

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Laws of Minnesota 2016 Accomplishment Plan



Date: July 22, 2016

Program or Project Title: Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project

Funds Recommended: \$ 3,150,000

Manager's Name: Tim Terrill

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Legislative Citation: ML 2016, Ch. 172, Art. 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 5(c)

Appropriation Language: \$2,105,000 the second year is to the commissioner of natural resources for agreements to acquire lands in fee in the Mississippi Headwaters and for agreements as follows: \$76,000 to the Mississippi Headwaters Board; and \$2,029,000 to The Trust for Public Land. \$1,045,000 the second year is to the Board of Water and Soil Resources to acquire permanent conservation easements and to restore wildlife habitat, of which up to \$78,000 is to establish a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed acquisitions must be included as part of the required accomplishment plan.

County Locations: Aitkin, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, and Hubbard.

Regions in which work will take place:

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Northern Forest

Activity types:

- Protect in Easement
- Protect in Fee

Priority resources addressed by activity:

- Forest
- Prairie

Abstract:

The Mississippi Headwaters Board will work with conservation partners to protect and preserve targeted habitat in high quality shoreland areas and provide access on the Mississippi River, headwater's reservoirs, and connecting corridor tributaries through fee title and permanent easements.

Design and scope of work:

The Mississippi River is known as "America's River." It is the largest river in North America, and provides drinking water, industry, and recreation for millions of people, and is the embodiment of Minnesota's outdoor traditions. Strategic and well placed public ownership is essential to maintaining the hunting, fishing, and game habitat along the Mississippi River. Public lands adjacent to private property are in danger of losing habitat connectivity because of the continued development pressures on private lands which result in further fragmentation. Land accessibility to these lands is essential to ensuring high quality, memorable experiences while hunting and fishing

within the Mississippi River Corridor. Riparian corridors and tributaries are of particular value to resident and migrating wildlife populations, providing connectivity to multiple habitat types.

As loss of habitat in western Minnesota and the Dakotas occurs, and climate change causes the drying up of existing wetlands, the Mississippi flyway will take on a more important role. The Mississippi flyway is the longest migration route of any in the western hemisphere, and is well timbered and watered to afford ideal conditions to support migrating birds. The Mississippi Headwaters supports more than 350 species of animals, mammals, and birds and is an important national treasure which must be preserved.

The Mississippi Headwaters Board will use targeted land acquisitions and permanent conservation easements to accomplish the goals of this proposal. All acquisitions will be approved by the local governmental unit and the Mississippi Headwaters Board where the property exists. The Mississippi river and its connecting tributaries and headwaters lakes are essential to wildlife, bird, and waterfowl transportation and sustainability. The Mississippi Headwaters Board will work with the Trust for Public Land to protect the priority lands using fee title acquisitions; and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the counties of Clearwater, Beltrami, Hubbard, Cass, Itasca, Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Morrison to implement the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program through the Board of Water and Soil Resources to gain permanent conservation easements. These actions will protect against fragmentation of forest land, and provide access to existing public land. Parcels identified as potential acquisitions of the Mississippi river are shown on the attached map. The Mississippi Headwaters Board will administer, provide updated reports to the council, coordinate efforts, and develop a consistent process that utilizes county support to ensure that the program and spirit of this proposal is met. The Department of Natural Resources or individual counties will hold the fee title acquisitions, and the Board of Water and Soil Resources will hold the permanent easements. A local Project Technical Committee will review potential acquisitions and easements after ranking is concluded.

This Mississippi Headwaters Board has developed 4 priorities for acquiring land.

1. The acquired parcels or easements will be targeted toward the Mississippi River; precise in protecting access to public lands; and provide multiple benefits such as hunting, fishing, and outdoor heritage opportunities.
2. The acquired parcels or easements must meet the Mississippi Headwaters Board natural value criteria of identifying and promoting protection of critical habitat flora and fauna as described in the Mississippi Headwaters Board Comprehensive Management Plan.
3. Acquisition and easement priorities will focus on parcels that provide access and are adjacent to existing County, State, and Federal public lands along the Mississippi River to increase habitat and corridor connectivity.
4. Parcels will be ranked by technical committee, and a brought before the Mississippi Headwaters Board for final approval. Parcels will be ranked according to habitat, public access, parcel location, parcel size and cost, and supporting plans.

During the spring of 2015 the MHB Executive Director Tim Terrill visited all eight joint powers board member counties to share the new direction the MHB was taking with regard to river protection. This "Move the Needle" campaign was well received by all of the constituent counties. These public presentations resulted in very positive local media coverage.

The Nature Conservancy has been coordinating county, state, and federal partners in addition to the non-profit conservation community to develop a science supported decision support tool to help guide water protection priorities in the Mississippi Headwaters region. This group called the North Central Conservation Roundtable (NCCR) completed the prioritization tool such that it can be used in conjunction with the MHB river corridor assessment data recently developed in 2013-14. The NCCR continues to meet quarterly in an effort to coordinate partners, programs, and opportunities to protect forest and water resources in the Headwaters region to maximize hunting and fishing habitat.

How does the request address MN habitats that have: historical value to fish and wildlife, wildlife species of greatest conservation need, MN County Biological Survey data, and/or rare, threatened and endangered species inventories:

The areas targeted by this proposal will strategically protect the habitat and connectivity for fish and game using permanent conservation easements and fee title acquisition to target riparian forest, wetland complexes, tributary confluences, and wild rice communities along the Mississippi river, headwater's reservoirs, and connecting corridors and tributaries. Land conversion and forest fragmentation have a threaten on habitat, corridor connectivity, and aquatic function on both land and water in this area.

What is the nature of urgency and why it is necessary to spend public money for this work as soon as possible:

The Mississippi river is the dominant river in the lakes tourism industry. This area is experiencing development pressure, and forest fragmentation from the economic decline of the timber industry.

Describe the science based planning and evaluation model used:

Zonation modeling that prioritizes fish and wildlife habitat along with water quality benefits will be utilized on a ranking sheet to help

locate areas that provide the best fish, wildlife, and game habitat. The Mississippi Headwaters sub-watershed prioritization model will be utilized to identify adjacent public land and access.

Which sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are applicable to this project:

- H2 Protect critical shoreland of streams and lakes
- H3 Improve connectivity and access to recreation

Which other plans are addressed in this proposal:

- Mississippi River Headwaters Comprehensive Plan
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this proposal:

Forest / Prairie Transition:

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

Northern Forest:

- Protect shoreland and restore or enhance critical habitat on wild rice lakes, shallow lakes, cold water lakes, streams and rivers, and spawning areas

Relationship to other funds:

- Clean Water Fund

Describe the relationship of the funds:

We intend in the future to explore ways to utilize the Clean Water Fund to address water quality issues to compliment this habitat effort.

How does this proposal accelerate or supplement your current efforts in this area:

The Mississippi Headwaters Board is a Joint Powers Board formed in 1980 to preserve the wild and scenic values of the Mississippi river. This proposal, coordinated and administered by the Mississippi Headwaters Board, will bring together state agencies, local governmental units, Comprehensive Water Plans, county government, Land Resource Plans, and nongovernmental organizations to provide a consistent and coordinated approach to permanent habitat preservation.

Describe the source and amount of non-OHF money spent for this work in the past:

Not Listed

How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended:

The BWSR easements are perpetual and will be monitored through the BWSR RIM easement monitoring process. Monitoring scheduling follows the RIM guidelines. Easements are inspected for the first five consecutive years beginning in the year after the easement is recorded. Thereafter, on-site inspections are performed every three years and compliance checks are performed in the other two years. Stewardship costs are part of this project and are calculated at \$5,000 per easement for 25 years.

The non-governmental organizations will transfer all fee title lands to the Dept. of Natural Resources or county for permanent stewardship. All land acquired by partners will meet the strategic missions of the DNR and counties who will own and manage the land. DNR acquired land will be required to develop a management plan consistent with their division priorities. The proposed parcels will be part of the state management system, being sustained and managed by local DNR Area staff involved in the partnership. Maintenance will be funded through the DNR budget, grants and funds provided by partners. Ongoing maintenance and monitoring will be arranged by acquiring entity.

Explain the things you will do in the future to maintain project outcomes:

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
2019	OHF	Work with landowners and agencies to determine interest and develop long term habitat priorities.	Utilize RIM program to maintain and monitor easements.	Perform on-site inspections for 5 consecutive years, and every 3 years thereafter.
2019	OHF	Work with landowners to determine interest and develop long term game, hunting and fishing priorities.	Work with Trust for Public Land to acquire parcels for fee title acquisitions.	Follow monitoring guidelines established by the DNR or Counties (depending on ownership) to monitor acquired parcels.

Activity Details:

If funded, this proposal will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056 - **Yes**

Will there be planting of corn or any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program - **Yes**

Explain

The primary purposes of WMAs are to develop and manage for the production of wildlife and for compatible outdoor recreation. To fulfill those goals, the DNR may use limited farming specifically to enhance or benefit the management of state lands for wildlife.

Lands proposed to be acquired as WMAs may utilize farming to prepare previously farmed sites for native plant seeding. This is a standard practice across the Midwest. On a small percentage of WMAs (less than 2.5%), DNR uses farming to provide a winter food source for a variety of wildlife species in agriculture-dominated landscapes largely devoid of winter food sources.

Are any of the crop types planted GMO treated - **No**

Will local government approval be sought prior to acquisition - **Yes**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Is this land currently open for hunting and fishing - **No**

Will the land be open for hunting and fishing after completion - **Yes**

Land conveyed to the Dept. of Natural Resources or counties will fall under management plans that allow for hunting and fishing opportunities.

Will the eased land be open for public use - **No**

Is the land you plan to acquire free of any other permanent protection - **Yes**

Are there currently trails or roads on any of the acquisitions on the parcel list - **Yes**

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

Informal trails on private property are typically used for personal access for hunting, fishing. Informal trails on Potlatch property are a remnant of forestry practices.

This appropriation is funding a program that will have a parcel list identified at a later time. Roads or trails are typically excluded from easement areas if they serve no beneficial purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring, or enforcement. Existing trails and roads are identified during the easement acquisition process. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are allowed to remain.

Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition - **Yes**

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

Land that is in an easement will be maintained by the landowner, and will be involved in a scheduled monitoring program by the County Soil & Water Conservation District. Land that is fee title acquired by the Dept. of Natural Resources will follow typical DNR management rules and monitoring plan. Land acquired by the county will follow a maintenance and monitoring plan developed by specific county forest resource plans.

For easements: This appropriation is funding a program that will have a parcel list identified at a later time. Roads or trails are typically excluded from the easement area if they serve no beneficial purpose to easement maintenance, monitoring, or enforcement. Existing trails and roads are identified during the easement acquisition process. Some roads and trails, such as agricultural field accesses, are

allowed to remain.

Will new trails or roads be developed as a result of the OHF acquisition - **Yes**

Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:

On easements, though uncommon, there could be a potential for new trails to be developed, if they contribute to easement maintenance or benefit the easement site (e.g. firebreaks, berm maintenance, etc). Unauthorized trails identified during the monitoring process are in violation of the easement.

No new trails are planned for fee acquisitions.

How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished:

The easements secured under this project will be managed as part of the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) RIM Reserve program that has over 6,500 easements currently in place. Easements are monitored annually for each of the first 5 years and then every 3rd year after that. BWSR, in cooperation with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), implement a stewardship process to track, monitor quality and assure compliance with easement terms.

Under the terms of the Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement program, landowners are required to maintain compliance with the easement. A conservation plan is developed with the landowner and maintained as part of each easement. Basic easement compliance costs are borne by the landowner, periodic enhancements may be cost shared from a variety of sources.

Lands acquired by counties will be managed utilizing individual county land management plans, and lands acquired by the DNR will be required to develop a management plan consistent with their division.

Accomplishment Timeline:

Activity	Approximate Date Completed
Partners- Landowner negotiations, due diligence, acquire land and convey to State or County	6/30/19
SWCDs- Complete conservation easements applications	6/30/19
BWSR- Process and acquire easements through the RIM program.	6/30/19
DNR, Counties- Acquire and manage land for habitat	6/30/19
MHB- Coordination, administration, reporting	11/1/19

Date of Final Report Submission: 11/1/2019

Federal Funding:

Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program - **No**

Outcomes:

Programs in the northern forest region:

- Increased availability and improved condition of riparian forests and other habitat corridors *An increase of lineal shoreland habitat permanently protected by easement or fee acquisition. An increase in the percent (%) of minor watersheds habitat being permanently protected.*

Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Rivers and streams provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west *An increase of lineal shoreland habitat permanently protected by easement or fee acquisition. An increase in the percent (%) of minor watersheds habitat being permanently protected.*

Budget Spreadsheet

Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan

How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount

Work for easements and acquisitions will be scaled down, and each partner will be given an allocation on an agreed upon amount.

