

SAWYER COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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## **700 MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE SAWYER COUNTY FOREST ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Mission Statement for the Sawyer County Forest Access Management Plan shall be to plan for, provide, and regulate access to the County Forest:

- For the benefit of the public, including a wide variety of user groups.
- To ensure the sustainability of roads and trails for current and future generations.
- To protect and conserve the environment including soils, wetlands, waterways, and a wide variety of other forest flora and fauna.
- To recognize and find solutions to minimize conflicts among a wide variety of user groups.

## **701 CHAPTER/PLAN OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of the Road and Access Plan is to:

- Provide direction to the present and future Forestry Committees and resource managers working on the County Forest. The goal of the plan is to provide balanced access to a wide variety of groups while still protecting the natural resources.
- Maintain a network of roads and trails on the County Forest that will meet the needs for resource management and protection activities.
- Identify the distribution, density, and types of roads and trails and uses of roads and trails needed to establish a safe and efficient transportation and recreation system that complements the economic, environmental, and social interest in the County Forest.
- Identify the existing and future County Forest roads eligible for Transportation aids under s. 86.31(1), Wis. Stats.
- Identify areas on the County Forest where access is limited or restricted and provide for enforcement of limited access.
- Identify the provisions and criteria that will be policy when addressing management issues on the County Forest.

### **701.1 VEHICLE USE REGULATIONS ON ALL COUNTY FOREST LANDS**

The following regulations apply to roads/trails and access to the Forest by motorized vehicles. It is understood that vehicles used in the management of the Forest by staff or by special permission, may be exempted from any of the regulations listed:

- No off-road (cross-country) vehicle use is allowed.
- No motorized vehicles are allowed on road or trails with earthen berms, piled logging debris, gates or signs, even if signs are missing and berms damaged.
- No two-wheeled motorized vehicles are allowed on the Forest except state licensed motorcycles on roads classified as open access or as limited open access.
- No motor vehicle use is allowed from April 1st to May 15th (Spring Closure).

## **702 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY**

Resource management and protection activities, recreational uses, and other public uses on the Sawyer County Forest require several different types of access. The Sawyer County Forest is large and has diverse acreage throughout which a broad network of access routes has developed. A combination of topography, soils, vegetation, surface waters, seasons of the year, presence/absence of roads or trails, ownership of adjoining lands, and public regulations interact to control access to all parts of the County Forest.

Please note, the terminology of road and trail is often used interchangeably in this Chapter, as a majority of designated recreational trails are located on existing forest roads that are still maintained as forest roads, with the exceptions of the American Birkebeiner Ski Trail, Hatchery Creek Trails and single track mountain bike trails.

### **702.1 TIMBER HARVESTING ROADS**

Almost all of the existing roads and trails were originally developed as logging roads over many years by timber producers while in the process of harvesting and transporting forest products to the mills. Some were constructed as forest fire protection lanes, or trails used to reach popular hunting and fishing areas. The locations and standards for these earlier roads were not routinely established by County personnel. Prior to 1980, staff from the County Forestry Department or the DNR rarely designed the location or standards for these roads. Early access trails for timber removal were designed for frozen ground access and were built to accommodate timber harvesting equipment that was much smaller than equipment used today. Many of these trails were built with little regard to wetlands, slope, erosion control or other environmental concerns.

As the forestry program evolved through the 1970's and 1980's, more care and planning were implemented in the development of this road network. Bridges, culverts, and primary haul roads were built and installed providing feasible access to most areas of the forest.

Currently, a majority of the forest is accessible using the existing road system. Road construction will still be needed as remaining areas are accessed for forest management. Unsuitable roads will be abandoned or reclaimed and existing roads will be upgraded to allow access for modern equipment.

Over the years, the road and trail density and frequency of vehicle use on the County Forest has increased in response to an expanding number of motorized recreational vehicles and to an active Timber Harvest Program. Often, different uses have occurred on the same trails with minimal conflicts. But, the diverse demands for, and uses of the County Forest have reached the point where an integrated Access Management Plan is needed. The Plan should conscientiously address the following areas:

- User conflict between groups: snowmobiling versus cross-country skiing; hunting on foot versus use of vehicles for access to game populations; biking versus hunting, etc.
- Safety: pleasure riding of horses on the same trail with ATV vehicle traffic, or hiking.
- Erosion: soils eroding due to use, or over-use by vehicles.
- Damage to access: rutted or impassable roads requiring costly repair by the County or other specific user groups.
- Litter: depositing garbage and waste on the County Forest.
- Over-utilization of a resource: ruts, sediment on trails and little or no ground vegetation - e.g. vehicles allow easy access of people and gear (tree stands and bait) to remote areas of the Forest, excessive harvest of ruffed grouse along trails.
- Crowding: complaints about intensified competition as a result of better access from road and trail development.
- Fires: increase exposure of the resource to forest fire occurrence.
- Endangered species management: identification and protection of endangered plant and animal species.
- Invasive species: protection of the resource due to the introduction and presence of invasive species along travel routes and waterways.
- Developmental trends: managing access for preservation of County Forest solitude by limiting access versus development of high intensity use by additional roads, trails and unlimited access.
- Road placement, design and sustainability: some roads should be closed because of improper location and evaluated for replacement.
- Clear and concise policy for the public: an Integrated Access Management Plan is developed jointly by the County Forestry Committee, County Forest Administrator and Department of Natural Resources (DNR), with input from the general public for implementation.

## 705 MANAGEMENT BLOCKS

The Sawyer County Forest consists of seven (7) blocks of Forest comprising approximately 114,000 acres. They are located in different parts of the County and each has a different set of soil types. Because of the difference in soil types, amounts of lowland areas, and other factors, there may be different access proposals developed for each block.

