohibited to operate any motor vehicle or highway vehicle in excess of 20,000 pounds on the Forest without permission from the DCFD (excluding use on official County Forest Roads).
- (15) The DCFD may, at its own discretion, open, close, or otherwise change any road or trail use designation in accordance with guidance and direction provided by this Plan.

### **745.1.1 County Forest Road System**

- (1) All Douglas County Forest Roads not designated as part of the snowmobile and winter ATV/UTV trail network may be closed temporarily during the spring break-up season. Roads will be inspected on a case-by-case basis and closed/reopened by sign notification as conditions warrant.
- (2) All Douglas County Forest Roads designated as part of the snowmobile and winter ATV/UTV trail network are closed to HV use annually from December 15 to April 30 and closed annually to OHV use from the official winter trail closing date to April 30.
- (3) All Douglas County Forest Roads designated as part of the winter cross-country ski trail network are closed to both HV and OHV use annually from December 15 to April 30.

**745.1.2 Recreational Trail System**

- (1) All County trails designated as part of the snowmobile and winter ATV/UTV trail network are closed to HV use year-round and open to OHV use only when the winter trail network is officially open or as signed.
- (2) All County trails designated as part of both the snowmobile and winter ATV/UTV trail and summer ATV trail networks are closed from the official winter trail closing date to the official summer trail opening date.

**745.1.3 Cross-Country Ski Trail System**

- (1) All County trails designated as part of the winter cross-country ski trail network are closed to HV use annually from December 15 to April 30 and closed to all OHV use year-round.
- (2) All County trails designated as part of the winter cross-country ski trail and summer ATV trail networks are closed to HV and snowmobile use year-round and closed to ATV/UTV use annually from December 15 to the official summer trail opening date.

**745.1.4 General Forest Access Road System**

- (1) Roads with no restricted sign, berm, gate, or other blockage device are open to both HV and OHV motorized use.
- (2) All general forest access roads that are closed to HV and OHV use year-round will be signed and blocked by a gate, berm, rocks, stumps or wood debris, or similar blockage device.
- (3) All general forest access roads that are closed to HV use year-round and annually open to OHV use from August 1 to March 14 will be signed accordingly and may have a road blockage device installed.
- (4) All general forest access roads that lack a sign but have a gate, berm, rocks, stumps or wood debris, or any other blockage device are closed to HV and OHV use year-round.
- (5) All general forest access roads being used for forest operations will be evaluated for general public motorized use allowances on a case-by-case basis. Some of these roads will be temporarily closed to both HV and OHV use during active operations for public safety concerns.
- (6) All general forest access roads open to HV and/or OHV use that are being used for illegal activity and/or are experiencing user-caused damage are subject to immediate closure. A warning sign may or may not be utilized prior to the closure warning users of the consequences of continued use.

**745.2 Objectives for All Areas**

- (1) Locate use designation signs on roads and trails using the signage objectives presented in this Plan.
- (2) Designate all Douglas County Forest Roads by name with a wooden sign following the traditional standard of routing letters into the wood. The letters will be yellow against a brown background.
- (3) The entire Douglas County Forest road and trail system is open to all County administered forest management activities.
- (4) Continue coordinating with recreational user groups, clubs, and cooperators to maintain and/or expand the summer and winter trails networks where feasible and appropriate.
- (5) Promote and encourage annual voluntary forest clean-up efforts by individuals and different user groups.
- (6) Provide appropriate parking areas and turnarounds on roads where motorized access is restricted.
- (7) Where appropriate and necessary, improve primary and secondary forest access roads to better sustain motorized use, and develop parking areas and turnarounds to disperse user recreation pressure.
- (8) Rehabilitate unimproved lake and stream accesses to minimize littering, pollution, silting and shoreline damage. If damage continues or escalates consider closing these areas to public use.
- (9) The use of any road or trail on the County Forest must not result in damage to riparian and/or wetland resources or cause shoreline erosion as determined by the DCFD.
- (10) Close all roads and trails that cannot sustain motorized use.
- (11) Continually adjust and adapt County Land Recreation Ordinance #7.2 to current user patterns to best protect County Forest resources and user experiences.
- (12) Continue coordinating with the Douglas County Sheriff's Department, Douglas County District Attorney's office, and partnering agencies for more efficient and effective Ordinance #7.2 enforcement efforts.
- (13) Identify locations where illegal access and/or use activities are occurring and promptly report to the County Sheriff's Department.
- (14) Coordinate with the County Recreation Officer and Sheriff's Department in scheduling Deputy Enforcement Days. Continue supporting these efforts by allocating annual funding to pay for the additional wages.
- (15) Propose hiring a second County Recreation Officer with the Sheriff's Department.