Total Amount of Request: \$ 3150000

Budget and Cash Leverage

BudgetName	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$380,500	\$124,800	private	\$505,300
Contracts	\$39,000	\$0		\$39,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	\$1,401,000	\$0		\$1,401,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Easement Acquisition	\$888,900	\$0		\$888,900
Easement Stewardship	\$78,000	\$0		\$78,000
Travel	\$9,100	\$0		\$9,100
Professional Services	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Direct Support Services	\$65,400	\$63,900	private	\$129,300
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Capital Equipment	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	\$1,500	\$0		\$1,500
Supplies/Materials	\$1,600	\$0		\$1,600
DNR IDP	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Total	\$3,150,000	\$188,700		\$3,338,700

Personnel

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Coordinator	0.10	3.00	\$68,000	\$0		\$68,000
Administration	0.10	3.00	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Protection and legal staff	0.80	3.00	\$260,000	\$124,800	private	\$384,800
Program Management	0.10	3.00	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Easement Processing	0.10	3.00	\$19,500	\$0		\$19,500
Total	1.20	15.00	\$380,500	\$124,800		\$505,300

Budget and Cash Leverage by Partnership

BudgetName	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	MHB	\$71,000	\$0		\$71,000
Contracts	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	MHB	\$3,500	\$0		\$3,500
Professional Services	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	MHB	\$1,500	\$0		\$1,500
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	MHB	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$76,000	\$0		\$76,000

Personnel - MHB

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Coordinator	0.10	3.00	\$68,000	\$0		\$68,000
Administration	0.10	3.00	\$3,000	\$0		\$3,000
Total	0.20	6.00	\$71,000	\$0		\$71,000

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	TPL	\$260,000	\$124,800	private	\$384,800
Contracts	TPL	\$15,000	\$0		\$15,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	TPL	\$1,401,000	\$0		\$1,401,000
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	TPL	\$150,000	\$0		\$150,000
Easement Acquisition	TPL	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Stewardship	TPL	\$0	\$0		\$0
Travel	TPL	\$4,000	\$0		\$4,000
Professional Services	TPL	\$80,000	\$0		\$80,000
Direct Support Services	TPL	\$63,900	\$63,900	private	\$127,800
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	TPL	\$25,000	\$0		\$25,000
Capital Equipment	TPL	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	TPL	\$0	\$0		\$0
Supplies/Materials	TPL	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR IDP	TPL	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Total		\$2,028,900	\$188,700		\$2,217,600

Personnel - TPL

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Protection and legal staff	0.80	3.00	\$260,000	\$124,800	private	\$384,800
Total	0.80	3.00	\$260,000	\$124,800		\$384,800

Budget Name	Partnership	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	BWSR	\$49,500	\$0		\$49,500
Contracts	BWSR	\$24,000	\$0		\$24,000
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Easement Acquisition	BWSR	\$888,900	\$0		\$888,900
Easement Stewardship	BWSR	\$78,000	\$0		\$78,000
Travel	BWSR	\$1,600	\$0		\$1,600
Professional Services	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Direct Support Services	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Capital Equipment	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Other Equipment/Tools	BWSR	\$1,500	\$0		\$1,500
Supplies/Materials	BWSR	\$1,600	\$0		\$1,600
DNR IDP	BWSR	\$0	\$0		\$0
Total		\$1,045,100	\$0		\$1,045,100

Personnel - BWSR

Position	FTE	Over # of years	LSOHC Request	Anticipated Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Program Management	0.10	3.00	\$30,000	\$0		\$30,000
Easement Processing	0.10	3.00	\$19,500	\$0		\$19,500
Total	0.20	6.00	\$49,500	\$0		\$49,500

Amount of Request: \$3,150,000

Amount of Leverage: \$188,700

Leverage as a percent of the Request: 5.99%

Output Tables

Table 1a. Acres by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	350	0	350
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	40	0	40
Protect in Easement	0	0	440	0	440
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	830	0	830

Table 2. Total Requested Funding by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$1,873,900	\$0	\$1,873,900
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$205,000	\$0	\$205,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$1,071,100	\$0	\$1,071,100
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$0	\$3,150,000	\$0	\$3,150,000

Table 3. Acres within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	0	0	0	0	0	0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	350	350
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	0	0	0	0	40	40
Protect in Easement	0	35	0	0	405	440
Enhance	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	35	0	0	795	830

Table 4. Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section

Type	Metro Urban	ForestPrairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N Forest	Total
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,873,900	\$1,873,900
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$205,000	\$205,000
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$80,000	\$0	\$0	\$991,100	\$1,071,100
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$0	\$80,000	\$0	\$0	\$3,070,000	\$3,150,000

Table 5. Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type

Type	Wetlands	Prairies	Forest	Habitats
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$5354	\$0
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$5125	\$0
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$0	\$2434	\$0
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Table 6. Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	Northern Forest
Restore	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5354
Protect in Fee W/O State PILT Liability	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5125
Protect in Easement	\$0	\$2286	\$0	\$0	\$2447
Enhance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

Mississippi River and Connecting Tributaries

Parcel List

For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.

Section 1 - Restore / Enhance Parcel List

No parcels with an activity type restore or enhance.

Section 2 - Protect Parcel List

Aitkin

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mississippi River, Aitkin	04727224	247	\$300,000	No	Full	Full

Beltrami

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Wolf	14632236	460	\$2,000,000	No	Full	Full

Cass

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Leech parcel	14329208	50	\$1,700,000	No	Full	Full

Clearwater

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mississippi River, Iron Springs Bog SNA	14436233	60	\$200,000	No	Full	Full

Crow Wing

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
Mississippi River, Baxter	13329223	600	\$1,800,000	No	Full	Full
Mississippi River, Buffalo	04431203	500	\$2,000,000	No	Full	Full
Mississippi River, Crow Wing State Forest North	04729220	159	\$500,000	No	Full	Full
Mississippi River, Crow Wing State Forrest South	04730225	358	\$700,000	No	Full	Full

Hubbard

Name	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection?	Hunting?	Fishing?
LaSalle Creek SNA	14435235	350	\$800,000	No	Full	Full
Schoolcraft River AMA	14533219	130	\$400,000	No	Full	Full

Section 2a - Protect Parcel with Bldgs

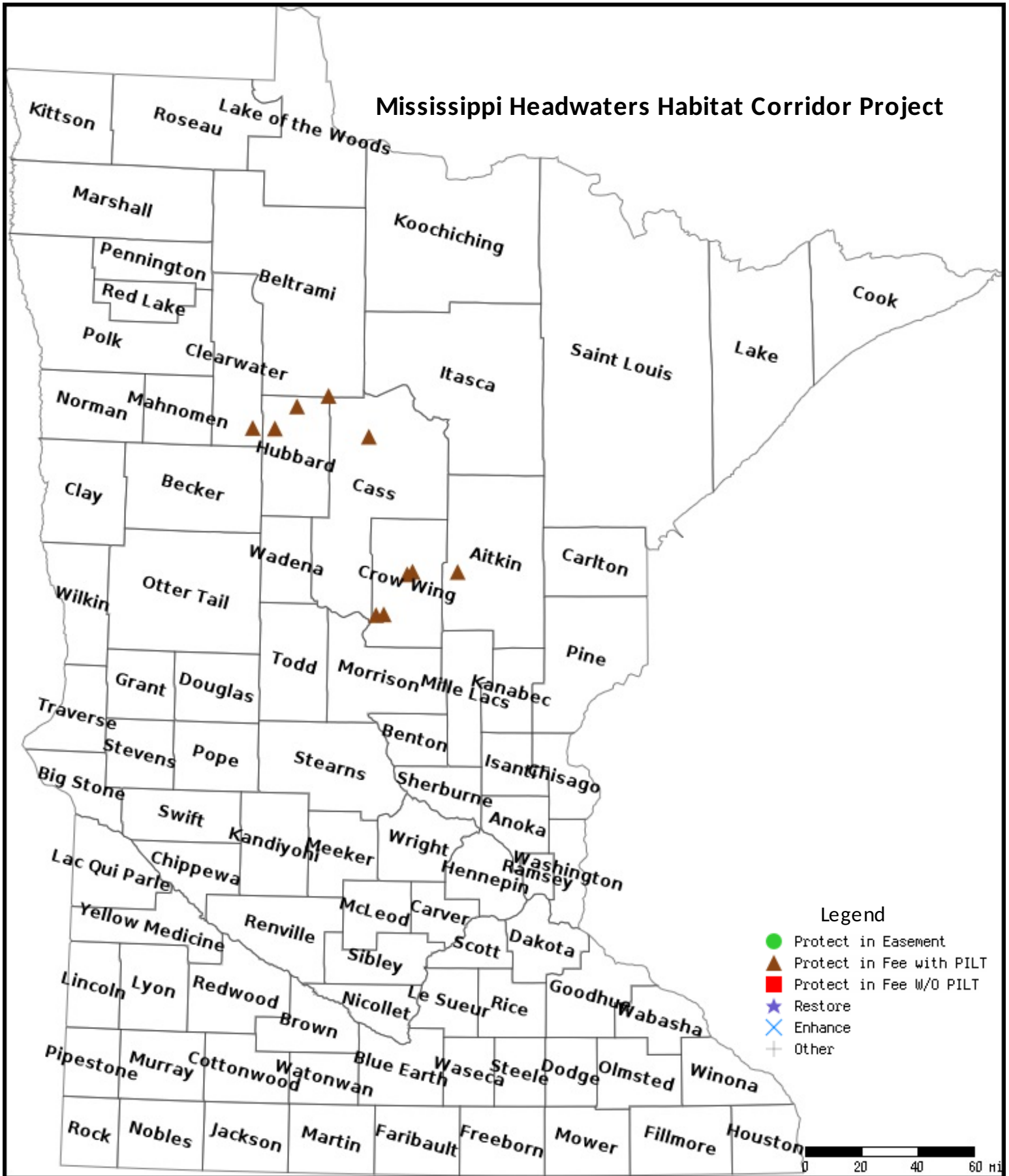
No parcels with an activity type protect and has buildings.

Section 3 - Other Parcel Activity

No parcels with an other activity type.

Parcel Map

Mississippi Headwaters Habitat Corridor Project



Data Generated From Parcel List

- To provide **recreational opportunities** for guests to the county park including maintained hiking and ski trails and signed nature walks.
- To enhance the **native wildlife habitat** on the property.
- To provide a **model** for observing “sustainable forestry” implemented on the ground.
- To protect the **aquatic zone** of Long Lake for aesthetics, avian and mammalian habitat, classes on lake bottom organisms and other wildlife and water quality benefits.

Lake and River Accesses

The ACLD maintains 21 accesses for lakes and rivers throughout the county. They are:

Lake Accesses

Boot Lake / carry in	Round (48-24)
Holy Water	Sheriff
Little Ball Bluff	Third Guide
Little McKinney	Turner
Rat House	VanDuse

River Accesses

Mississippi River (4-52-23) / ramp	Mississippi River (23-47-27) / ramp
Mississippi River (14-50-24) / carry in	Mississippi River (5-47-26) / carry in
Mississippi River (27-49-25) / ramp	Snake River (21-43-23) / carry in
Mississippi River (15-48-26) / ramp	Snake River (33-43-23) / carry in

Recreational Trails

Aitkin County actively manages its lands for the appropriate development of various types of recreational trails. In 2010 the County adopted the *Aitkin County Comprehensive Recreation Trail Plan* to provide ongoing guidance for trail development and maintenance. The following are the goals and objectives from that plan.

Trail Goals and Objectives

The goal of the comprehensive recreation trail plan is to provide a framework that will guide recreation trail management on county managed lands in Aitkin County. In addition, the plan development process has included the objective of balancing natural resource protections with recreation demands and competing land uses.

Environmental Sensitivity

Aitkin County is interested in attracting a variety of outdoor recreation enthusiasts to the trails that are available in the county, while maintaining natural resource and wildlife habitat protections. Land use and trail management plans must be compatible with the county’s Forest Stewardship Council certification requirements.

Economic Benefits

Aitkin County is interested in creating “Destination Trails” that promote the use of the trail systems and reduce off-trail activities and negative impacts. The trail system will be supported by

monitoring and enforcement plans, and signs and trail markings will support high quality trail user experiences.

Community Support

Aitkin County is interested in developing recreation trails that support year-round regional visitation and connectivity between major recreation destinations. The trail system will offer diverse trail opportunities for a full range of recreation types.

Snowmobile Trails

The ACLD oversees the designation of all Grant in Aid (GIA) snowmobile trails in the county. Currently there are over 600 miles of GIA trails in the county. ACLD's responsibilities and duties regarding the trails include:

- Process all GIA paper work for existing and new trails.
- Recommend to the County Board whether to accept new GIA trails.
- Monitor trails used for or near active logging sites. This includes working with the logger and the appropriate snowmobile club regarding signing, temporary closure or rerouting of the trail, and other measures to maintain safe trails.
- Maintain inventory of current trail locations.