- Nelson Lake Block  
This block is generally a clay-silt-loam soil. The predominant timber types are maple, basswood, mixed hardwood and aspen. The topography is generally flat with many lowland areas. Logging is done mainly in the winter months over frozen ground. When the logging is completed on most tracts, the access road will be closed with an earthen berm. In certain circumstances, if it is determined the access road is suitable to be left open, then the Forestry Department may decide to leave it open to the public, or gate it so it could be mowed. A number of roads have been left open, but are not drivable when the ground is not frozen. These roads are slowly growing shut. Other roads have been left open as access roads for recreational use.
- Seeley Hills Block  
This block has generally a sandy loam soil type. Timber types are mostly of the oak, aspen and pine types. Topography is rolling to hilly. Because of the hills, logging is more of a summer activity. Very few wetlands exist in this block. Sawyer County had a CCC Camp located near Little Smith Lake, south of Telemark. These workers created many fire lanes through this block of County Forest. Because of them, the public has always had very good access to this block. The distance between roads at this time is generally less than one (1) mile in any direction.
- Sissabagama Block  
This block generally has sandy loam type soils. The predominate timber types are oak and aspen. The topography is generally rolling. This block contains a number of wetlands and also a number of small pothole lakes. This is a long, narrow block.
- Edgewater Block  
This block has soils that are mostly loamy to sandy loam. The timber types vary from maple and basswood to oak and aspen. The area is somewhat hilly with many lowland wet areas at the bottom of the hills. Stoney Hill Road and Zettel Road split the block leaving almost no areas over a mile from a road.

- Couderay Block  
This block has soils that are loamy to sandy loam. This block has a wide variety of topography including extensive flat, poorly drained areas and rolling topography including steep erodible slopes. The timber types vary from oak and aspen to balsam and aspen.
- Draper Block  
This block has soils that are mainly clay loam. The timber types are mainly maple and basswood with patches of aspen and balsam. The block contains many wetlands so most timber cutting is done when the ground is frozen. This area may not be suitable for a year around ATV trail.
- Winter Block  
This largest block of the County Forest has soils that fit mostly in the clay loam category. The timber consists of maple, basswood and aspen. The terrain is relatively flat with many wetlands and tributaries. Some highland timber areas could be cut during the summer months if they adjoin a township road. The majority of timber cutting is done when the ground is frozen.

## 710 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The layout and construction of any new road or trail situated on the County Forest shall adhere to *Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality* (PUB-FR-093-95). This Access Management Plan addresses the need and diversity level of Forest roads and trails within the County Forest. Chapter 6 of the BMP Manual provides guidelines for road construction. Areas with highly erodible soil types, close proximity to streams or lakes, or steep slopes are identified on the erosion susceptibility map included in Chapter 900. Soil disturbance activities in these areas may require mitigating measures in excess of those currently listed in the Best Management Practices Manual PUB-FR-093-95. Wide buffers, sediment control structures and water diversion techniques will be used as appropriate in these sensitive areas.

*NOTE: The Best Management Practices for Water Quality, as they relate to trail construction and maintenance, are currently being refined and revised along with technical standards for trail construction. Once complete, a reference will need to be added to indicate where the standards and practices can be found. **NOT REVISED YET.***

## 715 FOREST ROAD AND RECREATIONAL TRAIL CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Sawyer County Forestry staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads and trails within the County Forest. These roads/trails may be constructed and maintained by the County and/or private contractors working under County supervision, other public resource agencies and in cooperative agreements with non-profit organizations. The specifications for road/trail construction and maintenance may vary with the frequency, duration, and planned use of each road/trail.

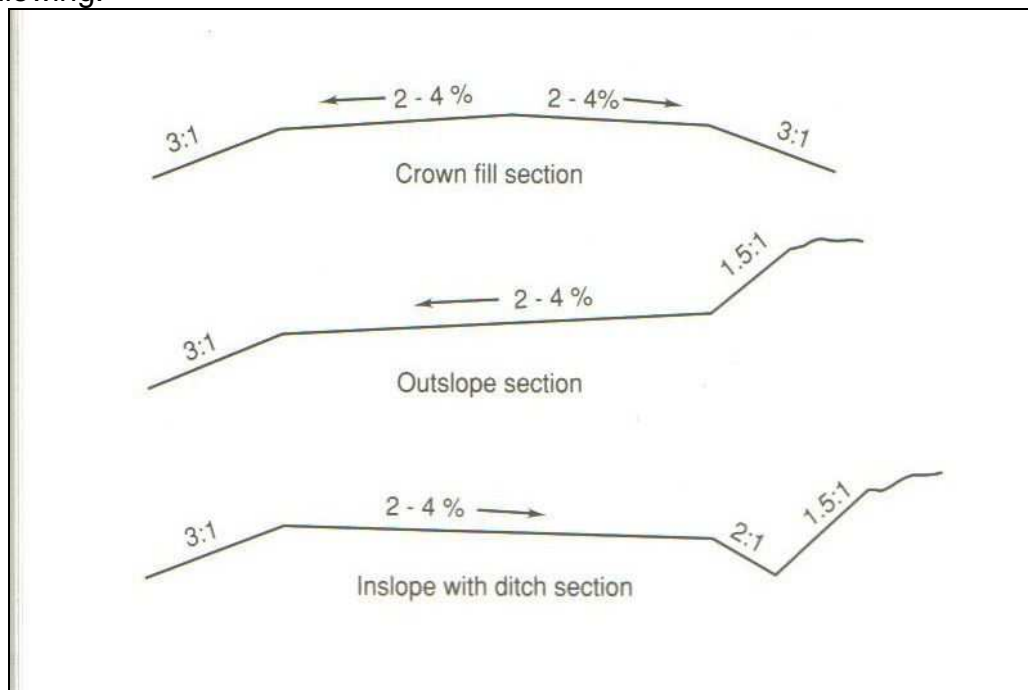
### 715.1 SUSTAINABLE ROAD/TRAIL DEFINITION

A sustainable road/trail is:

- Located, designed, and constructed to shed water effectively from the surface of the road/trail without causing damage or erosion to the road/trail surface or to the surrounding area.
- Road/trail can also be maintained in an environmentally, and socially acceptable condition for its designed purpose with a minimal, reasonable and affordable maintenance schedule.

### 715.2 ROAD/TRAIL SPECIFICATIONS AND DESIGNS

All new roads/trails will be constructed in accordance with standards outlined in Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality Handbook. All new roads and trails will be ditched and crowned as shown in the figure following.



New road/trail establishment will consider information identifying areas with sensitive soils and/or severe slopes that have the potential for adverse water quality and/or erosion impacts from land management practices. County Forestry staff will work with the local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) water resources staff to develop site-specific measures when appropriate. New roads/trails will be classified, at the time of construction, as one of the three major road/trail types described in this Chapter.

### 715.3 SAWYER COUNTY RUTTING POLICY/EXCESSIVE SOIL DISTURBANCE - FOREST ROADS AND RECREATIONAL TRAILS

These standards are required for Forest Certification. The same standards will be applied to both forest roads and recreational trails.