- (16) Encourage users who observe or are aware of violations to promptly report them. Provide an anonymous method for violation reporting.
- (17) Acquire and utilize surveillance equipment in areas experiencing use violations.
- (18) Provide regular, current trail opening, closing, and condition updates on the DCFD website and telephone recreation trails hotline.
- (19) Annually evaluate additions, reductions, and modifications to the Douglas County Forest Road network and review the maintenance program for improvement opportunities.
- (20) When feasible, budget for and obtain the services of partnering agencies and independent contractors for road and trail construction and maintenance activities.
- (21) Attempt to secure permanent easements or purchase lands as necessary to ensure access to County Forest lands and/or trail use.

## **750 ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Consistent with applicable State and Federal laws, the DCFD recognizes the desire of persons with permanent or long-term disabilities to operate a HV and/or OHV on the County Forest.

The DCFD offers a permit for disabled persons to operate a motorized vehicle in closed areas of the Forest. Currently, persons holding a valid Class A, B (issued for more than one season), or C disability permit issued by the State can request and apply for a permit. Applicants and valid permit holders must meet all permit requirements and applications are approved and permits issued on a case-by-case basis. No permit will be issued for use in a Low Motorized Area or on any road that is highly susceptible to environmental damage or poses a risk to public safety. Access is restricted to established routes and all cross-country travel is strictly prohibited for any purpose. Motorized vehicle use is also subject to all State law and County Ordinance regulations, and all vehicles must be operated in such a way as to not cause environmental damage.

## **755 EDUCATION**

A primary goal of this Access Management Plan is to increase public awareness of the land and natural resources of the County Forest and to reinforce the ethical and responsible use of the Forest by abiding by rules and regulations. This section provides the on-going public educational opportunities offered by the DCFD and cooperating recreational groups and public interest organizations.

### **755.1 Objectives**

The following objectives were developed to assist with the on-going public education component of this Plan:

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- (1) Development and production of a brochure addressing the topic of access management in the Forest. The brochures should provide information on: (a) ethical considerations surrounding social interactions between motorized and non-motorized users, (b) responsible use, (c) personal safety, (d) environmental protection, and (e) natural resource management.
- (2) Production of annual winter snowmobile and ATV/UTV and summer ATV/UTV trail maps made available to the public and distributed as widely as possible.
- (3) Continued installation of use designation signs that indicate particular motorized recreational access restrictions on specific roads or trails throughout the Forest. Signs will inform users of motorized recreational use restrictions on roads and trails by type of use and seasonal time period.
- (4) Staff from the DCFD, WDNR, and the County Sheriff's Department will continue to communicate the policies of access management with area users through personal contact.
- (5) Staff from the DCFD and WDNR will continue to communicate to the County Sheriff's Department and District Attorney's Office the importance of the role of law enforcement in ensuring the long-term success of this Plan.

### **755.2 Plan Availability**

Copies of the finalized Access Management Plan will be available at the DCFD office and posted on the County website. Updated annual trail maps and informational brochures also will be available at the DCFD office, WDNR offices, local area businesses, County Visitors Center, and on the County website.

### **755.3 Douglas County Recreation Officer Role**

The role of the Douglas County Recreation Officer is to assist in informing and educating the general public about the Access Management Plan. Through patrols and individual user contact, the Recreation Officer plays a vital role in educating the public. DCFD staff will regularly coordinate with the Recreation Officer to maintain consistency in serving the public. The Recreation Officer also plays a primary role in the following areas:

- (1) Contact citizens and users while on patrol; discuss access management policies, distribute trail maps, explain rules and regulations, etc.
- (2) Conduct ATV/UTV/snowmobile training classes; incorporate the Access Management Plan into the classes and emphasize the significance and importance of the Plan.
- (3) Provide assistance and public outreach to citizen and service groups such as sportsman's, snowmobile, ATV/UTV, and wildlife clubs.
- (4) Assist the DCFD in the on-going further development of County ordinances.

- (5) Coordinate interagency patrol and enforcement activities throughout the Forest as warranted.
- (6) Educate and train other County law enforcement personnel on the elements of the Access Management Plan, applicable ordinances, and pertinent State laws.