Trail maintenance is the responsibility of snowmobile clubs. The majority of trails are maintained by: Aitkin Sno-Drifters, Haypoint Jackpine Savages, Palisade SuperSledders, Mille Lacs Snowmobile Club, Giese SnoCruisers, and Tamarack SnoFlyers. Other trails are maintained in Aitkin County by clubs located in: Moose Lake, Garrison, Isle, Emily, Greenway, Floodwood, and Cromwell.

ATV Trails

The ACLD oversees the designation of all Grant in Aid (GIA) ATV trails in the county. Currently there are over 100 miles of GIA trails in the county including: Soo Line ATV Trail (North and South), Rabey Line ATV Trail, Blind Lake ATV Trail, and the Red Top ATV Trail.

The County's responsibilities for ATV trails are similar to that for snowmobile trails. One exception is that the ACLD grades the Soo Line Trails which are owned by the County.

Starting in 2007 Aitkin and Itasca Counties have undertaken the planning and development of what is now known as the Northwoods Regional ATV Trail (originally named the Aitkin-Itasca 70-Mile ATV/OHV Trail Project). The project seeks to create an extensive, first-rate ATV/OHV trail in the two counties. The trail is designed to be environmentally sensitive, economically beneficial, and community supported. When completed, the Northwoods Regional ATV Trail System will:

- Focus the increasing ATV user base on an existing extensive (420+ miles) and meaningful (popular destinations) trail system within 2 hours of the Twin Cities. This should reduce potential negative impacts on natural resources, often caused by unregulated cross-country travel, by providing a well-advertised "place to go" and by linking trail segments in environmentally sensitive ways
- Connect major recreation destinations (from the Mille Lacs area, through McGregor and the Big Sandy Lake areas, and on to the Grand Rapids area) via an ATV trail to promote tourism and its associated economic impacts.
- Revitalize local communities along and near the trail system. These communities benefit economically from seasonal snowmobile use; expanding a similar clientele (ATV users) to a larger segment of the year could have significant benefits to these small communities.

The project is directed by a 19-member oversight committee representing diverse interests and experiences from throughout the project area.

The Northwoods Regional Trail incorporates all of Aitkin County's existing ATV trails including the Rabey, Soo Line, Blind Lake, and Red Top routes.

Hiking, Cross Country Ski, Hunting/Fishing Trails

The ACLD maintains a number of hiking, cross country ski, and non-motorized hunting/walking trails.

- Long Lake Conservation Center: hiking and cross country ski trails.
- No-Achen Cross Country Ski Trail
- Vispo Property Hiking and Cross Country Ski Trails
- Jacobson Campground Walking Trail
- Snake River Walking/Fishing Trail
- Twin River Springs Walking / Fishing Trail
- Hunter / Walking Trails: 13 miles at various sites.

5.2 County Parks and Recreation Ordinance

In 2008 Aitkin County adopted a multi-faceted County Parks and Recreation Ordinance. The following is a synopsis of the ordinance:

- Establishes a County Park Commission and defines its duties.
- Defines duties of the Land Department relative to parks.
- Determines that all parkland must be classified as one of two use types:
 - Limited Use Area: includes camping areas, parking areas, tent camping areas, boat accesses, limited access nature trails, swimming areas, recreation trails, ball fields, environmental education areas, wayside rests, and scenic areas.
 - Open Use Area: all park land not designated as limited use area.
- Sets forth regulations for protecting parks and recreation areas and governing permissible behavior on them. Areas covered include: general conduct; protection of natural resources within limited use areas; camping in limited use areas; swimming; meetings, speeches, demonstrations and parades in parks; vehicles; park operation; and forest roads and recreation trails.
- Among the regulations concerning forest roads and recreation trails are the following:
 - County forest roads are open to highway licensed vehicle use unless gated or posted closed.
 - Off-highway operation (OHV) is prohibited on County forest roads or recreation trails unless designated open for a specific OHV use.
 - Off-highway vehicle travel on County forest roads or recreation trails not designated open to OHV use is prohibited except for ATV's used for trapping during open season and big game hunting during October-December.
 - Off trail, cross-country travel with a motorized vehicle is prohibited on County managed land, except to retrieve downed big game animals with ATV's during legal hunting season.
 - No person shall construct an unauthorized permanent trail on County managed lands.
- Sets the penalty for violating provisions of the ordinance as a misdemeanor.

- Sets oversight of the entire operation of the Long Lake Conservation Center, which is owned and operated by Aitkin County, by the County Park Commission. The LLCC Executive Director will be directly supervised by the Land Commissioner.

5.3 Recreational Facilities and Trails Policy

The Aitkin County Land Department has policies and procedures regarding recreational activities on tax forfeited lands. These policies and procedures may be obtained from the Land Department. Among the topics covered by these policies are:

- Implementation of the County Park Ordinance.
- Conduct planning for recreational trails.

SECTION 3 RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN INCLUDING FOREST ACCESS ROUTES

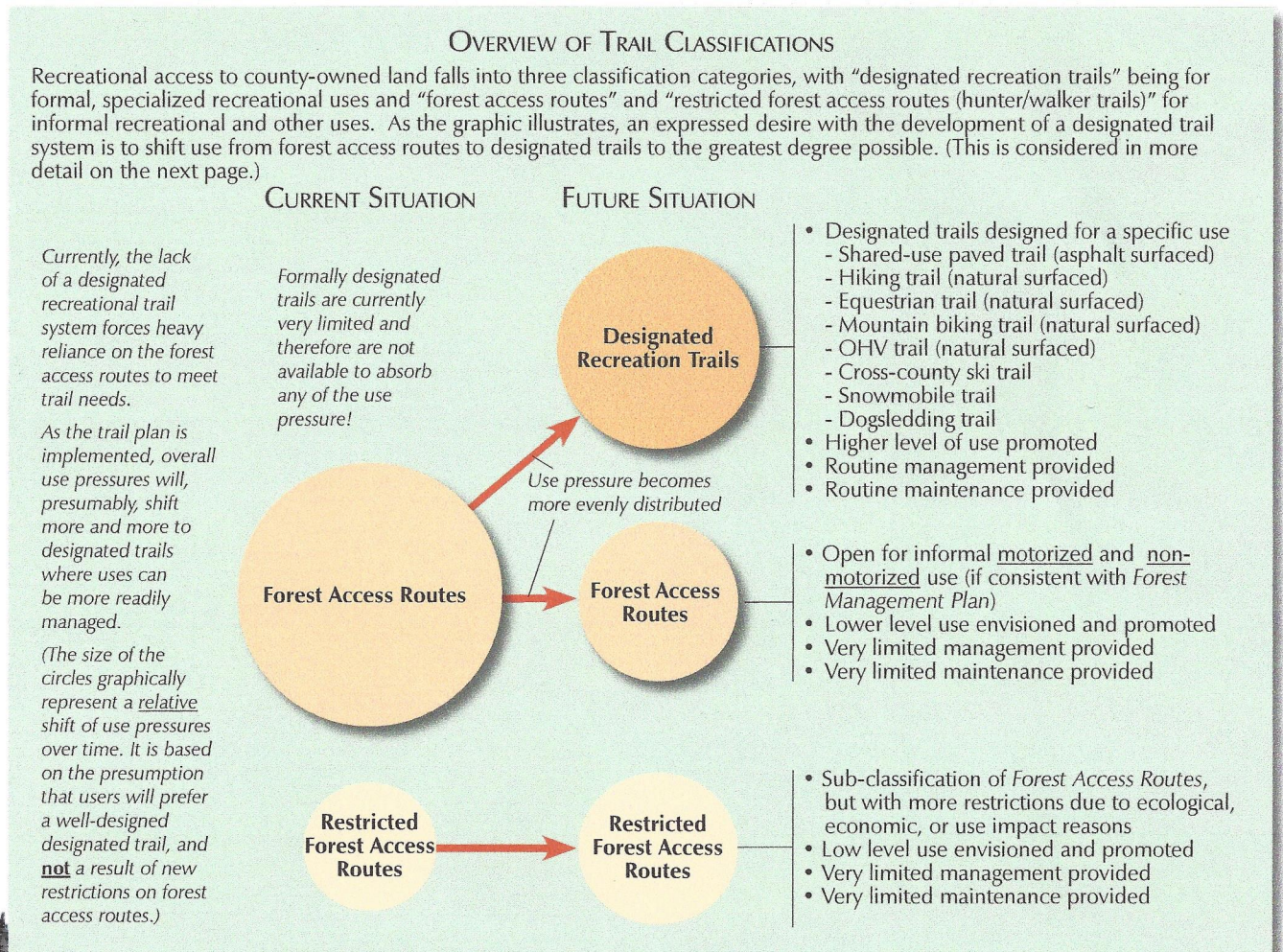
OVERVIEW

The *designated* recreational trails plan defined in this section addresses all types of motorized and non-motorized trails on county-owned land. Although technically managed under the *Forest Management Plan*, the *informal* use of forest access routes is also considered in this section to establish their interrelationship with designated trails, which has important design, operations, management, and maintenance implications.

TRAIL CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES

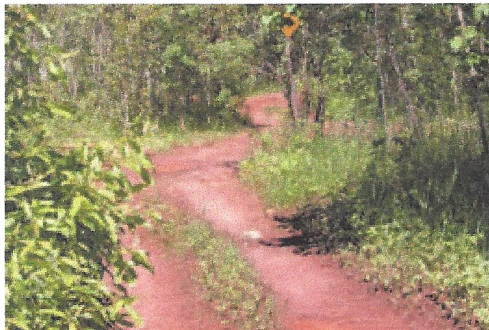
Classifications define the various types of trails that are included in the *Recreational Trails Plan*. The classifications are consistent with those that are commonly used in Minnesota as defined in the *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* (MNDNR, 2006).

The trail classifications used in Beltrami County's trail system fall into three categories, as illustrated in the following graphic.





"Forest access route" – is a route through the forest where informal recreational use is permitted, unless impacts become unacceptable or use is otherwise restricted for resource management reasons.



"Designated recreation trail" – is a trail that is designed and signed for a specific use. Importantly, the trail's design must be compelling enough (i.e., lots of fun!) to entice users away from excessive use of forest access routes.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN DESIGNATED RECREATIONAL TRAILS AND FOREST ACCESS ROUTES

The distinction between the classification categories is important relative to the levels of design, management, and maintenance that will be provided by the County and/or a local trail group. As illustrated in the last graphic, designated trails are formal trails for specific types of uses. The design, management, and maintenance of these trails will be consistent with accepted standards. Use of these trails will be actively promoted and managed, either by the County or a local sponsoring group.

Conversely, forest access routes are for informal use and *will not be managed or maintained for any specific type of recreational use* unless designated as part of a recreational trail system. Any use of these corridors is at the discretion of the individual as long as that use is consistent with the management of the forest as defined under the *Forest Management Plan*.

As informal corridors, individual forest access routes or hunter/walker trails are *not* included as part of the designated recreational trail system. Instead, areas where forest access is permitted are defined in broader terms as part of the overall *Forest Management Plan*.

ENCOURAGING THE USE OF DESIGNATED TRAILS OVER FOREST ACCESS ROUTES

One of the main reasons for developing designated recreational trails is to shift some of the growing use pressure away from forest access routes over to trails that are designed to accommodate higher levels of use. By shifting use to designated trails, there is a much greater chance that informal recreational access to the forest can remain relatively unrestricted even as overall recreational demand increases over time. The following graphic illustrates this important point.

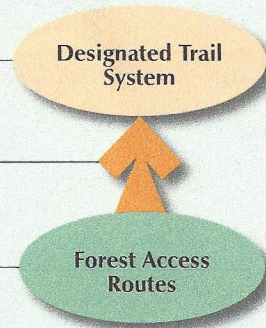
SHIFTING USE AWAY FROM FOREST ACCESS ROUTES TO DESIGNATED RECREATION TRAILS

Beltrami County is attempting to maintain a balance between accommodating increasing demand for recreational access to the forest and responsibly managing and protecting the forest resource. The designated recreation trails defined under this plan play an important role in this effort, as the following illustrates.

Designated trails must be well designed, mapped, signed, and promoted to entice their use and reduce use pressure on forest access routes.

The implicit intent of the plan is to shift use pressures away from forest access routes to designated trails to help ensure that the former can remain relatively unrestricted for informal, lower volume use over an indefinite period of time.

Forest access routes are available to those that find them on an informal basis, with very little, if any, formal route mapping and promotion by the County or advocacy groups in order to help limit use pressures.



The long term importance of managing use levels in the forest cannot be overstated. If recreational use of these lands continues to grow to the point where impacts become unacceptable, the County will have to increasingly consider imposing greater restrictions on access in order to protect the forest resource. Through the adoption of this recreational trails plan and promoting the use of designated trails, greater confidence can be gained that restricting the use of forest access routes will not become a necessity.



DESIGNATED RECREATIONAL TRAILS PLAN

For additional information related to trail needs!

Input from stakeholders for each of the trail types can be found in Section 2 - Trends and Public Process Findings. This information should be referenced as the trail plan is being implemented and advocacy groups are invited to participate.

Overall Beltrami County Recreational Trails map!