#### 715.3.1 Rutting Standards

Soil compaction and rutting can reduce the productivity of a site, disrupt surface drainage and infiltration, and contribute to erosion and sedimentation. Compaction occurs over broad areas, but does not necessarily result in visible depressions. Ruts are depressions, such as furrows or trenches, created by breaking through the forest floor.

#### 715.3.2 Guidelines

- Existing road/trail systems will be utilized when environmentally appropriate.
- The Forest Administrator will have final approval in designating the location of roads/trails, landings, and skid trails, and may consult with other County and DNR staff.
- Wisconsin Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality (BMP's) and this Plan will be followed during all phases of the timber sale to prevent or reduce erosion and sedimentation to surface waters and wetlands.
- Expanding the footprint of roads/trails, landings, and skid trails to maneuver around wet or muddy areas that develop during use is prohibited unless authorized by the Forest Administrator.
- It is expected that appropriate measures will be taken to prevent excessive rutting. If excessive rutting occurs, the forestry/trail operations will be suspended.
- The Forest Administrator may modify standards in this policy if modifications provide equal or greater soil and water protection. Depending on site conditions, rutting standards may need to be more restrictive or flexible. Details of and justification for modifications must be documented in the road/trail plan, timber sale narrative and timber sale field notes.

### 715.3.3 Standards

#### 715.3.3.1 Forest Roads

- Rutting is prohibited on forest roads/trails within a riparian management zone (RMZ). New forest roads/trails are to be located outside of RMZ's, except at stream crossings.
- In wetlands, a rut on a forest road/trail may not exceed fifty (50) feet in length with depths of six (6) inches or greater.
- In uplands, a rut on a forest road/trail may not result in channelized flow into a wetland or water body.
- Other ruts are acceptable provided it is shown that they can and will be repaired prior to final sale close out.

#### 715.3.3.2 Mountain Bike Trail Standards

- Refer to International Mountain Bike Association publications - "Building Better Trails" and "Trail Solutions"

#### 715.3.3.3 Landings

- Landings are prohibited in wetlands unless the timber sale is located in a large wetland complex without suitable upland landing sites. Wetland landings may only be used during frozen ground conditions. Details of and justification for modifications must be documented.
- In uplands, a rut on a landing may not result in channelized flow into a wetland or water body.
- Other ruts are acceptable provided it is shown that they can and will be repaired prior to final sale close out.

#### 715.3.3.4 Skid Trails

- Ruts with depths of six (6) inches or greater may not exceed a total of twenty-five (25) feet in any one hundred (100) feet.
- Total rut length on skid trails may not exceed ten (10) percent of the total length of skid trails.

#### 715.3.3.5 General Harvest Area

- The rutted area for an acre of general harvest area may not exceed five (5) percent (six (6) inches or deeper).
- The average rutted area per acre may not exceed two (2) percent of the total harvest area.

#### 715.3.3.6 Measurements

- **Forest Road Rut Length** is determined by measuring the length of ruts with depths of six (6) inches or greater.
- **Skid Trail Rut Length** is determined by measuring the total length of ruts and dividing by the total length of skid trails. The length of rut made by each wheel or track is measured separately.
- **General Harvest Area Ruted Area** is determined by measuring the length and width, in feet, of ruts greater than six (6) inches in depth, in an acre of harvest to determine square feet of ruted area. This total is divided by 43560.

Classifying a soil disturbance as "excessive" does not mandate closing of a forest/road trail; however, actions should be taken, as appropriate, to minimize further soil disturbances. If a forest road/trail has soil disturbances that exceed the excessive threshold, then the expectation is that the contractor/trail steward will contact the Forest Administrator (or vice versa) and together they will evaluate the disturbance and determine what actions, if any, are needed to repair or mitigate the effects of the disturbance.

#### 715.4 FOREST ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

Four (4) types of forest roads occur on the County Forest: 1) Permanent primary roads; 2) Permanent secondary roads; 3) Temporary Roads; and 4) Obsolete Roads.

##### 715.4.1 Permanent Primary Roads

Primary roads are designed, constructed and maintained for year round use according to State Town Road standards and may be considered for County Forest Road Aid payment. These roads serve as essential arteries and are located to facilitate multiple use management. At this time, Sawyer County has no roads that fall in this category. As funding allows, roads will be prioritized to be considered for upgrades to primary roads and potentially County Forest Roads.

##### 715.4.2 Permanent Secondary Roads

Secondary roads are roads maintained as part of a permanent road system, but are generally narrower than primary roads (10-14 foot drivable surface) resulting from logging operations that are integrated into the

County system. These roads are maintained as needed and primarily for multiple use benefits, including Forest Management, Wildlife Management, fire protection, and/or general public recreation. In general, these roads are secondary arteries leading from town roads. Some are maintained for public travel, others are restored after use and closed to motor vehicle travel.

#### 715.4.3 Temporary Roads

Temporary roads are almost always used for timber management purposes. They are generally short segments of roads designed and constructed for short-term use and when the activity is completed, these roads are closed AND reclaimed in accordance with the timber sale prospectus and contract. These roads are naturally or artificially revegetated and may be closed by use of earthen berms or other physical barriers.

The need for temporary new roads will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will be permitted only when approved and designed as part of a timber sale prospectus or under other special circumstances. Consideration will be given to the objectives within each County Forest Block, existing road density, potential use, soil type and other nearby roads. New trails constructed as temporary roads should be closed and reclaimed in order to keep road densities on the forest from increasing.

#### 715.4.4 Obsolete Roads

Scattered throughout the Forest are numerous old roads and trails, constructed for timber harvest, that are no longer suitable for future use. Many of these roads and trails were initially constructed for frozen ground conditions. Roads and trails categorized as obsolete may have been designed poorly, located in unsuitable locations, have a high risk of erosion, or may impact water quality.

The intent of the Obsolete Road classification is to gradually remove these roads from the County Forest and return them to forested settings. Once classified as obsolete, the roads should be removed from the trail inventory. A separate list of these roads should be maintained for the purpose of monitoring the status of the reclamation or restoration, and to assure that these roads are not designated for forest management or recreational use.

Obsolete roads should be closed to motor vehicle use including timber harvest activities. Roads should also be reclaimed whenever possible,

including repair of any rutting, erosion control problems, and water quality issues.

