

Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

MEMO: Agenda Item #12 A
DATE: May 26, 2021
SUBJECT: Presentation by MN DNR – Off-Highway Motorcycle Trails on OHF acquired parcels in Huntersville State Forest.
PRESENTER: MN DNR Staff

Background:

In spring of 2019, via a concerned citizen, LSOHC staff became aware of Public Input being sought by DNR Parks & Trails regarding the planned designation and construction of 11 additional miles of Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM) trails within the Huntersville State Forest in Wadena County. After further investigation, it became apparent that the 11 miles of OHM trails were being planned for construction upon OHF acquired parcels that had been acquired and transferred to DNR Forestry through the ML2015 Protecting Pinelands Sands Aquifer Forestlands – Phase II appropriation.

Appropriation Language:

M.L. 2015, First Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 1, Section 2

3(c) Protecting Pinelands Sands Aquifer Forestlands - Phase II

\$2,180,000 in the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire forest lands in Cass and Wadena Counties for wildlife management purposes under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 8, and to acquire land in fee for state forests under Minnesota Statutes, section 86A.05, subdivision 7. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan.

At the June 2019 Council meeting, Director Johnson reported to the Council that staff was watching the situation, communicating with DNR, and would be appraising the Council as staff received further information or became aware of developments. After subsequent communications with DNR, Director Johnson's impression was that DNR leadership was looking into the OHM trails proposal, would take into consideration the potential concerns of the Council and staff, and would get back to staff with further updates. No further information was received past Nov 2019.

In late April 2021, a concerned citizen informed LSOHC staff that DNR's trails construction was being planned to take place in summer 2021. Subsequently, staff solicited and received verification from DNR staff that construction is indeed planned for 11 new miles of OHM trails over OHF acquired parcels this summer.

At issue, for the Council's consideration and discussion, is the planned construction of 11 miles of new Off-Highway Motorcycle trails on OHF acquired parcels of state forest land, whether such trails are within the allowable or intended uses for these OHF acquired parcels, and whether the Council wishes to be informed of or involved in any such occurrences regarding OHF acquired parcels in the future.

DNR will present the Council with the background and current status of the trails development. Council questions and discussion will follow.

Attachment:

ML 2015 Protecting Pinelands Sands Aquifer Forestlands - Phase II Accomplishment Plan