An 11" x 17" map is attached to the back of the report for reference.

"Search area" definition!

"Search area" relates to county-owned lands where OHV trails may be provided if the proper field conditions are found that can support this type of trail development.

Prior to the layout of any trails, County natural resource managers will evaluate each site to define which areas are best suited for trails based on soil types, topography, forest cover, ecological impacts, buffers to adjoining properties, and other related factors.

The designated recreational trails plan includes a variety of trails under a number of classifications to meet the needs of many types of trail users throughout the year. The plan includes:

- Shared-use paved trails (asphalt surfaced) for walking, bicycling, and inline skating
- Hiking trails (natural surfaced)
- Equestrian trails (natural surfaced)
- Mountain biking trails (natural surfaced)
- OHV trails (natural surfaced)
- Cross-county ski trails
- Snowmobile trails
- Canoe trails
- Dogsledding trails

The design, management, and maintenance of each of these trails will be based on accepted industry standards, as defined in the *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* (MN DNR, 2006) – albeit modified as appropriate for use in Beltrami County.

The accompanying **Beltrami County Recreational Trails Master Plan** provides an overview of the proposed trail system for the county. The following considers each type of trail in greater detail.

OFF-HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) TRAILS

The development of a designated area for OHV trails is one of the major features of the proposed trail system plan. The OHV trails will be designed for recreational trail riders and long distance tourers seeking well-designed trails in a natural setting with varying levels of difficulty.

The trails will accommodate, to varying degrees, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), off-highway motorcycles (OHMs), and off-road vehicles (ORVs). Of the three, trails for ATV use will likely be the most extensive based on popularity, although some level of demand for OHM and ORV specific trails also exists in the county. The extent to which each of these uses are ultimately accommodated is a detail design consideration that will be determined as part of the implementation process – which will include additional input from OHV advocacy groups on the types of trails most needed.

Location and Configuration of Designated OHV Trail System

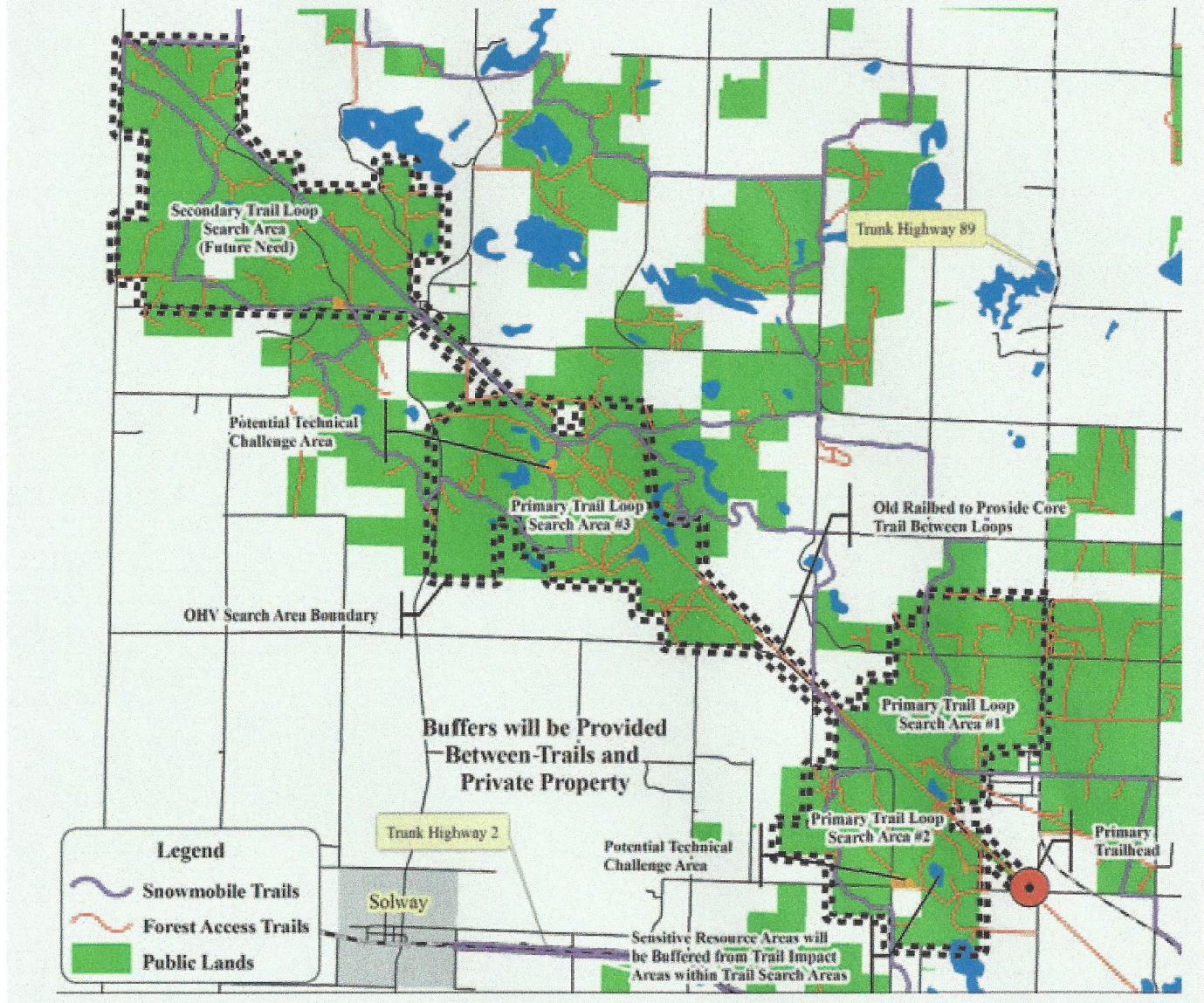
The designated OHV trail area is located on county-owned land northwest of Wilton along an abandoned Soo Line rail grade. The primary trailhead is situated just north of the intersection of U.S. Highway 2 and Minnesota Highway 89.

This area was selected for OHV use for primary three reasons: 1) contiguousness of County-owned land linked together by the abandoned rail grade; 2) preferred soil conditions relative to other areas in the county; and 3) relative ease of access from the regional population center and major road systems.

As illustrated in the graphic on the next page, the trail will start at a designated trailhead, with the main or core trail following the abandoned rail grade. Stacked loops of varying difficulty and length will be provided off the main trail within the identified "search areas". The loops will be designed to accommodate either a variety or a specific type of OHV, depending on local demand.



DESIGNATED OHV TRAIL SYSTEM



The OHV trail loops will consist of a mix of new trails, existing rail grades, old roads, and forest access routes where possible to limit the built footprint and provide a diverse and interesting trail experience. In some cases, the alignments of existing access routes used for these trails may be altered to meet design standards and improve the quality of the trail experience. The photos on the next page highlight the varying character of the different types of trails that would be used to create an OHV trail in the search areas.

The overall length of the OHV trail system that can be reasonably accommodated within the search area is likely to be in the 25 to 40 mile range – which should be adequate for day outings or a weekend of riding. The level of difficulty, tightness of the design, and average trail speeds will all factor into the carrying capacity of the trail and the time it will take for an average rider to cover the entire system.

Under a phased approach, initially limiting development to a 20 to 25 mile looped trail system has merit to further understand demand and test trail design approaches and maintenance practices, as well as determine actual





Abandoned rail grades (left) and existing forest access routes (center) will be converted into designated OHV trails where feasible to limit the built footprint in the forest. New dedicated trails (right) will also be developed to complete the looped system. The extent to which each of these types of alignments will be used will be determined during the detailed design process at the point of implementation. Careful assessment of ecological impacts is a key aspect of selecting trail routes and alignments.

operating costs. Subsequent phases could be used to expand the trail system as warranted by demand and the capacity of the County and local advocacy groups to maintain the trail system.

As illustrated on the previous map, a number of search areas are identified as areas for trail loops. The length of each loop will vary depending on type of use and level of difficulty. Providing a series of two-way loops of 2 to 5 miles each off the core trail is a common approach. Two-way traffic is generally recommended to limit speeds and extend riding opportunities.

Providing “technical challenge areas” is also included as part of the OHV trail system. These are areas where riders are allowed to be more aggressive and test their skills and machines in a controlled setting. If well-designed, challenge areas can help reduce the likelihood of rough riding occurring along forest access routes, where any damage caused is harder to detect and the ecological impacts harder to remedy.

With OHV trails, particular attention needs to be given to avoiding impacts to sensitive ecological areas within each of the search areas. In addition, adequate buffers should be provided between the trail and adjacent private properties to avoid off-site impacts and disturbances to the greatest degree possible.

Secondary OHV Facility

In addition to the designated OHV trail, the trails plan includes an option for establishing a secondary riding area in an area southeast of Blackduck, largely relying upon the current infrastructure of roads and routes through County, State, and Federal lands *where OHV is expressly allowed* by the governing agencies. As the largest land owner in this area, much of this system will likely be on designated routes through the Chippewa National Forest as defined by the USFS for specific types of motorized use.

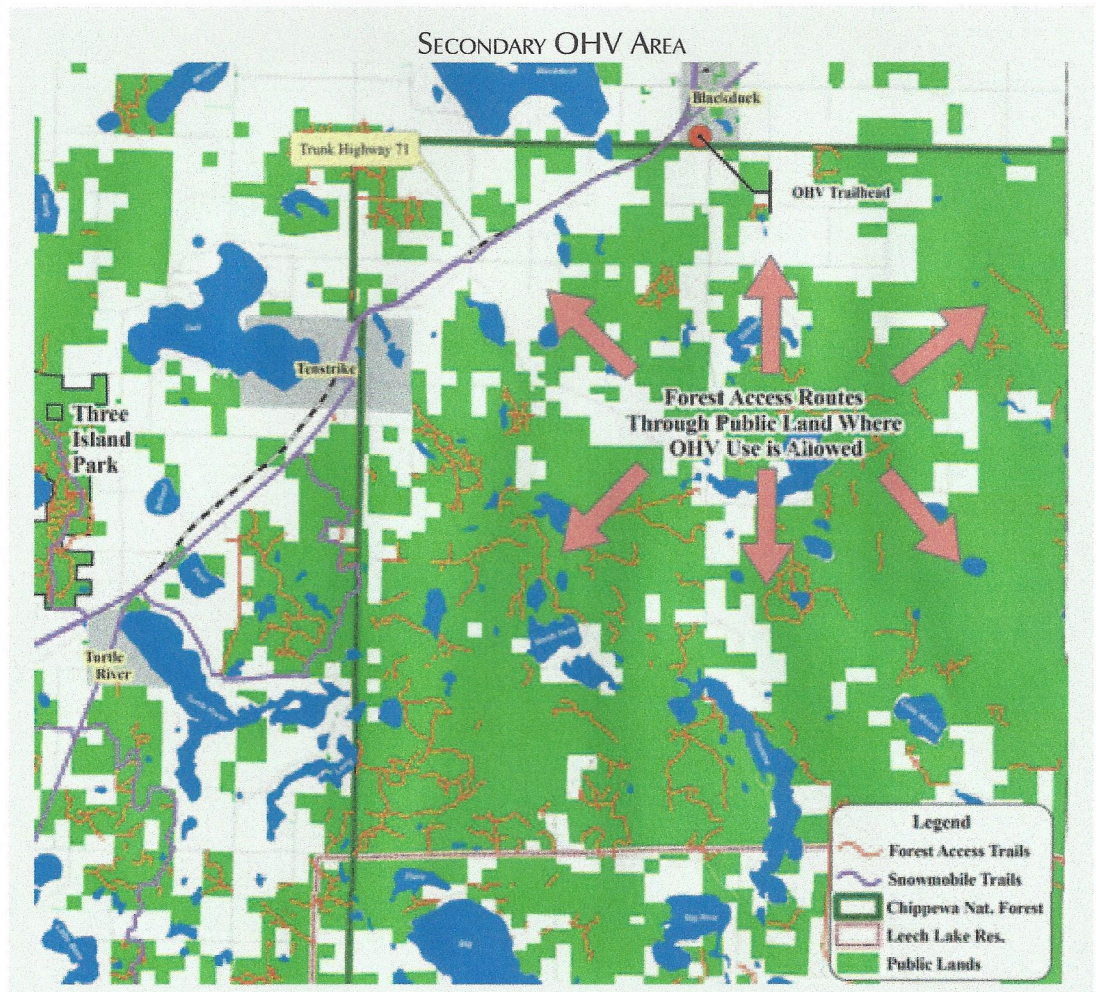
Including a secondary option in Beltrami County’s recreational trail plan is done for two key reasons. The first is to underscore that managing OHV use is a regional issue requiring a high level of cooperation between land managers at the county, state, and federal level if this use is to be successfully accommodated. Although Beltrami County is making a major commitment in this regard under this plan, its efforts alone will likely be inadequate to address this need if participation rates and use levels continue to grow at the same pace as has been the case in the past 10 years.