#### **755.4 Douglas County Forestry Department Staff Role**

DCFD staff will continue to assist educating the general public on the Access Management Plan. In many cases, DCFD staff will be the first contact with users regarding the Plan. All staff members will be educated on the Plan and instructed to provide the public with accurate and timely information in a consistent manner.

DCFD staff will use professional signing techniques to inform individuals of motorized recreational use restrictions on roads and trails. Public service announcements, recreational trails hotline and DCFD website may all be used to inform the general public of trail openings and closings and communicate other important access management issues.

#### **755.5 Local WDNR Staff Role**

The role of local WDNR personnel, including WDNR Conservation Wardens, will be to support and assist the DCFD with all aspects of the Access Management Plan. Upon request, WDNR staff will help with on-going road maintenance activities, use designation sign installation, and continual evaluation of access management needs across the Forest. The WDNR will also play an important role with respect to on-going public education efforts through citizen and user contacts.

#### **755.6 Organized User Groups Role**

The DCFD will coordinate with organizations such as sportsman's groups, snowmobile and ATV clubs, and other user based groups to educate both the general public and their own members on access management in the Count Forest. Many of these groups offer their own various education efforts, e.g., training classes on boating , ATV/UTV'ing, snowmobiling, and hunting safety. These classes educate the general public on land ethics and the responsible use of natural resources and also offer the opportunity to provide important information on access management in the Forest.

### **760 ENFORCEMENT**

Success of the Access Management Plan requires the enactment of appropriate regulatory mechanisms to help ensure the long-term viability of the Plan and the realization of recreational and resource management objectives within the Forest.

### **760.1 Objectives**

The enforcement objectives of the Plan are to:

- (1) Protect the public, employees, natural resources, and property under the jurisdiction of the DCFD.
- (2) Investigate and enforce applicable laws and regulations that affect the County Forest.
- (3) Prevent criminal violations by informing and educating visitors and the general public of applicable laws and regulations.

### **760.2 Citizen Involvement**

As one of the primary enforcement goals, the DCFD strongly encourages a high degree of citizen involvement with enforcement. Citizens who observe a violation should promptly report it directly to the County Sheriff's Department at (715) 394-4432 or the DCFD at (715) 378-2219. If possible, users should complete a violation reporting form and submit it to the DCFD. Forms are available on the DCFD website and can be completed anonymously. Reports should include a detailed description of the violation, including the specific location of occurrence and any observation linking the violation to an individual.

### **760.3 Role of the Douglas County Recreation Officer and the Sheriff's Department**

The Douglas County Recreation Officer is a fully credentialed Douglas County Sheriff's Deputy. The primary responsibility of the Recreation Officer is to enforce ATV/UTV, snowmobile, and boating rules and regulations and County Ordinances. The Recreation Officer patrols trails, roads, and lakes by vehicle, ATV/UTV, snowmobile, or boat. The position also enforces State laws and County and City of Superior ordinances on public and private property. This includes enforcing ordinances related to the County Forest and County-owned parks.

The Recreation Officer also may be called upon to respond to emergencies, accidents, and violent or abusive criminal acts, and will enforce traffic laws and make warrant arrests.

The Recreation Officer closely works with City of Superior police officers, WDNR Conservation Wardens, Minnesota Conservation Wardens, Wisconsin State patrol officers, and other law enforcement officials in the course of his or her duties. The position also works in close conjunction with DCFD staff on issues directly related to the Forest and parks.

County Sheriff's Deputies also enforce County ordinances and State laws. They may be requested to both County Forest land and/or County Parks to respond to complaints or reported violations. Deputies also routinely patrol the Forest and County parks.

Since 2008, the DCFD annual budget has included a separate allocation for additional deputy work on the Forest and in the parks. The purpose of this funding is to enhance enforcement efforts during periods of especially high use (e.g. July 4th Holiday, big game hunting seasons, special events, etc.). Scheduling is coordinated by the Recreation Officer where additional overtime shifts are posted and

made available to all deputies on a first-come first-served basis. Deputies working these shifts are 100% assigned to the Forest and/or parks. Since inception, this program has proven very successful and is planned to be continued.

#### **760.4 WDNR Conservation Warden's Role**

WDNR Conservation Wardens are primarily responsible for enforcing State law. They do not have jurisdiction to enforce County ordinances. Often they work in close conjunction with the County Sheriff's Department, reporting ordinance violations while enforcing State statutes.