Criteria for consideration of an obsolete road will include any or all of the following:

- Steep slopes
- Soils with a high potential for erosion
- Streams or wetland crossings
- Drainages that could deliver silts and sediments into nearby streams or lakes
- Road does not serve any future management purpose
- Management area can be accessed using other, more acceptable roads
- Environmental, cultural, social, or other factors would benefit by abandonment

#### 715.5 FORDS

The County Forestry Department has found that culverts typically require a high degree of maintenance, especially on those trails open to public motor vehicle travel. The County began to test rock ford crossings during the late 1990's. A ford crossing is constructed by replacing stream bottoms with four to eight inch (4-8") rocks, while maintaining the original elevation of the stream bottom. This allows traffic to cross through the water without causing erosion or sedimentation. The following are ford crossings in use on the County Forest:

- Cold Brook - SW:NE of Section 5, Township 42 North, Range 9 West
- Unnamed stream in the NE:NW of Section 24, Township 37 North, Range 5 West

#### 715.6 ACCESS ACROSS PRIVATE LANDS

It is often necessary to cross private or other lands in order to conduct forest management activities. Whenever an access point across other lands will be repeatedly needed, the Forest Administrator shall make a reasonable effort to attempt to secure an Easement deeded to the County for forest management purposes. These easements shall be requested for official use only with firm language outlining the County's responsibility to repair any damages that occur as a result of a timber management activity conducted by the County or designee. These easements may be purchased at the discretion of the Forestry Committee.

In cases where adjoining landowners are willing to allow access, but are not willing to grant an easement, or the access will be infrequent, a letter of agreement should be executed.

## **720 ROAD AND TRAIL DESIGNATIONS**

Any road or trail on the County Forest may be used for forest management activities (e.g. timber harvesting, timber sale establishment, etc.) with prior approval from the County Forest Administrator.

Every road and trail on the County Forest has been inventoried, numbered and designated with classifications as to the type of allowable or restricted use. No undesignated roads or trails are part of the road inventory and classification. There are three major classifications of roads and trails on the County Forest. As part of these major classifications, there are also several designations within each class. They are defined as follows:

### **720.1 OPEN ACCESS**

Road is open to all motor vehicle travel, provided the vehicle is either a state licensed or state registered vehicle.

#### **720.1.1 Open Access (Forest Road)**

Road is designated as a forest road. Open to all motor vehicle travel, providing the vehicle is either state licensed or state registered.

#### **720.1.2 Open Access (ATV/Snowmobile Trail)**

Road is designated as an ATV/Snowmobile trail but is open to all motor vehicle travel as defined in the Open Access classification.

#### **720.1.3 Open Access (ATV/Snowmobile/Mountain Bike Trail)**

Road is designated as an ATV/Snowmobile/Mountain Bike trail. Open to all motor vehicle travel as defined in the Open Access classification.

#### **720.1.4 Open Access (Snowmobile)**

Road is designated as a snowmobile trail, open to all motor vehicle travel as defined in the Open Access classification.

#### 720.1.5 Open Access (Mountain Bike)

Road is designated as a mountain bike trail. Open to all motor vehicle travel as defined in the Open Access classification.

### 720.2 LIMITED OPEN ACCESS

Open to state licensed vehicles only, and snowmobile use when ground is snow covered. Restricts the use of ATV's (LUV's) except for big game retrieval as outlined in Section 750.2.3.

#### 720.2.1 Limited Open Access (Forest Road):

Road is designated as a forest road. Open to state licensed vehicles only, and snowmobile use when ground is snow covered.

#### 720.2.2 Limited Open Access (Snowmobile)

Road is designated a state funded snowmobile trail. Open to motor vehicle travel as defined in Limited Open classification.

#### 720.2.3 Limited Open Access (Mountain Bike)

Road is designated as a mountain bike trail. Open to motor vehicles as defined in the Limited Open classification.

#### 720.2.4 Limited Open Access (Motorized Recreational Exclusive)

Road/trail is designated motorized recreational exclusively, to include:

##### 720.2.4.1 ATV/Snowmobile Exclusive

Designated trail open only to state registered ATV and Snowmobile use.

##### 720.2.4.2 Snowmobile Exclusive

Designated trail open only to state registered snowmobile use.

##### 720.2.4.3 ATV Exclusive

Designated trail open only to state registered ATV use.

### 720.3 CLOSED ACCESS

Road is open to non-motorized access only.

#### 720.3.1 Closed Access (Forest Road)

Road is designated forest road open only to non-motorized traffic.

#### 720.3.2 Closed Access (Hunter Walking Trail)

Road is designated Hunter Walking Trail, open only to non-motorized traffic. Use of non-motorized wheeled vehicles (with the exception of game retrieval carts) is prohibited from September 15 to December 31 of each year. Trail is maintained and mowed periodically.

#### 720.3.3 Closed Access (Recreational Exclusive)

Trail is maintained as non-motorized recreational trail exclusively to include:

##### 720.3.3.1 Single Track Bicycle Trails

##### 720.3.3.2 Ski Trails

Refer to maps of County Forest blocks or master list of roads detailing designated roads and trails in map section.

### 720.4 SIGNAGE

In order to communicate to the public the designations of uses on forest roads and trails, signs will be posted as to the uses allowed. The roads and trails will be signed as follows:

#### 720.4.1 Closed Access

Either signed as closed, or road/trail will be gated or bermed.

#### 720.4.2 Open Access

Road/trail will be signed with a BLACK ATV sign. State funded ATV/Snowmobile trails are signed with BROWN ATV/Snowmobile signs.

#### 720.4.3 Limited Open Access

Will remain unsigned.

All recreational designated roads/trails will be signed with the corresponding trail designation.

In addition, maps will be available online at the Sawyer County website and at the Forestry Office for all County Forest Blocks detailing road/trail designations. Informational signs will be erected at major County Forest access sites.

## **725 RECREATIONAL TRAIL ACCESS**

These trails provide access for many recreational opportunities on the County Forest. An important role of the County Forest is to provide sustainable recreational trails that cause minimal long-term natural resource damage, and provide a quality recreational experience for the user. Trails may be temporarily or permanently closed or relocated by Forestry Administrator/Forestry Committee decision for the protection of the forest environment and/or protection of the users.