The second reason this option is included is to give some forethought to building some flexibility into the trails plan given the uncertainty about how fast and to what degree the demand for OHV trails will grow in the county and region. By having this option in place, excess demand can be more quickly understood and readily absorbed in a more managed way, rather than simply being dispersed into the forest.



The last point is important in that use of the informal forest access route system cannot be as readily maintained as a designated trail system, with many routes being incapable of sustaining heavy use levels over an extended period time.

For this reason, the County is encouraged to work closely with MNDNR and the USFS on developing a route-specific plan for OHV riding that would complement the designated OHV trail being proposed on county-owned land. The following map illustrates the general area for the secondary OHV trail system.



Development Standards and Guidelines

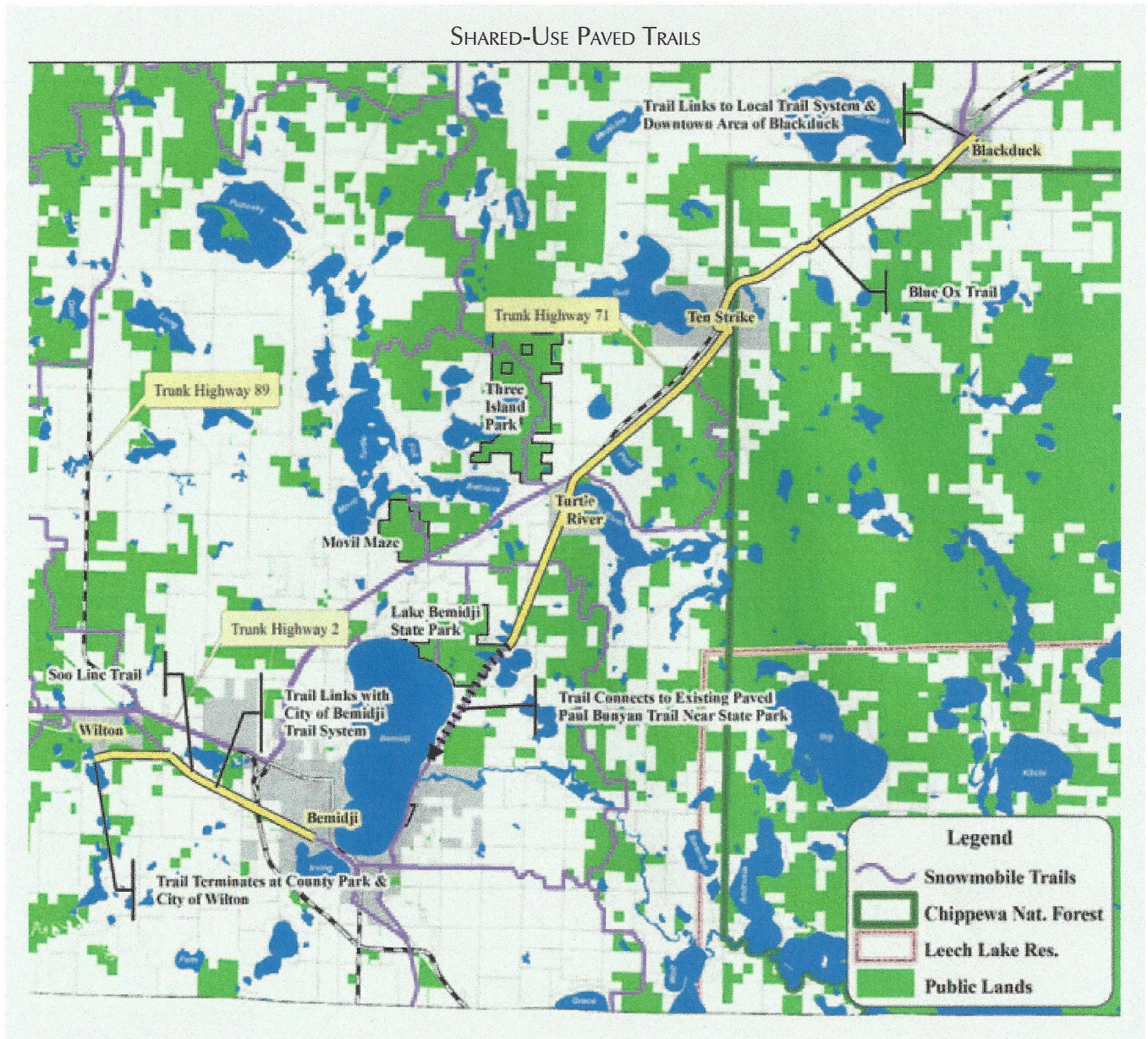
The *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* provide the baseline standards for developing OHV trails. These standards provide extensive information on the type of features most desired by OHV riders and guidelines on difficulty levels. The guidelines also provide extensive information on building natural surfaced trails that are both enjoyable to use and capable of withstanding years of day-to-day use. The section on minimizing impacts to ecological systems has particular application for this type of trail.

Potential trailhead facilities include a parking area, loading area, portable restroom, and picnic shelter. An area for warming up and testing machines should also be provided as close to the trailhead as possible. The first loop off the core trail should be no more than 3 miles from the trailhead.



SHARED-USE PAVED TRAILS

Shared-use paved trails for walking, bicycling, and inline skating and primarily for summer-season use. Two potential paved trail corridors are included in the plan, as the following graphic map illustrates.



Blue Ox Shared-Use Trail Corridor

The first and longest proposed shared-used trail follows the existing Blue Ox trail corridor, which is already an established snowmobile trail for winter use. As illustrated on the map on the last page, the Blue Ox trail will essentially be an extension of the existing Paul Bunyan State Trail that currently ends at County Road 20 and Lake Bemidji State Park. As shown, the trail heads north from the park and end at Blackduck, where it will tie into the local trail system and downtown business district. The overall length of this segment will be approximately 18 miles.





The Blue Ox Trail corridor is currently unpaved and used primarily for snowmobiling in the winter. Paving it with asphalt would make a year-round trail serving a variety of user groups. The trail would be 10 feet wide.



The Blue Ox Trail will connect directly with the existing paved Paul Bunyan Trail that currently ends at County Road 20. This trail also links directly to Lake Bemidji State Park.

Completion of this trail would considerably expand paved trail opportunities in the county and region, attracting both local users and tourists. There are, however, some important qualifiers that must be addressed if the trail is to be developed. The first consideration is that paving the trail must not preclude the use of the corridor for snowmobiling. There are two options in this regard: 1) allow snowmobiles with studded tracks to use the trails or 2) accommodate snowmobiles on an adjacent corridor of equal or better quality than provided by the old rail grade.

With respect to the first option, the prospect of developing new types of pavements that can withstand studs is improving, with a number of states actively testing advanced materials. In addition, a number of states, including Minnesota, are reevaluating the impact that studs have on paved surfaces, with at least some prospect that existing policies could change to allow certain types of studs on paved trails. If either of these scenarios proves true, paving the Blue Ox corridor while preserving existing winter access would become a real possibility.

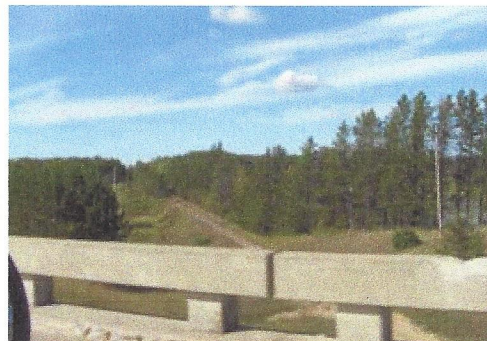
Although asphalt is not necessary preferred, upgrading the rail grade to a paved surface could benefit snowmobilers in that it will make the corridor much smoother than is currently the case – which might be a worthwhile trade-off.

With respect to the second option, developing an alternate corridor for the snowmobile trail would take a more detailed evaluation of options that could be supported by the local club. Given the limited public land along this corridor and constraints with the width and grade of the existing right-of-way, the first option of paving the trail is likely the more feasible one, although this second approach should not be entirely ruled out.

Another issue with this corridor is that some sections of the old rail grade are privately owned, with the prospects of acquisition uncertain in at least the near term. Although this poses some constraints, finding a suitable route around these areas seems feasible.

Soo Line Shared-Use Trail Corridor

The second proposed shared-used trail follows the old Soo Line rail grade from Bemidji to Rognlien Park, an existing County-owned park near Wilton. As illustrated on the previous map, the Soo Line trail would be an extension of the City of Bemidji’s planned trail following the same abandoned rail corridor, which ultimately connects with the Paul Bunyan Trail and other local trails. As shown, the trail follows a northwest alignment from Bemidji over to Rognlien Park, which is an appealing terminus point. The park offers a swimming beach and other amenities. The trail could also link to local streets within Wilton, providing local residents access to an extensive local and regional trail system. The overall length of this segment will be approximately 6 miles.



The Soo Line Shared-Use Trail will follow an abandoned rail grade for much of its length. The trail would be 10 feet wide.



As illustrated on the map, the trail leaves the rail grade in order to make its way over to the county park. The alignment shown on the plan, which is conceptual, traverses across county-owned land to the degree possible. Outside of public lands, the trail may have to follow existing or future road rights-of-way if easements across private properties cannot be acquired. Nonetheless, this trail corridor could be of considerable recreational value for local residents and tourists. It would also promote more use of the county park as a destination within relatively easy biking or inline skating distance from the regional population center.

As with the Blue Ox Trail, this trail corridor could be used in the winter for snowmobiling if the issue of studs can be successfully addressed.

Development Standards and Guidelines

Both of these shared-use paved trail corridors should be consistent with regional or state level trail standards, which is a 10 foot wide asphalt trail suitable for walking, bicycling, and inline skating. Each of these trails should also meet accessibility standards, which as a general rule means grades of 5 percent or less. Achieving this should not be an issue given the existing grades on the old rail beds.

The *Minnesota Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* again provide the baseline standards and guidelines for developing shared-use paved trails. Other applicable standards, such as the MN DOT Bicycle Facility Design Guide, should also be referenced, especially if specifically required for grant funding.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS

Cross-country ski trails are currently provided at a number of locations within the county. On county land, established trails are provided at the Movil Maze and Three Island Park, each of which are well-liked venues by local skiers. The Movil Maze offers 14 kilometers of trails for classic and skate-style skiers. Three Island Park offers 25 kilometers of trails for classic and skate-style skiers. Of the two, Movil Maze trails are geared toward intermediate and advanced skiers, with Three Island Park more for beginners and intermediate skiers.

Other ski venues in the area include:

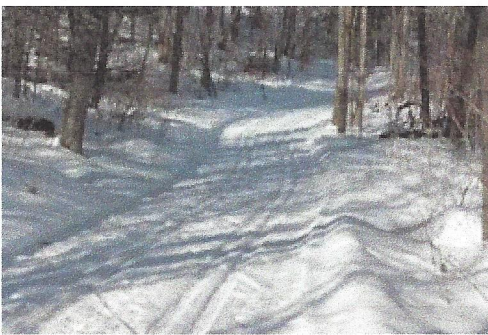
- Montebello Trail, which has lighting, is provided within a City of Bemidji park and is 4.5 kilometers long. Classic and skate-style skiers are accommodated.
- Buena Vista is on private land and open to the public only in the winter. 25 kilometers of trails are groomed for classic and skate-style skiers.
- C.V. Hobson Memorial Forest provides 7 kilometers of classic-style trails on land owned by Bemidji State University.
- Lake Bemidji State Park offers 16 kilometers of trails for classic skiers.

The graphic on the next page illustrates the existing locations for ski trails.

The local cross-country ski club also has a desire to develop trails in two new areas, both of which would be on state-owned land as identified on the overall ***Beltrami County Recreational Trails Master Plan***.

Movil Maze and Three Island Park Cross-Country Ski Trails

The cross-country ski trails at both of these locations are considered high quality venues by local skiers. Movil Maze in particular is well liked for the variety and challenge of the skiing terrain and is a heavily used venue. The trails within both of these areas have been developed and maintained primarily by the local cross-country ski club.