Conservation Wardens have statutory authority to enforce State laws related to hunting, fishing, snowmobile and ATV/UTV use, boating, and environmental protection on all State lands. Regarding recreational vehicles, Wardens enforce laws and regulations related to helmet use, registration, age restrictions, equipment violations, intoxicated use, reckless operation, and trespass on private land. Wardens cannot enforce local ordinances related to speeding or illegal operation on County Forest land.

Wardens also may act on specific requests from local law enforcement agencies if a crime or violation is observed in their presence. The County Sheriff's Department may request that a Warden take action when a violation of a county ordinance has been observed. They are authorized to take immediate action should a violation of State law occur, e.g., damage to property.

Wardens may be asked to participate in recreation-related patrols coordinated by the County Recreation Officer or other Sheriff's Department deputies.

#### **760.5 Role of the Douglas County District Attorney**

The Douglas County District Attorney's Office is responsible for prosecuting violations of State law and County ordinances. The office acts on reports of violations forwarded by the County Sheriff's Department, WDNR officials, and other local law enforcement agencies.

The District Attorney's Office prosecutes violations related to hunting, fishing, snowmobile and ATV/UTV use, boating, and environmental protection on all County properties, including County Forest lands. Convictions for violations can result in forfeitures and/or fines, revocation of hunting or fishing privileges, and possibly incarceration.

#### **760.6 Role of the Douglas County Forestry Department Staff**

The role of the DCFD staff is to assist and support all aspects of law enforcement on the County Forest. In some minor cases, staff members may be in the position to identify a violation and take the necessary steps to address the issue themselves. If a significant violation of a County ordinance is observed, staff is instructed to record pertinent information and report the violation to the proper authorities. If a citizen observes and reports a violation to a staff member, that staff member will instruct the person on the proper procedure for reporting the violation with a law enforcement officer. Staff will follow through with all County ordinance violation tips provided by citizens in a



timely manner.

### **760.7 Role of Local WDNR Staff**

The role of local WDNR personnel is to support and assist DCFD staff, the County District Attorneys Office, and the County Sheriff's Department in all law enforcement efforts.

As requested, WDNR staff will assist the DCFD in enforcing County ordinances that are outside of the WDNR's jurisdiction. WDNR staff will take appropriate actions based on what is considered safe and reasonable in identifying, reporting, and documenting County ordinance violations.

## **765 FUNDING**

The major sources of potential funding available to Douglas County to manage and administer the Access Management Plan are State and Federal aids and grants, revenue from the sale of County timber stumpage, conservation organization grants, tax levies, user fees, and donations from clubs and users. It may also be possible to use funds from other sources to implement, maintain, and enforce the Plan.

The following are the primary potential funding sources:

### **765.1 County Forest Road Aids**

*(per statutory authority 86.315 (4)(a))*

County Forest Road Aid is available through the State to help defray costs for the improvement and maintenance of public roads within the County Forest. As of 2018, the County is to receive \$351 per mile of qualifying forest road to be paid each year on March 10th. The aid is prorated if the amount appropriated in the State budget is insufficient to support the \$351 per mile payment. To qualify, the road must be:

- (1) Within the County Forest.
- (2) At least 20 feet wide with a drivable surface width of at least 16 feet.
- (3) Open and used for travel.
- (4) Part of a Comprehensive County Forest Land-Use Plan approved by the County Board and WDNR.

County Forest Roads are not eligible for General Transportation Aid.

### **765.2 All-Terrain Vehicle and Utility Terrain Vehicle Trails**

*(per statutory authority 23.33 and Wis. Admin. Code NR 64)*

State funding is available to the County to acquire, insure, develop, and maintain ATV trails, areas, and routes. Levels of reimbursement vary according to the project and trail type. The following are eligible levels of reimbursement:

- (1) ATV/UTV trails available for spring, summer, and fall riding may be reimbursed up to 100 percent of eligible maintenance costs (up to \$600 per mile for ATV and \$200 per mile for UTV).
- (2) ATV/UTV trails available for winter riding may be reimbursed up to 100 percent of eligible maintenance costs (up to \$100 per mile for ATV and \$100 per mile for UTV).
- (3) Development of ATV/UTV trails and areas may be reimbursed up to 100 percent of eligible costs.
- (4) Major rehabilitation of bridge structures or trails may be reimbursed up to 100 percent of eligible costs.
- (5) Maintenance of ATV/UTV intensive use areas may be reimbursed up to 50 percent of eligible costs.