All of the recreational uses of the County Forest have corresponding maps in Chapter 900:

- Snowmobile/ATV trail map
- CAMBA trail map
- Seeley Hills Ski and Bike trail map
- Hatchery Creek Park map
- American Birkebeiner Ski Trails maps
- Hunter/walking trail maps

Trail use by organized events must go through a County application process.

- A per entrant fee will be assessed if there is a sponsor charge to enter the event.
- Organized trail events and group-sponsored activities must protect Sawyer County with a minimum of a one million (\$1,000,000) dollar liability insurance coverage. The group must provide a Certificate of Insurance as proof of coverage that shows Sawyer County as additionally funded.
- Each permit application will be submitted to the County Forest Administrator and the Forestry Committee will be responsible for the review and approval/denial of each trail use permit.
- The trail steward of each trail system will be advised and consulted for each application.
- The safety of others and the environmental impact of the trail system and infrastructure will be two (2) important criteria for approval.
- A separate account will be set up to collect the funds (other than Birkie Trail Usage) to be used for repair/maintenance on said trail.

## 725.1 ROAD AND TRAIL CLOSURES

### 725.1.1 Seasonal Closure

Forest roads and trails will be closed to all vehicles (motorized and non-motorized) from April 1st to May 15th each year. The Forest Administrator has the authority to open or close trails and to extend or shorten the closure period. (A common goal of surrounding counties and state ownership is to develop a uniform closure period for the area for the benefit of tourism and trail users. Every attempt will be made to enact closures that are consistent and acceptable to municipalities in the surrounding areas).

During years of very high fire danger, road and trail closure may be extended or implemented. Roads and trails will be closed to protect road and trail surfaces to ensure their sustainable use, and to protect wetlands and waterways. Road and trail surfaces are at much greater risk to damage during this time period due to ground frost conditions, spring runoff, ponded/standing water, and saturated soils. The following vehicles will be exempt from the closure period:

- Snowmobiles and snow grooming equipment
- County and State vehicles performing assigned duties.
- Logging equipment on a site-specific basis if pre-approved by the Forestry Committee
- Emergency vehicles
- Maintenance vehicles with prior approval of the Forest Administrator.
- Other needs as brought to the attention of the Forestry Committee.

As roads and trails are built to sustainable standards, they may be left open year round at the Forestry Committee's discretion. ATV trails will be classified as sustainable if they fit the definition and are capable of being maintained within the allowable grant funding per mile (\$450/mile) for general maintenance. The Nine Mile Loop (9-Mile Loop), Trail #11, is open year around on a trial basis.

### 725.1.2 Additional Closures

Trail use may be temporarily or permanently closed and/or relocated for the protection of the Forest environment and/or protection of the users. The County Forest Administrator may temporarily close any road or trail for a period of 45 days, for the safety of the users and to limit environmental damage until the Forestry Committee can make a formal decision on a course of action.

## **730 RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS**

In addition to providing trails for wheeled vehicle use, the County Forest may also provide and designate restricted areas within the County Forest Blocks where motorized equipment is not permitted unless authorized by the Forestry Committee. The principle intent of restricting access shall be to prevent environmental damage to sensitive areas, protect historical or archeological sites, protect endangered and threatened species, provide for human safety and provide areas for quiet, secluded recreation.

## **735 RECREATIONAL TRAIL CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE**

Requests for recreational trails must be reviewed and approved by the Forestry Committee. Groups requesting specific trail development or use must present a plan for the long-term funding and maintenance of proposed trails.

### **735.1 RECOMMENDED PROCESS REGARDING REQUESTS TO CONSTRUCT AND/OR MODIFY RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

- Present concept, area, rough location and design to the Sawyer County Forest Administrator for approval to layout and flag.
- Physically layout, flag and GPS trail.
- Present plan to Forest Administrator for preliminary review to determine if plan is consistent with Forest Plan.
- Present plan to Forestry Committee. Details of plan are to include the trail purpose, potential use, specific location and route, phases, who, how and when to build and maintain, and how funded.
- Periodically update the Forest Administrator and Forestry Committee on the progress of the current phase(s) and before the next or additional phases are begun.

### **735.2 CONSTRUCTION**

Construction of any recreational trail in which the activity would increase erosion potential of one (1) acre or more of land is subject to State and Federal Storm-water runoff requirements (NR 216), Wis. Admin. Code and s. 283.33, Wis. Stats. Construction or development for silvicultural purposes is presently exempt from these requirements. Recreational trail development in Sawyer County that meets these parameters will employ Best Management Practices for Water Quality (PUB-FR-093-07 Rev., Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality) to mitigate any adverse impacts. In addition, an Erosion

Control Plan will be prepared for each project depicting the location of the project and surrounding wetlands and what erosion control measures will be employed and submitted to the DNR (Department of Natural Resources).

#### **740 OFF-ROAD OR OFF-TRAIL RECREATIONAL USE BY VEHICLES**

The intent of this section is to prohibit the "off-road" or "cross-country" use of all vehicle types.

**Prohibited:** Operation or use of all motorized and non-motorized vehicle types (including bikes) on the Sawyer County Forest is prohibited everywhere unless:

- The vehicle is being used on a "designated" road or trail approved by the Forestry Committee, and the vehicle type is listed in this Chapter as an allowable type for that specific designated road or trail type, or
- The vehicle is a non-motorized type of hand-pulled cart and is designed for and being utilized for carting/removal of large game from the forest, or
- County or State employees in the performance of their job duties, or
- By permission from the Forest Administrator for special circumstances.

#### **745 DESIGNATED NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

Trail use may be temporarily or permanently closed and/or relocated for the protection of the Forest environment and/or protection of the users.

##### **745.1 HIKING TRAILS**

- American Birkebeiner Ski Trails
- "OO" Nordic Ski Trails
- Hatchery Creek Park Trails
- Seeley Hills Ski Trails
- Single track mountain bike trails

All areas of the County Forest are open to hiking or foot travel unless marked with signs closing the area. Closure to foot travel will normally not occur except in special circumstances such as erosion control projects, or for management activities that may endanger public safety.

##### **745.2 BICYCLE TRAILS**

- Mountain bike trails
- Seeley Hills mountain bike trails
- Single track mountain bike trails

All trails and roads are open for recreational bicycle use, except Hunter/Walking Trails which are closed from September 15th through December 31st of each year. Off-trail mountain bike use is not permitted.