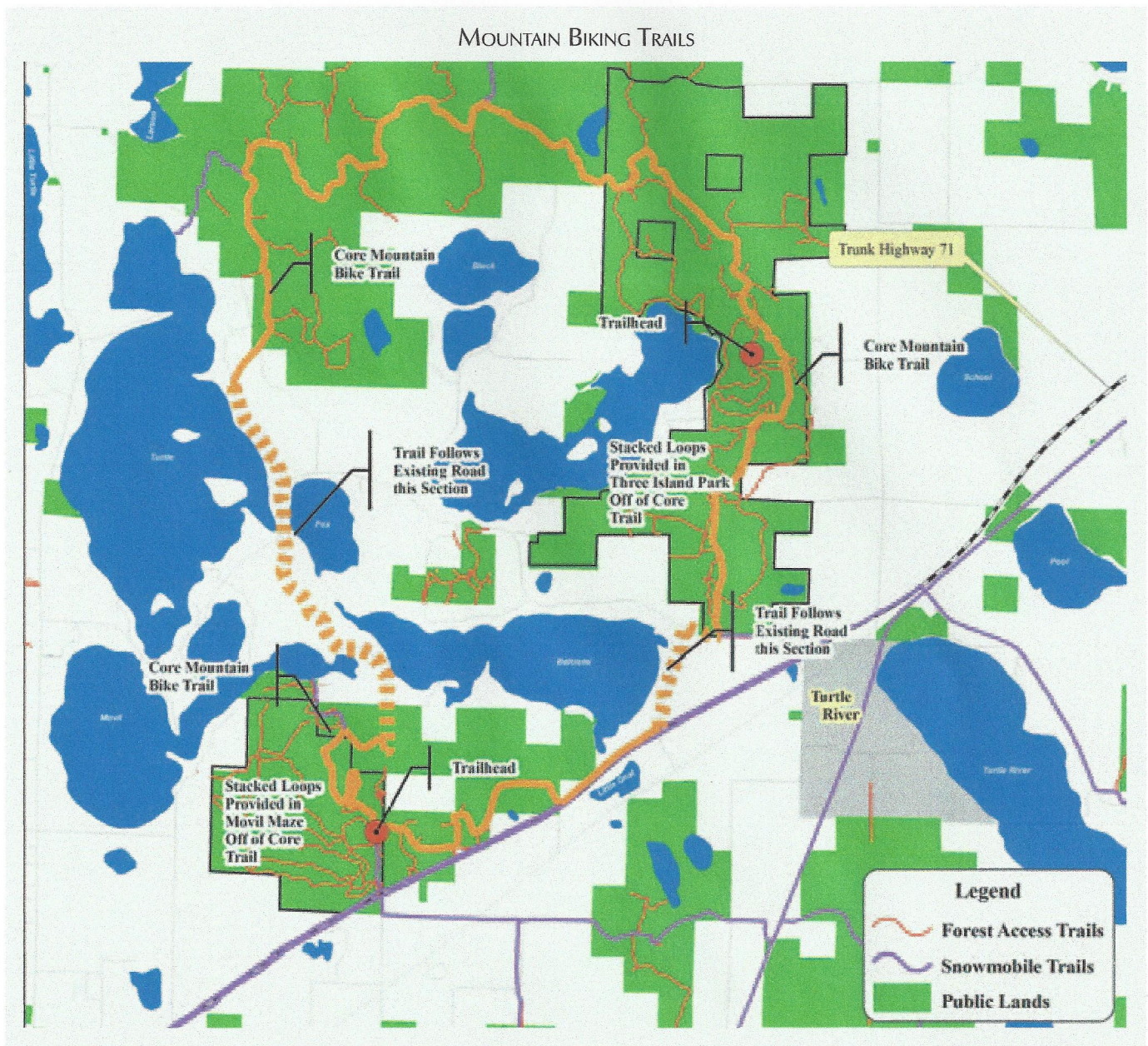
Winter ski venues in the county are highly regarded and accommodate skate-style (top) and classic-style (bottom) skiing for skiers of all skill levels.



The *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* may also add to existing knowledge and be of value in designing and developing new trail loops or realigning existing ones. The guidelines may be particularly useful for laying out trails in ecologically-sensitive areas.

MOUNTAIN BIKING TRAILS

Mountain biking within the county has been relatively informal in the past, with most of the use occurring on forest access routes or on trails within Movil Maze and Three Island Park. At lower use levels, mountain biking on designated ski trails does not pose much of an issue. If demand grows, however, a single or double track may develop that increasingly affects trail grooming for skiing. To avoid this situation, and to promote the activity, a designated mountain bike trail is included in the plan, as the following graphic illustrates.





Mountain bike trails will be a combination of double-track (top) and single track (bottom) to provide a variety of riding options for all skill levels. The double track will typically take advantage of existing routes through the forest, with the single track being designed in the field using appropriate standards.

Location and Configuration of Designated Mountain Bike Trail System

As illustrated on the graphic, the designated mountain bike trail will be a combination of single track trails on county-owned land, forest access routes on county and state land, and signed roads to create a large core loop. From the core trail, “stacked” loops (i.e., loops that interconnect with each other) will be provided offering varying levels of challenge. Most of the stacked loops will be single track trail within Movil Maze and Three Island Park.

The overall core looped trail will be approximately 20 to 25 miles long and suitable for most riders. Each of the stacked loops will range from 1 to 5 miles and vary in level of difficulty. The overall system of trails at full development could range between 35 and 40 miles.

The extent to which loops are developed will be based on demand. Initially, developing an interconnected loop between Movil Maze and Three Island Park has the most merit. Under subsequent phases, the trail could be expanded to include the larger core loop as shown on the plan. Although the routes along the roads are less interesting than single track, riders will follow the routes if they are reasonably safe and well-signed. As with OHV trails, a phased approach is recommended to ensure that trails are not over-built relative to demand, and that the trails can be adequately maintained.

As shown on the master plan, a trailhead is proposed in Movil Maze and Three Island Park. Parking and an information kiosk are the primary amenities needed for the trail.

With the increasing use pressures on Movil Maze and Three Island Park, the development of any new mountain biking trails will have to be considered in the context of other forms of development that might occur on these properties. (This and related issues are considered in more depth under *Parks and Recreation Areas* later in this section.) In addition, mountain bike trails make for excellent snowshoeing corridors in the winter, especially the single track trails.

Development Standards and Guidelines

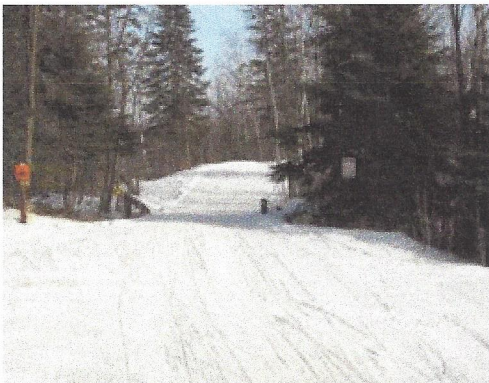
The core mountain bike trail will largely follow existing forest access routes across county or state land that will be designated for this use. In many cases, the corridor for the core trail follows those used for snowmobiles. As wider trails, the core trails will be two-way and either single or double track, depending on the width of the existing tread. Although new sections of trail may be required, the vast majority of the core trail should follow existing routes to avoid expanding the built footprint in the forest. This trail should also be generally suitable for all levels of mountain bikers.

The stacked loops off of the core trail should purposefully offer a variety of challenge levels, with the majority of these trails being one-way single track. Notably, single track trails for mountain bikes follow considerably different design guidelines than cross-country ski trails. Therefore, these uses should be separated as new trails are developed. The *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* provide baseline standards and guidelines for developing mountain bike trails. Advocacy groups should also be involved in the design of these trails to ensure that they meet the nuanced needs of the user.

In situations where the trail follows a road, adequate signage should be provided for direction and to alert motorists of the shared use.



SNOWMOBILE TRAILS



The extensive network of snowmobile trails in the county come in many forms and characters. The system has evolved over many years and has served local users and tourists well for many years.

As with cross-country ski trails, the snowmobile trail network is well-established throughout the county, mostly through the efforts of the local snowmobile clubs supported by funding through the state grant-in-aid program. Overall, the snowmobile network is close to the maximum mileage that the local clubs can develop and maintain. Future efforts will focus mostly on maintaining the existing system and finding reroutes for trails where access is restricted for any number of reasons.

Location and Configuration of Designated Snowmobile Trail System

The accompanying *Beltrami County Recreational Trails Master Plan* illustrates the snowmobile trail network throughout the county. As shown, the trail system traverses across public and private lands. Each year, the trail network changes to some degree as private property trail agreements expire or properties change hands and access becomes more restricted.

Of all the issues, incrementally losing access to private property is the most perplexing and threatening to the snowmobile trail network. The loss of trails due to private land access becoming more restricted is a hard problem to solve other than to rely more on public lands for trail routes, which is also self-limiting. To this end, the County and local advocacy groups are encouraged to proactively keep track of new route options and actively educate and market to new property owners to maintain access.

Another perplexing issue relates to ATV riders wrongfully assuming that the snowmobile trail corridors across private property are open to their use in the summer. More aggressively signing and gating closed areas, educating trail users about offseason use, and working with local law enforcement are all recommended to help forestall growth of this problem.

Improvements to the trails should focus on providing more variety in the types of trails offered. Currently, the system has too many straight sections that are less interesting and entice snowmobilers to go fast, sometimes excessively so. Adding more sections with curvilinear layouts and more variety in terrain would add value to the overall system.

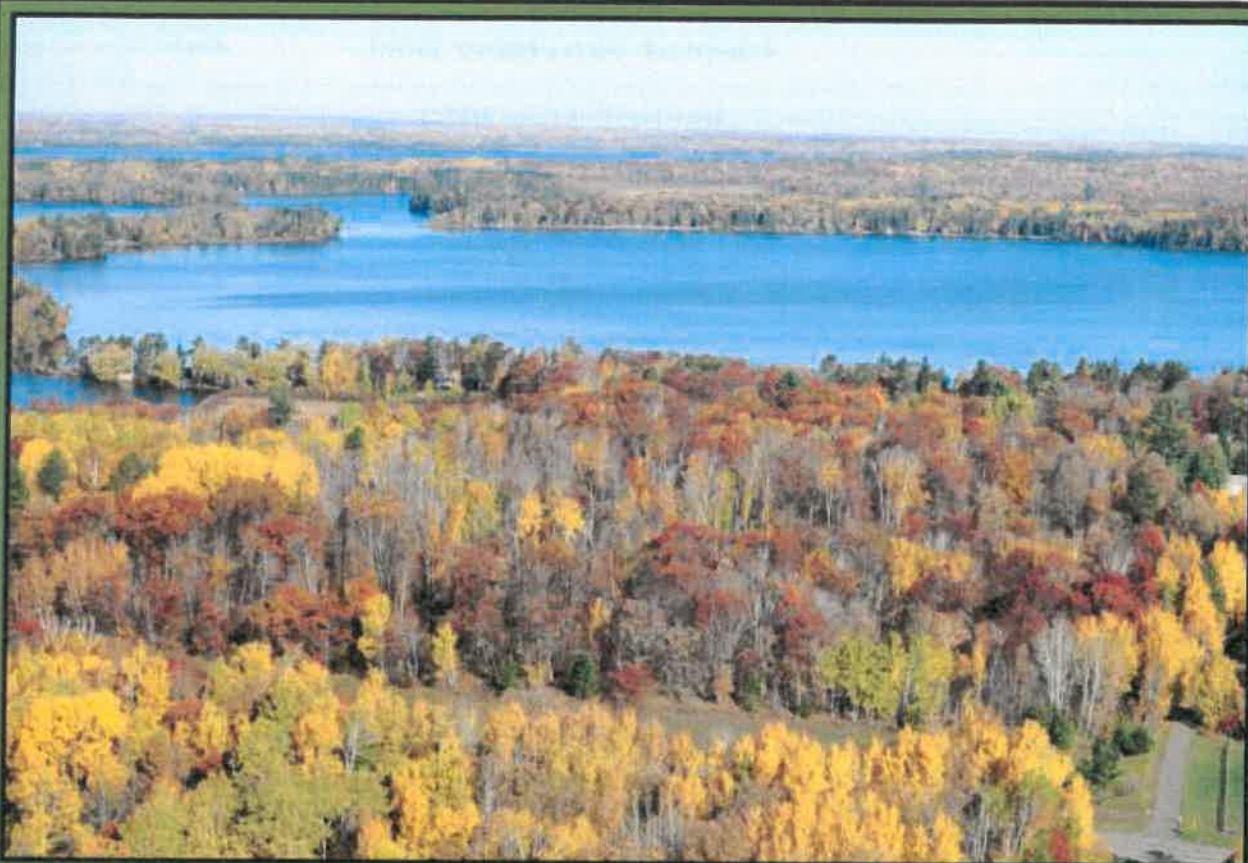
Improving the signage along the trail and providing better mapping and information on access points and services were also objectives of the local clubs in forthcoming years.

Development Standards and Guidelines

As with cross-country ski trails, the existing network of trails has established a high standard for trail quality and any new trails should be consistent with that standard. The *Minnesota Trail Planning, Design, and Development Guidelines* may also add to existing knowledge and be of value in designing and developing new trails or realigning existing ones. The guidelines may be particularly useful for laying out trails in ecologically-sensitive areas.

A 2005 publication entitled *Guidelines for Snowmobile Trail Groomer Operator Training* by the International Association of Snowmobile Administrators (IASA) is also a recommended reference for grooming trails. It is available through the organization's website.





Cass County Forest Resources Management Plan



May 2010



Cass County Long Range Resource Management Plan

Adopted: November 2003

Revised: May 2010

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Chapter 8.0 Recreation Facilities and Trails

8.1. Assessment

Cass County is meeting its obligation to provide recreational opportunities on its land base by managing the land in a manner that encourages and supports dispersed recreation (e.g., hunting, hiking, wildlife watching, etc.). Outside of trails, the County does not intend to create recreational facilities such as picnic grounds, parks, campgrounds, or boat accesses.