The WDNR allocates funds in accordance with the following ranked priorities:

- (1) Maintenance of existing, approved trails, areas, and routes.
- (2) Liability insurance acquisition.
- (3) Easement acquisition.
- (4) Major rehabilitation of bridge structures or trails.
- (5) Land acquisition and development of new ATV/UTV trails and areas.

### **765.3 Snowmobile Trail Aids**

*(per statutory authority 23.09 and chap. 350 and Wis. Admin. Code NR 6)*

State funding is available to the County for well-signed and well-groomed snowmobile trails for public use and enjoyment. Eligible projects include:

- (1) Maintenance of trails (includes signing, brushing and grooming of snowmobile trails, purchase of liability insurance, and purchase of short-term easements).
- (2) Development of trails (includes general trail construction, bridges, gates, and signs).
- (3) Major rehabilitation of existing snowmobile bridges.
- (4) Rehabilitation of existing trail segments.

The County is eligible to receive reimbursement for up to 100 percent of:

- (1) Approved maintenance costs (up to \$300 per mile).
- (2) Development costs.
- (3) Major bridge rehabilitation costs.
- (4) Trail rehabilitation costs.

### **765.4 Annual Budget**

Funding also is available through the annual Douglas County budgeting process. The DCFD is responsible for developing its own budget, contingent upon approval by the FPRC, Administration Committee, and the County Board of Supervisors.

### **765.5 Conservation Organizations**

Many conservation organizations provide grant funding for the management and protection of natural resources. The Ruffed Grouse Society is an example of an organization that has provided project funding to the DCFD in the past. Funding proposals must typically meet grant objectives and can only be used in accordance with rules of the grant.

## **770 REVIEW PROCESS**

The following objectives will ensure that the Access Management Plan continues to address the needs of the access management on the County Forest into the future:

### **770.1 Objectives**

- (1) The Access Management Plan will be reviewed as necessary and evaluated for effectiveness in meeting goals of the Plan. DCFD staff and local staff from the WDNR will monitor motorized recreational use levels and patterns to determine the effectiveness of the Plan.
- (2) Any changes to the Plan will be proposed by official plan amendment and are subject to FPRC approval. Any proposed plan amendments will include an opportunity for review by the general public at regularly scheduled meetings of the FPRC.
- (3) The principles, objectives, and performance measures developed as standard requirements for forest certification shall be included in all on-going plan review. The Plan shall maintain forest certification program compliance.
- (4) DCFD supervisory staff will review all road and trail use designations on an on-going basis for Forest-wide consistency according to established access management policies and use designation criteria. Use designations may be altered in response to changing needs or circumstances within the context of the Douglas County Forest Comprehensive Land-Use Plan.
- (5) The County Recreation Officer will monitor the effects of, interact with and educate the general public concerning rules and regulations of access management in the Forest, specifically focusing on enforcement activities in accordance with plan objectives.
- (6) Funding be allocated as needed to continue managing and administering the Access Management Plan.

### **770.2 Approval of the Douglas County Forest Access Management Plan**

The Access Management Plan is subject to approval by the Douglas County Board of Supervisors and was developed as part of the Douglas County Forest Comprehensive Land-Use Plan. The Plan will then be presented to the WDNR for final approval.

### **770.3 On-going Public Involvement**

The DCFD and WDNR will continue cooperating in promoting awareness of the Access Management Plan and encouraging public feedback.

### **770.4 On-going Environmental Analysis**

The effectiveness of the Plan in protecting and minimizing adverse environmental impacts to the County Forest will be continually monitored. Roads and trails open to motorized uses will be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that BMP's for Water Quality Guidelines are being adequately met and any drainage structures are functioning properly. The DCFD will provide on-going environmental analysis of the environmental effects access management is having on the County Forest.

### **770.5 Forest Certification**

As forest certification continues to expand in both scope and complexity, the Access Management Plan will be required to adapt to new program standards and expectations. Uses of the Forest will need to be consistent with the principles, objectives and performance measures required by certification. The DCFD is committed to following certification program standards on behalf of the citizens of Douglas County.

### **770.6 Regulatory Advancements**

The development of new rules and regulations are essential if the objectives of the Access Management Plan are to be achieved. Drafting new ordinances or revisions to existing ordinances will be necessary to adapt to changing needs and policies while consistently maintaining a high level of Forest stewardship. Penalties should be further developed with the overall goal of discouraging violations.