**Allowable Uses for Single Track Trails:** hiking, biking, snowshoeing, hunting, etc.

**Restricted Uses for Single Track Trails:** motorized vehicle, horseback riding.

### 745.3 HUNTER/WALKING TRAILS

Hunter/Walking trails are found in these blocks. See map in Chapter 900. Trails are mowed periodically.

- Birchwood Block
- Totogatic Flowage/Nelson Lake Block
- Seeley Hills Block
- Couderay/Weirgor Block
- Sissabagama Block
- Winter Block
- Draper Block

**Allowable Uses:** Hunting, hiking, berry picking, etc. Non-motorized vehicle use allowed other than hunting seasons.

**Restricted Uses:** Wheeled vehicles of any kind will not be allowed during hunting seasons (with the exception of non-motorized big game retrieval carts) - the period being September 15th through December 31st of each year.

### 745.4 CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS

- American Birkebeiner Ski Trail
- Hatchery Creek Park Trails
- Seeley Hills Ski Trails

**NOTE: Dogs are not permitted on the Birkie Trails or Hatchery Creek Trails once the trails are snow covered and groomed.**

**Allowable Uses:** Cross-country skiing, biking, hiking, hunting, berry picking, etc.

**Restricted Uses:** Ski-jouring, dog sledding, horseback riding, motorized vehicle use.

## 745.5 HORSEBACK RIDING TRAILS

Sawyer County currently has no designated trails for horseback riding.

All trails and roads within the County Forest are open for horseback riding with the exception of designated cross-country ski trails and single track bicycle trails. Off-trail horseback riding is not permitted. Horseback riding may be further restricted, by amendment to the Sawyer County Owned Land Ordinance, if erosion and other environmental damage begins to occur.

## 750 **MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

The use of motorized vehicles on the County Forest continues to increase. The design, maneuverability, and power of the vehicles have improved to the point where they are capable of operation and, often are operated across every type of terrain on the Forest. This has led to more widespread and greater use, increased trail use conflicts, environmental damage, and increased expenses for trail maintenance. Additional regulation restrictions on these motorized vehicles (e.g. trucks, ATV's, dirt bikes, motorcycles, LUV's, etc.) is needed to protect the County Forest and limit adverse impacts on non-motorized areas.

### 750.1 SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Two (2) types of groomed snowmobile trails are authorized on the County Forest: 1) State-funded trails; and 2) Local club trails. Snowmobile trails are located both on and off County Forest land. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance, and insurance obligations between Sawyer County and the Sawyer County Snowmobile/ATV Alliance. Changes to designated trails within the Sawyer County Forest must come before the Forestry Committee for approval.

**Allowable Uses:** Snowmobiles must be registered.

**Restricted Uses:** Snowmobile trails are closed to vehicles over 900 pounds once trails are groomed.

Sawyer County does not officially open or close the snowmobile trail system. Trail use is at your own risk. People are urged to call the Sawyer County Forestry Department or the Chambers of Commerce to get updates on trail conditions.

#### 750.1.1 State-Funded Trails

A system of approved and funded snowmobile trails is authorized on designated trails and forest roads. This system is part of the statewide network of snowmobile trails which links Sawyer County with adjoining

Counties as well as the rest of the State. Snowmobile registration and out-of-state user fees are used to support trail development, signing, maintenance, grooming and bridge construction.

#### 750.1.2 Local Club Trails

A smaller network of local club-sponsored snowmobile trails is also permitted on designated trails and logging roads. Maintenance of these trails is supported by club membership fees and fundraising activities.

#### 750.1.3 State Funded Snowmobile Trails - 334.8 miles in Sawyer County

- Bayfield/Frog Creek Trail - 20.5 miles
- Blueberry Trail - 8.7 miles
- Chetac Trail - 8.0 miles
- Nine Mile Loop/Exeland Trail - 18.2 miles
- Dead Horse Connector Trail - 8.6 miles
- Fish Trap Trail - 6.0 miles
- Fish Trap Trail North - 13.0 miles
- Fish Trap Trail - 13.5 miles
- Grade Trail - 3.0 miles
- LCO Connector/Little Round Trail - 11.8 miles
- Loretta Draper Trail - 6.0 miles
- Lost Land Lake Trail - 14.5 miles
- Moose Lake Trail - 12.0 miles
- Moose Lake/Ghost Lake Trail - 12.0 miles
- Musky Tale Trail - 8.5 miles
- Ojibwa Trail - 14.0 miles
- Rusk County Trail - 5.0 miles
- Seeley Connector - 6.9 miles
- Seeley Hills Trail - 48.6 miles
- Spider Lake Trail - 5.1 miles
- Stone Lake-Edgewater-Birchwood Trail - 17.0 miles
- Stone Lake/Whitefish Trail - 17.2 miles
- Tally Ho Trail - 7.5 miles
- Trail 40 North - 10.5 miles
- Trail 63 North - 6.5 miles
- Trail 63 South - 6.2 miles
- Tuscobia to Rusk County Trail - 26.0 miles

#### 750.1.4 Undesignated Snowmobile Trails

Undesignated trails are those not approved as part of the official County snowmobile trail system and are not funded under the DNR Snowmobile Aids program. Travel off of a designated snowmobile trail is permitted only on those roads identified as Open Access or as Limited Open Access within the Road and Access Management Plan. No cross-country use is permitted.

## 750.2 ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) TRAILS

Sawyer County has a number of state-funded ATV trails. See 735.1 for information on how to request construction or modification of trails. See 725.1 for trail closure dates.

The Sawyer County Owned Land Ordinance regulates the use of ATV's on trails not designated as ATV trails and detailed information on open areas and trails contained in the Road and Access Management Plan. The following is a summary of regulations applying to ATV use:

**Allowable Uses:** ATV's must be registered.

**Restricted Uses:** Cross-country travel is not permitted. Motorized vehicles are not allowed on roads or trails blocked with earthen berms, piled logging debris, signs, gates, or other closures installed by, or directed to be installed by the County. Motor vehicle travel is allowed only on those roads and trails designated open by the County. No ATV use is allowed from April 1st through May 15th.