Travel on recreational trails will be a major activity across County lands. While the County does not intend to construct the trails, it will make its land base available to agencies such as the MnDNR and organized user groups to locate and develop appropriate trails on its land. The County will work with user groups, the DNR, and affected property owners on planning for future trails. In general, the County will encourage user groups to prepare comprehensive trail system plans so that the County, MnDNR and others can evaluate an entire system of trails, even if development occurs a segment at a time. The County will take action to insure that established recreational corridors are protected and to assist in the acquisition of land for future corridors.

Probably the most contentious issue regarding recreation concerns motorized trails, especially non-winter travel by ATVs, motocross bikes, and off highway vehicles. Currently, 89% of the County's land is open for motorized uses on trails; only 11% is designated solely for non-motorized recreational use. Current policy prohibits driving on- or off-road vehicles on County administered land within 50 feet of a lake, river, or type 1-8 wetland except while on a designated forest road or trail.

The State has three classifications of its forest for motorized recreation. "Closed" areas prohibit all forms of motorized uses. On lands designated "managed" motor vehicles may operate on forest roads and trails unless they are posted and designated closed. On lands designated "limited" motor vehicles may operate only on those roads and trails that are specifically designated open to such uses. Recent state legislation prohibited off trail travel on state forests except for specified purposes during selected times of the year including building hunting stands, trapping, retrieving downed big game, and conducting forest management activities.

Activities in the Spider Lake area, on State and County land, raised many issues over motorized recreational uses on forest lands. As a result, sections of this area have been designated "limited" while others retain the "managed" status. Cass County will continue to adjust its designations in this area to insure consistency.

Trails

Trails are a major recreational feature on Cass County's tax forfeited lands. The Land Department directly develops and maintains some systems while others are developed and maintained by private or public entities with County cooperation.

- 433.6 miles of Grant-in-Aid snowmobile trails managed by Cass County.
- 40.7 kilometers of cross country ski trails: Cut Lake trail (16.5 km); Hiram trail (8.0 km); Washburn Lake (22 km) and, Deep Portage (18.2 km – managed jointly

by Deep Portage and Land Department). These trails also serve as mountain bike trails in the summer.

- The County has no restrictions on horseback riding on any County Forest Roads or trails. Currently there are several miles of posted horse trails that are maintained by the Cass County Land Department in cooperation with local users. These trails are not designated and do not require a permit to use.
- 20 miles of designated hunter walking trails. All cross country ski trails are also hunter walking trails (non-motorized). Further, except for designated use by hunters with disabilities, most of Deep Portage is set aside for non-motorized trail use. Approximately 28,000 acres lie within these various non-motorized areas; this is 11% of the entire tax forfeited land base or 15% of the forested lands.

For current maps of trails, readers should visit Cass County's website (<http://www.co.cass.mn.us>) and click on the maps button. This will direct users to an interactive mapping program through which trails can be identified. Interested people can also contact the Land Department for printed maps.

There is a need to develop an officially designated system of trails for all terrain vehicles (ATVs). This will involve designation and upgrading of existing trails and may include construction of new ones. As state legislation and rules for State lands unfold, it likely will be necessary for the County to increase the number of trails which are designated and signed for specific types of recreational uses.

The development of new trails or expansion / redevelopment of existing ones will be done with several guidelines in mind. First, the County will require the active participation of affected user groups and, preferably, the sponsorship of a local club. Second, wherever possible, trails will be designed to be year-round and support multi-use. Third, trails are to be designed to avoid or at least minimize use of road rights-of-way and to eliminate back-tracking. Fourth, permanent protection of trail corridors and critical segments will be sought.

Recreational Trail Policy

1. The County will use its land base to help establish, promote, manage and retain recreational trail corridors in Cass County.
2. All officially recognized forest roads and trails on tax forfeited lands that are designated by the County Board will be signed as appropriate.
3. All designated forest roads and recreational trails on County administered lands are considered open to motorized recreational vehicles unless specifically posted closed. "Posted closed" includes such measures as signage, gating, and placement of boulders, earth, and other natural materials to indicate that passage by motorized vehicles is clearly prohibited. The big game exemption applies to these trails and licensed hunters are encouraged to use them while pursuing big game. Cass County will work with the State and Federal land managers to secure consistent use designations to avoid conflict and confusion.
4. Off trail motorized travel across County administered tax forfeited lands is prohibited. All motorized recreational vehicles must stay on existing roads and trails in accordance with use designations. In response to unauthorized off trail or cross country travel, the Land Department, with County Board consent, will post areas closed as a tool to limit resource damage.
5. Motorized recreation scramble areas (e.g., hill climbs, mud runs, etc.) are deemed inappropriate for public forest lands and are not to be allowed.

6. The design and development of recreational trails will involve user groups, the general public, public and private landowners potentially affected by a trail, and local units of government where the trails are located.
7. While priority is given to forest management activities, good faith efforts will be made to adjust schedules and procedures so as to avoid or minimize conflicts with recreational uses, including use of trails.
8. Requests for Designation of County Administered Land will require local unit of government consent. The Cass County Land Department has created a template of land use designations for discussion that was drafted considering historic use, neighboring public land designations, soils, existing resources, wetlands, and forest covertype. This template will be used for reference. Designations will be brought to the County Board for consideration after the following criteria has been reached.
 - Local units of government need to provide written consent with the proposed routes or areas of limitations. This includes permission from all road authorities where either road right of way or road surface is required. This will avoid County approval on a route that a township or city does not condone. If we require local units of government to approve the plan first, the County will not be pushing a specific route or area on a local unit of government.
 - Routes and areas of limitations must follow the existing draft management plan that was produced during the public review process for the East Central Trail designations. This map was created by professionals with the intent of protecting the resource and to avoid landowner conflicts. If the proposed route or area of limitations is outside those recommendations, specific mitigation measures must be identified to ensure the resource is being protected and that all affected private property owners have been notified and agree to the use of their property for this purpose.
 - Designated trails across County Administered Land need to be under the Grant In Aid system (GIA) or maintained by the State of Minnesota. This will not only provide a means of liability protection for the County but will also provide the club or requesting party an additional source of funding for maintenance and signs. All recommendations from the County should require GIA status within a specific time period as a condition of the conditional use permit or recreational trail permit.
 - Funding for maintenance and construction of the trail or area of limitation signage must be identified by the party requesting the designation or trail permit. The Cass County Land Department currently spends money on designated GIA trails only if there is a benefit to resource management. All other funds are currently coming from GIA funds or local clubs.
 - An enforcement plan must be identified by the party requesting the permit. This should include existing programs like trail ambassadors and required ordinances from local units of government to use road surfaces or right of ways for trail connections when needed. The trail proposals and areas of limitations should be as self sufficient as possible given the current limitations on laws and regulations from both the State of Minnesota and existing local ordinances. If a new ordinance is required to help police the proposed trail or area of limitation, it should come from a local unit of government below the County with an enforcement plan. This again will not require the County to force trail routes, areas of limitations, and regulations on a local unit of government.

Chapter 9.0 Forest Roads

9.1. Assessment

Cass County administered land contains over 1,000 miles of forest roads whose purpose is to provide access to the land for management purposes. While portions of some of the roads also serve as recreational trails, they are distinguished from recreational trails by their use as forest roads for the purpose of resource management.

Forest roads on County administered land can be found at various stages of development and maintenance depending upon location and successional stage of the surrounding resource. This reflects the intended use of the road and level of its construction and maintenance.

In addition, forest roads on County administered lands are considered open to use to motorized recreational vehicles unless specifically posted closed. When persistent damage to the resource occurs from unauthorized use, access is controlled through gates and/or rocks and berms with County Board consent. The reasons for controlling access along a road include:

- Prevent dumping of garbage and demolition waste;
- Allow for successful seeding of trails;
- Protect hunter walking trails;
- Protect road bed of newly constructed trails;
- Restrict motorized traffic on cross country ski/mountain bike trails; or
- Prevent erosion on access roads traversing highly erodible soils.

Some control gates are permanent such as those on hunter walking trails and on ski / mountain bike trails. Gates installed for the protection of new seeding or newly created road beds are moveable and are reused. Gates on trails that need seasonal protection such as for the prevention of erosion are open when weather or road conditions permit.

The current system of forest roads (including public roads that abut tax forfeited land) provide direct access to 90,500 acres of tax forfeited land (land that lies within 600 feet of the road); this is 36% of the total amount of tax forfeited land.

As noted earlier, the county has identified non-motorized trail areas (i.e., County tax forfeited lands accessed by forest roads that are gated, barricaded or otherwise identified as not being accessible to motorized recreation vehicles). Approximately 28,000 acres lie within these non-motorized areas; this is 11% of the entire tax forfeited land base.

Wherever possible, the County cooperates with other landowners on the development and maintenance of forest access roads. The intent is to minimize the number of roads while insuring adequate access.

The County does not plan to develop new major maintained-class forest roads. Additional non-maintained-class roads may be needed for future management activities.

Forest Roads and Trails Policy

1. All forest roads will be designed and built in accordance with "best management practices" regarding location, terrain, water quality and quantity, visual qualities, and the like.

2. Road development and improvement will be coordinated between the Land Department and affected property owners to maximize safety, minimize conflicts, reduce costs, and encourage appropriate cooperative development and use.
3. All forest roads are considered open to motorized travel unless posted closed with County Board consent.
4. Roads will restrict access with County Board consent for any one or more of the following reasons: Prevent dumping of garbage and demolition waste; Allow for successful seeding of trails; Hunter walking trails; Protect road bed of newly constructed trails; Restrict motorized traffic on cross country ski/mountain bike trails; Prevent erosion on access roads traversing highly saturated or erodible soils.
5. All forest roads and trails will be inventoried, mapped using geographic positioning systems (GPS) technology or air photos during forest inventory updates.
6. Forest roads and trails will be signed regarding their designated use.
7. Relative to potential impacts on wetlands due to forest road construction, the County's policy is:
 - Additional fill placed in wetlands for any reason, including road construction, requires mitigation and replacement.
 - Roads must be built and maintained for forest uses only.
 - Trail Designation cancels all exemptions from wetland requirements.
 - Easements providing access to private property cancels all exemptions from wetland requirements.
 - Grant-in-Aid Trail grants on corridors cancels all exemptions from wetland requirements.
 - Existing wetland crossings are to be maintained "as is" with no expansion of the current footprint within a wetland.

9.2 Procedures

The Land Department has adopted procedures addressing roads and trails. These procedures are amended from time to time. Readers are directed to the Land Department website for the latest versions (www.co.cass.mn.us/land/land_home.html).

Chapter 10.0 Habitat

10.1. Assessment

Cass County has a long history of considering habitat values in its overall management programs. One member of the Land Department staff is designated as a wildlife specialist.

In 1998 the MnDNR published the County Biological Survey for Cass County.¹¹ This report presents an extensive examination of rare and critical biotic communities and individual species (plants, animals, insects). The detailed information concerning locations of particular specimens is not part of the public record but is accessible by County staff as it undertakes site-specific work.

Rare, Endangered or Species of Special Concern

The County Biological Survey revealed a number of plants and animals that are rare, endangered, or of special concern for which management practices should be adopted. Table 9 lists rare plants tracked by the state's Natural Heritage Information System and sensitive species being tracked by the Chippewa National Forest. Table 10 lists rare animals documented from or potentially occurring in Cass County.

Habitat	Name	Status
Open Water	Myriophyllum tenellum (Water milfoil)	NS
	Nymphaea tetragona (a type of water lily)	SC
	Potamogeton vaseyi (Vasey's pondweed)	
Littoral Aquatic	Cladium mariscoides (Twig rush)	SC
	Eleocharis olivacea (Olivaceous spikerush)	T
	Eleocharis pauciflora	SC
	Eleocharis quinqueflora var. fernaldii (Few-flowered spikerush)	
	Najas gracillima (Slender naiad)	SC
	Sparganium glomeratum (Clustered bur-reed)	SC
	Utricularia gibba (Humped bladderwort)	NS
	Utricularia purpurea (Purple-flowered bladderwort)	SC

¹¹ Minnesota Biological Survey. 1998. Cass County biological survey 1992-1995. Biological Report No. 59. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. 325 pp.

Clearwater Resource Management Plan Regarding Trails

Management of Tax Forfeit Lands

The County will manage the County's lands for the benefit of all Clearwater County residents. Management will focus on three broad areas: forest commodities, recreation, and wildlife habitat. To ensure that the County can continue to provide these benefits to its residents' the preservation of the land base, providing access to these lands, and enhancing forest diversity will be primary objectives of the Land Department.

Retention, Acquisition, Retention and Disposition (LD-P1, LDP2)

The County seeks to retain a tax forfeit land base that provides a continues flow of timber, recreational opportunities, protection of significant ecological and cultural features, and one that helps to minimize the cost of infrastructure to the tax payers.