### 750.2.1 ATV Defined

For the purpose of use on County Forest Lands, the definition of an ATV is described in s. 340.01(2g) Wis. Stats. as follows:

- Engine driven device having a new weight of 900 pounds or less
- Width of 48 inches or less
- Seat designed to be straddled by the operator
- Travels on 3 or more low pressure tires
- Tires mounted on a rim with a maximum diameter of 12 inches
- Tires designated to be inflated with a pressure not to exceed 6 psi

### 750.2.2 State Funded ATV Trails in Sawyer County

- |                                      |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ● <u>Winter Trails - 96.3 miles</u>  | ● <u>Summer Trails - 81.4 miles</u>  |
| Dead Horse Connector - 8.6 miles     | Dead Horse Connector - 8.6 miles     |
| LCO Day Use Trail - .6 miles         | LCO Day Use Trail - .6 miles         |
| Louie's Landing - 13.0 miles         | Louie's Landing - 13.0 miles         |
| Nine Mile Loop - 9.0 miles           | Nine Mile Loop - 9.0 miles           |
| Phipps to Seeley - 5.6 miles         | Phipps to Seeley - 5.6 miles         |
| Trail 15/Seeley Hills - 27.0 miles   | Trail 15/Seeley Hills - 27.0 miles   |
| Stone Lake to Birchwood - 15.0 miles | Stone Lake to Birchwood - 15.0 miles |
| Trail 31 to Barnes - .8 miles        | Trail 31 to Barnes - .8 miles        |
| Trail 5/3 - 7.0 miles                | Island Lake Trail - 1.8 miles        |
| Trail 6 - 9.7 miles                  |                                      |

### 750.2.3 Big Game Retrieval

No cross-country travel is allowed by motorized vehicles. ATV 's are allowed to use Limited Open trails for big game retrieval providing that:

- 1) No firearms are in possession
- 2) One ATV with maximum of 2 people
- 3) Animal must be tagged prior to entry

### 750.3 OTHER MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL VEHICLE TRAILS

As other grant and funding opportunities become available for funding and maintenance of both winter and summer use off-road vehicle (ORV) or motorcycle (MC) trails systems, the Forestry Committee may choose to consider these trail opportunities at that time. This trail network would permit ORV or MC use only on this designated trail system. State funds may be available to support trail construction and maintenance. The Forestry Committee may enter into agreements with clubs or organizations for the responsibility of signing and maintenance of these trails. This trail network may involve a combination of both public and private lands.

Currently, two-wheel motorized travel (mini-bikes, dirt bikes, motorcycles) are not permitted anywhere on the County Forest with the exception of state licensed, street legal motorcycles on roads and trails open to motorized access.

#### 750.3.1 LUV's (Lightweight Utility Vehicles)

The use of LUV's on the County Forest will be considered at the end of the two (2) year pilot project scheduled to end in September 2009. Currently, Sawyer County is participating in a pilot project to evaluate the effects of LUV's on state funded ATV trails.

## **755 RECREATIONAL TRAIL SIGNS**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Trail Signing Handbook will be used as the guide for posting standardized signs and will assist in promoting uniformity for trail signing through the County. Only trail signs that provide information for safety, regulations, or trail directions will be permitted.

Signs on the County Forest will be used discreetly to perform and function with minimal disruption to the multiple uses of the County Forest. Private signs promoting personal, commercial, or political objectives will not be permitted without authorization from Sawyer County. Private directional business signs must conform to design standards. All trail signs must be mounted on posts, not trees, and follow DNR trailing signing

guidelines. Signs erected by the County for management purposes or by non-profit recreational trail groups will be as follows:

- Informational type signs
- Interpretive Signs - to educate the general public about Forest Management Practices
- Public Land Signs - to identify the land as Sawyer County Forest property
- Trail Markers - to provide direction and safety to trail users
- Scientific, Historical or Geological Markers - to identify points of interest
- Recreational Facility Markers - to identify park entrances, etc.
- Directional Markers
- Regulatory Type Signs - to regulate the use of the County Forest in specific areas

#### 755.1 SIGNING STANDARDS

To assure that signs will serve a purpose without damaging aesthetics, the following standards will be maintained:

- All signs will be mounted on posts - not trees.
- Signs will be of neat appearance.
- Signs on trails must conform to any applicable snowmobile, ATV, bike, etc. state standards and be approved by the Forestry Committee.
- All authorized signs shall be protected by the Recreational Sign Ordinance from being damaged, defaced, obstructed, removed, or possessed by unauthorized persons.
- All unauthorized signs will be removed by the County Forestry and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) staff. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during removal.
- Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under s. 943.13(3), Wis. Stats.

#### **760 RECREATIONAL TRAIL STEWARDS**

The maintenance/grooming of these designated trails will be assigned to local stewards of the trail that the County has granted the responsibility of trail management and maintenance. The past responsibility for the historical development and the current maintenance of these specific trails will be the criteria for granting stewardship of these trail systems. Assigned stewards of these trails must show ability and want for the maintenance of these trails. A management plan must be submitted to the Forestry Committee every five (5) years for review and approval. Infrastructure improvement and trail maintenance projects must be approved on an annual basis.

**Definition:** A **Recreational Trail Steward** is a cooperating group, club, organization or individual that is **appointed** bi-annually by the Forestry Committee to manage a defined trail system for which the Committee is responsible for oversight and management.

**Purpose:** The purpose of appointing Trail Stewards shall be to facilitate efficient management of recreational trails by individuals or groups not employed by Sawyer County for the benefit of the general public, specific trail users, and the protection of the environment.

**Application:** Individuals or organizations shall apply bi-annually to the Forestry Committee by May 15th of even-numbered years to be considered for appointment as a Trail Steward for a specific trail system. Individuals or organizations wishing to become or continue as a Trail Steward shall complete a written application supplied by the Forestry Committee.

**Written Trail Management Plans:** Trail Steward applications shall include a new or updated written management plan and map (GPS accurate +/- 50 feet) for the trail system. The new or updated written management plan shall become a part of this plan and placed in Chapter 900.

**Appointments:** Trail Stewards serve at the pleasure of the Forestry Committee and their appointment is contingent upon a majority vote of approval by the Committee.

**Authority, Expectations and Responsibilities:** Trail Steward applications shall define expectations, responsibilities, and authority of the Steward and of the Forestry Committee. The Forestry Committee shall retain all authority assigned to it by Federal, State and County law. The Forestry Committee may assign complete or partial responsibility to Trail Stewards for management of a trail system. Responsibilities, expectations and any temporary authority the Committee may retain or assign to a Trail Steward shall be clearly defined in the Trail Steward application. This delegation of responsibility does not imply any financial commitment or support by the County.