The County at times will acquire land through tax forfeiture that is better suited for retention as conservation lands. The County may at times consider acquiring lands through purchase that may help to reduce the fragmented nature of the land base and improve the ability to manage the land base.

The County is open to the possibility of land exchanges with both public and private entities in order to consolidate its land holdings. Parcels open for consideration for exchange would include those that are:

- Small in nature and far from other County holdings,
- Lack good access
- Have little timber or recreation value

The dispossession of low value lands and consolidation of its land holdings will create opportunities for better management of resources through larger contiguous management areas, and a decrease in operational expenses through increased efficiencies.

Where public lands are scarce and access to particular high value County land holdings is poor the County will seek means to improve the access to those lands for timber management and/or recreation purposes.

Recreation (LD-OP8)

The County manages one on Long Lake in southern Clearwater County. The County also maintains seventeen (17) public water accesses throughout the county. The County will consider expansion of park opportunities to other areas of the county as opportunities emerge.

The County's primary involvement with recreation will be providing access to its lands through the network of roads that it maintains for logging purposes. This network of roads are often

thought of as trails and used as such by County residents to access forest lands for recreational purposes, which includes:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Berry Picking, sugar bushing, and other “traditional use” activities
- ATV and OHV trail use

The biggest challenge facing the County over the next 10 years will be managing the forest in terms of motorized and nonmotorized use. There will be some areas or trails where the County will want to promote motorized use, and there will be some areas where the County will want to discourage or restrict motorized use. The County does not currently have a set of policies that delineates where or when motorized vehicles will and will not be permitted.

The tax forfeit lands are currently classified as managed for off highway vehicle (OHV) use. This means they are open to OHV use unless posted closed. Off trail use is limited to the exemptions as stated in Minnesota Statute. OHV use is informal as there are no designated use trails or areas. The Mississippi State Forest is designated limited for OHV use which means OHVs on state administered land may only ride on trails posted open. The White Earth State Forest is currently proposed as limited as well. OHV users must be aware of these designations as they differ from the county designation.

Transportation System (LD-OP1)

The county has a forest road network of nearly ninety (90) miles. The vast majority is minimum maintenance and is travel at own risk. Approximately thirty (30) miles of this network are system roads and are bladed during the summer and have improvements such as gravel additions, culvert maintenance and weed control.

New road construction primarily occurs to facilitate timber management activities. These roads are generally closed following an activity and even permanently debilitated if the need to re-enter the area is deemed to be no sooner than a rotation of timber or it provides no further access need.

Crow Wing County Forest Resource Plan

5.7 Cooperative Activities

Mississippi River Corridor

Crow Wing and seven other counties are members of the Mississippi River Headwaters Board (MHB), a cooperative entity designed to oversee the proper management of private and public land along the river corridor. Of particular relevance to this management plan is the MHB's desire to have public lands retained within the corridor.

Mississippi River Corridor Policy

Lands within the Mississippi Headwaters corridor will be managed in accordance with the approved Mississippi Headwaters plan and ordinance adopted by Crow Wing County as per Minnesota statutes. Among the activities covered by the plan and ordinance with potential impact on the management of tax forfeit lands are: public roads, land uses, shoreland alterations and forestry, extractive uses, and public land ownership.

County Comprehensive Recreation Trails Plan (Chapter 2)

Crow Wing County manages a network of recreational trails, boat accesses, and two parks. In February 2012 the county adopted the *County Comprehensive Recreational Trail Plan* developed by the Land Services Department that focuses on near-term priorities for addressing trail management opportunities on county administered lands.

The plan was based on addressing recommendations generated during the effort's first phase. These major recommendations were:

1. Review the trail planning process.
2. Identify benchmarks for recreation trails.
3. Develop a decision making matrix for trail planning.
4. Support public access to recreation trails information.
5. Explore potential trail linkages that can enhance recreation opportunities on county-managed lands.

The plan identified actions for these types of trails: non-motorized summer trails, non-motorized winter trails, motorized summer trails, motorized winter trails, and water trails.

Chapter 6 of this plan presents details of the county's recreational facility system, the recreation trails plan, and management policies.

Chapter 6.0 Management: Recreation Facilities and Trails

6.2 Recreation Trails Plan

As discussed in Chapter 2, the county has county adopted a recreational trails plan that focuses on near-term priorities for addressing trail management opportunities on county administered lands. The plan addressed recommendations generated during the effort's first phase which work generated these outcomes:

1. A Crow Wing County Trail Planning Process was developed.
2. Benchmarking indicators were identified for each category of recreational trail type managed by the Crow Wing Land Services Department.
3. A Monitoring and Enforcement Plan was developed.
4. Decision making criteria were identified related to social, economic and environmental considerations in trail planning. An analysis was completed to apply environmental limiting factors to the development of summer motorized trails.
5. The Land Services Department initiated efforts to improve public access to trails information.
6. The Land Services Department began the process of reviewing proposed trail linkages to evaluate impacts on county-managed lands and opportunities to minimize negative impacts and support a collaborative trail project. Potential motorized and non-motorized trail linkages have been identified (see proposed trails in tables above).

Recreational Facilities and Trails Policy

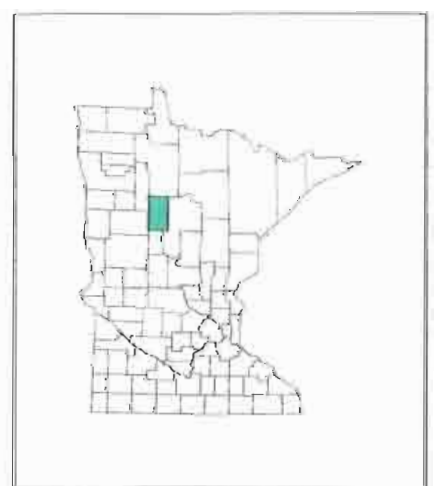
Regarding recreation uses on tax-forfeited land it is the policy of the Crow Wing County Land Services Department:

1. The Crow Wing County “Comprehensive Recreation Trails Plan”, prepared February 2012, as it may be amended from time to time, is incorporated into this plan.
2. Tax forfeited lands will be made available for various forms of recreational activities across a continuum of use intensity as follows:
 - a. Park: A relatively small (typically less than 40 acres) area in which recreation is the primary use and forest management is used for park enhancement and/or education. Multiple recreational opportunities may exist within a concentrated area. Most likely, a park will be highly facility oriented with a corresponding high level of management and maintenance activities. The types of uses likely to occur in a designated park include boat accesses, picnicking, play areas, and support functions (e.g., parking, toilets, shelters).
 - b. Dispersed Recreation: Unless otherwise designated or posted, tax forfeited lands will be available for dispersed forms of recreation. Dispersed recreation is defined as those activities which do not require developed infrastructure such as trails, parking areas, toilets, buildings, play equipment, improved campsites, and the like. Examples of dispersed recreation include hiking, hunting, bird watching, snowshoeing, berry gathering, and the like. Dispersed recreation expressly does NOT include off-travel with motorized vehicles except as may be explicitly allowed elsewhere in this plan.
3. Primitive camping on County-administered tax forfeit land is allowed under the following guidelines: camps cannot be used for more than 14 consecutive days; person wishing to camp more than 14 days must relocate their camp onto a site more than a mile distant from the first camp; camps cannot be established within a mile of any public campground or site; campers must remove all trash and debris from the site; live trees may not be felled for making a camp, accessing a camp, or for use as firewood; no camping is allowed in a wildlife management area that is under cooperative management agreement between the County and State, within a quarter-mile of a boat access, or in any other area designated no camping by the County.
4. Efforts will be made to develop ongoing partnerships with public and private interest regarding the planning, development and maintenance of designated Parks and Recreation trail systems where appropriate



**Hubbard
County
Tax-Forfeited
Lands
* * *
Forest
Resources
Management
Plan**

October 2002



Prepared by the Consultant Team of
Klaers, Powers & Associates *** Pro-West & Associates, Inc. *** Northern Software & Consulting

Hubbard County Forest Resources Management Plan

Adopted: October 2, 2002

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Cover Image

The cover is a mosaic of medium format color infrared aerial photography of Hubbard County, taken in May 2001 by Pro-West & Associates, Inc. The separate images have been georeferenced into a single mosaic to provide an unified view of the county's forests. Color infrared photography is used to delineate tree species as they leaf out in the spring.

Table 12 summarizes the total extent of trails in the county. Additional discussion can be found under the motorized/non-motorized discussion.

Administrator	Ski	Non-Motorized	Snowmobile / Motorized	Total
County (Grant In Aid)	8	10	172	190
DNR Forestry		33	104	137
State Trails		22	21	43
Total	8	65	297	370

Deer Herd Density – Forestry and Hunting

Deer hunting is a major recreational activity in Hubbard County. According to MnDNR surveys, the level of hunter pressure has steadily increased over the past five years. This is reflected in the number of deer killed which has increased from a decade low of roughly 3,000 (Park Rapids DNR field office area) in 1997 to not quite 11,000 by 2001.

According to MnDNR monitoring programs, the deer herd in Hubbard County has the second highest per square mile average density in the entire state. The density is routinely 50% higher than the desired level. While this presents good hunting prospects for hunters each fall, the situation poses serious problems for foresters trying to regenerate certain tree species. In particular, jack and red pine (and northern white cedar although there is little of this type in the county) are vulnerable to deer browsing. Many planted areas are completely browsed within a year or two of planting. Combined with the low level of fire used for regeneration and release, this situation makes it difficult to regenerate these forest types.

The DNR's response has been to issue double the number of antlerless deer hunting permits and to encourage hunters to shoot does. However, this strategy has only modest success. In years when the DNR increases the number of antlerless deer permits the actual number of such deer killed only rises slightly (ex: in 2001, 7,000 permits were issued but only 2,800 antlerless deer were killed – a number only slightly higher than the previous year when 4,500 permits were issued).

Motorized and Non-motorized Recreation

A growing point of controversy on forested lands throughout the state revolves around recreational trails – the so-called "motorized vs non-motorized" issue. The heart of the matter is the increasing level of demands being placed on a limited resource to satisfy the needs of people with significantly different perspectives on recreation. In addition, there is the concern by land managers, private and public, that certain uses damage the resource.

Nearly all the attention focuses on motorized uses with the major concern being the creation of unauthorized trails, cross country use that adversely impacts the resource, or excessive use of trails resulting in rutted, eroded trails. Motorized recreation users state that they are entitled to have access to public lands and that State gasoline tax funds set aside for motorized trails must be used to help provide this access.

Within or immediately adjacent to Hubbard County, most forms of motorized recreation are better served than elsewhere in the state. There is over 200 miles of designated ATV trails, a 120 mile off-highway motorcycle system, and various recognized forest trails open to their use.

In addition, the MnDNR has designated its forest lands as "managed" meaning that motor vehicles may operate on forest roads and trails unless they are posted and designated closed. Recent legislation prohibited off trail travel on state forests except for specified purposes during selected times of the year including building hunting stands, trapping, retrieving downed big game, and conducting forest management activities.

The MnDNR has undertaken a OHV system plan for the northwest region including Hubbard County. Among other things this plan proposes a designated ATV trail system centered on the Two Inlets State Forest and the area east to the Paul Bunyan State Forest. In addition, the Round River ATV trail in the Paul Bunyan Forest may have 52 miles of designated ATV trails.

The County feels that the State's actions adequately address the needs of motorized recreation without the County having to develop any new trails. While the County itself will not create new motorized trails, it may allow easements across appropriate land for trails as may be necessary and consistent with overall management objectives. The County will work with user groups, the DNR, and affected property owners on planning for future trails. In general, the County will encourage user groups to prepare comprehensive trail system plans so that the County, MnDNR, and others can evaluate an entire system of trails, even if development will occur a segment at a time.

The County will maintain its policy of closing any newly created forest roads or trails to motorized use. It will continue its policies that identify appropriate existing forest roads and trails for motorized use. The County will also seek to keep its policies consistent with State law and policy for state forested lands within the county. Because of the intermingled ownerships, this approach will minimize confusion and potential conflict.

The County will continue to have specifically designated non-motorized recreation areas. In general these include designated hunter/walking trails. In addition, the County is exploring the designation of blocks of land as non-motorized recreation areas. It must be noted that designation of areas for non-motorized recreation does not preclude mechanized forest management activities.

Visual Resource Management

The scenic quality of the forest is widely recognized as a value important to recreation, tourism, and local quality of life. Striving to achieve and maintain desired scenic values has become an integral part of forest management.

Obviously, the public perception of "visual quality" varies with the person and often are contradictory. One person's version of a "natural" looking forest may include dead and down trees while another's only includes stately pines with no underbrush. It is the land manager's challenge to find the appropriate balance.

In 1994 Hubbard County along with fifteen other northern counties and the MnDNR completed a visual quality classification of its lands which was then implemented through an adopted set of Visual Quality Best Management Practices. Three factors were used in the classification process: the perceived degree of sensitivity of users of a travel route or recreation area concerning landscape aesthetics; the volume and type of use a