## **765 WATER ACCESS**

As a result of the wide distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the County Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall County Forest Access Management Plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the County Forest primarily for recreational activities. In addition, these water access points also provide water supply points for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structures. The existing water access points will be maintained to provide a place to launch a small fishing boat, canoe or kayak. Not all watercraft will be able to

use these access points. These landings were built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing boats for longer than twenty-four (24) hours is prohibited.

#### 765.1 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS SITES MAINTAINED BY TOWNS

- Etlingers Landing on Nelson Lake
- Smith Lake
- Price Dam Road on Lake Winter

All new sites for developed water access must be reviewed and approved by the Forestry Committee.

#### 765.2 UNDEVELOPED WATER ACCESS POINTS

Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the County Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats, canoes or kayaks but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe.

- |                   |                  |
|-------------------|------------------|
| ● Weirgor Lake    | ● Horseshoe Lake |
| ● Camp Smith Lake | ● Zettel Lake    |
| ● Green Lake      | ● Heron Lake     |

All new sites for undeveloped water access must be reviewed and approved by the Forestry Committee.

### **770 WILD LAKES**

The surface waters encompassed under the Wild Lakes designation include those restricted use areas that are not open to any gasoline-powered vehicles, watercraft, or snowmobiles - except when snow covered. In general, all or most of the shorelines of these lakes and streams are owned by Sawyer County. Counties may request that townships, under authority of s. 30.77(3), Wis. Stats., establish regulations restricting motorized use on these surface lakes. Canoes, kayaks, and boats propelled by wind, oars, or electric motors are permitted. Gasoline or diesel powered equipment is not permitted. The intent of these restrictions is to protect the aquatic resources of these lakes but still allow human access.

### **775 WETLANDS**

In addition to surface waters, all wetlands on the County Forest are closed to motorized recreational vehicle use when soils are not frozen. Vehicle use during non-frozen seasons causes soil rutting, compaction and damage to vegetation. The wetlands are not listed individually here but include all areas where soils, groundwater or surface

waters support the growth of vegetation commonly associated with wetland plant communities.

## **780 ACCESS TO PRIVATE LANDS**

Applications by private parties to build or improve access roads through County Forest land will be considered by the Forestry Committee on a case-by-case basis. The following stipulations will be adhered to before a "Low Use Access Permit" is granted:

- No legal easement will be granted, just permission to cross County lands.
- The permit is non-transferable, unless approved by the Sawyer County Forestry Committee. New landowners must apply to continue the land use agreement.
- Access roadway may not exceed 20 feet in width.
- Road improvements and upgrading must be approved and will be supervised by the Forestry Department staff. Prior notification of three (3) days is required before work starts.
- All wood cut is the property of Sawyer County. Stumpage value will be charged for timber cut to make a road.
- Roadway must be open to the public through County land. No private gates will be erected on County land.
- The County continues full ownership of the improved roadway; however, it shall not be liable for maintenance or upkeep of the road.
- Permittee waives any rights to any declaration of ownership or interest in the road on County land for administrative costs as a result of this "Low Use Access Permit." The access permit is granted upon the Permittee's and Forest Administrator's signatures and any fees being received by Sawyer County.
- The "Low Use Access Permit" shall be written for a five-year (5) period with a five dollar (\$5.00) per year fee. Twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) shall be collected before the permit is signed by Sawyer County. Any changes will be determined by the Forestry Department.
- The Permit may be cancelled by a thirty (30) day written notice should the use interfere with present or future management objectives of the County.

## **785 PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS**

Access on the County Forest for utility reasons is covered under Chapter 500, Special Uses.

## **790 RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ON TRAILS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

The County will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations in the development and maintenance of any publicly accessible County Forest building or developed facility or intensive use area. If instances are found where this is not the case, procedures for corrective measures will be implemented.

This compliance is not intended to apply to undeveloped areas of the forest; however, the Committee will make every effort to provide recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. As part of this commitment, the County will also provide the following:

- Areas on the County Forest are open to motor vehicle travel on most roads and trails.
- Disabled persons holding a State Class "A" disability permit may receive a permit from the County to operate a motor vehicle in areas designated as Closed Access.
- Disabled persons holding a State Class "B" permit or who wish to request a disability permit and do not hold a State permit, must present such request to the Forestry Committee.

## **795 RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE NEEDS**

- *Continue to update and keep current road inventory.*
- *Work with Rusk County and the Town of Winter to develop ATV trail between Winter and Rusk County. Road numbers 53 and 108 have been identified as possible trail connectors. Some town roads in the Town of Winter may need to be designated as ATV routes.*
- *ATV trail connector between Jolly Fisherman Road and Seeley Fire Lane.*
- *Create new miles of ATV trail where trails can be routed off of town roads. Road numbers 170, 176, 179, 427, 429, 433 have been selected as options for this. Additional roads may be identified in the future to accomplish this goal.*
- *Create mountain bike trail connector from existing trail system to Seeley and County Highway 00 and to Bayfield County..*
- *Increase ordinance deposits to a range of \$100-\$400. Look into some of the increase to fund additional enforcement, maintenance, or repair of damages.*
- *Address camping possibilities on County Forest in 2009.*
- *Consider upgrading secondary forest roads to primary forest roads and County Forest Roads as funding allows in order to reduce erosion potential and to keep the trails from being rutted or damaged to the point where they are impassable to most vehicle travel. Several main access roads have been identified as possible options.*
- *Continue road planning and timber sale contract stipulations on all timber harvest operations, including provisions for road closures, and reclamation when appropriate.*
- *Attempt to secure permanent easements or purchase lands necessary to assure timber harvest and public access to the County Forest.*
- *Continue to require and use Best Management Practices for Water Quality on all road and trail projects.*
- *Construct bridges, culvert crossings, boardwalks (paths) and fords as necessary for timber harvest and recreational trails.*

- *Maintain gates, berms and signs that regulate the road and access plan. Signs should be erected at as many of these closure sites as possible to better facilitate public recognition of closure. Effort should be made to ensure that all road closures are physically completed in compliance with the road and access plan.*
- *Apply for recreational grants wherever feasible to supplement maintenance funds on trail systems.*
- *Improve trails open to public motor vehicle access with a priority on those areas where damage is occurring due to high public use, or problem areas identified as part of the GPS classification. Permanent secondary trails should also be given a priority.*
- *Repair access roads to Zettel Lake and Heron Lake to prevent further erosion problems, and improve public access.*