

FEEDBACK/RESPONSES
2021-2035 Chippewa County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #1 of 4: Focus on Access and Recreation

A. Broad questions relating to recreational opportunities in the County Forest.

1. The current spatial extent of the County Forest limits, and in some cases prevents, opportunities for public recreation, natural resource conservation and access for certain forest management activities. Furthermore, dense recreational trail development limits the opportunity for primitive “back country” experiences and remote areas that certain wildlife need. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to the County or private non-profit organizations purchasing lands that are voluntarily offered for sale by private landowners, for the purpose of expanding the County Forest? Please explain.

RESPONSES

The County should, as resources permit, purchase private lands that are up for sale which are within either the eastern or western blocking of the county forest. Such lands should share contiguous boundaries with current county forest lands and should have the ability to expand forest productivity and/or provide for recreational activities, especially of the non-motorized type.

In my opinion, suitable land which is adjacent to the county forest should be given serious consideration for purchase by the county when the price is right and parties are seeking to have their property added to the county forrest. These opportunities for land acquisitions do not come along often. The county needs to be prepared to act when and if they do. Recreational usage will boost the quality of life for users for generations to come.

All opportunities to purchase additional land should be considered by a committee of the LCFM, user groups and LCFM board. Land to purchase is often times scarce and every opportunity to expand the county forest for various activities should be carefully considered by a team.

I recommend that Chippewa County make every effort to expand the Chippewa County Forest if the oppurtunity to expand becomes available. Even though expansion of the forest reduces tax revue, the recreational use, wildlife habitat and long term forest preservation more than out weigh the tax loss. The tax loss could be made back up to the local municipality by the sale of timber from the property. By expanding the Chippewa County Forest, it insures that future generations will have the oppurtunity to enjoy forest and natural resources that we have.

Does the available land considered for purchase enhance the county land it it near? Does the land contain rare or endangered species or habitat? Is the cost reasonable? Will it provide recreational opportunities for a variety of individuals. Will the land provide financial opportunities for the county?

The longstanding practice of acquiring parcels that fall within the boundary should be continued. If important parcels are available outside the current boundary but adjacent to it, they should also be eligible for consideration if they are adjacent to the boundary, or have a demonstrable conservation value (high-value conservation area, adjacent to county recreational area, etc.). Some or all of these acquisitions should be highly considered for special use area designation and not actively managed for silviculture.

Land that is voluntarily offered for sale by private landowners, for the purpose of expanding the country forest, should always be pursued if it falls within the blocking boundary. Parcels near blocking boundary should be considered if feasible and logical.

I see no specific issues or concerns with land acquisitions to expand the public's land base.

1. If the county is unable to acquire lands for sale and private NGO's are, whether in partnership or outright fee or conservation/trail easement, doing so should be enthusiastically embraced by the County.

2. The County should acquire new land to meet the increasing demand of recreation opportunities as well as for marketable timber production.

2. Given the high-quality environment, proximity to population centers, and desire for active lifestyles, the County Forest has experienced intensive recreational development and sustained demand for more developed recreational opportunities. Citizens have expressed concerns about the intensity of recreational trail development and have expressed a desire to establish a “trail-free” zone or zones within the County Forest to provide balance. **“Trail-free” zones would remain open for public walk-in access, however, construction and maintenance of recreational trails (non-motorized and motorized) would be prohibited in these zones.** What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to establishment of a “trail-free” zone or zones? Please explain.

RESPONSES

Trail free zones will be of limited use by only a very small segment of the population. Most folks desire at least a walking trail to follow such as the Ice Age Trail. While this may be desirable in a few instances, I would limit the emphasis put on this type of zone creation. I would be much more in favor of further development of non-motorized trails. I think the same type of experience can be had by walking this type of trail as opposed to no trail at all.

The space in the county forest is finite. Many user groups are utilizing trail systems built for their unique purposes. It is unrealistic to think we can turn back the hands of time to make the county forest land pristine and rustic. What we can do is set aside a block off land having no trail development. There is a large block of land such as the Camp Lake area that could meet these needs of totally undeveloped land.

I would be supportive of a non-motorized "Trail-free" zones.

There are many acres of county forest available as “trail free” zones in the Chippewa County Forest. Additionally, there are separate sections of county forest without developed recreational trails for the public walk in. In our experience, the public would rather walk on a horse trail than strike off through the woods without a trail. We don’t see this as an issue.

The Chippewa Valley Trailriders have no intention of seeking out other sections of the forest to increase trail mileage that are not within our current surrounding footprint.

I believe the forest can be used by all citizen groups. The trails have provided excellent use of the forest. It is my recommendation that like the motorized and nonmotorized trail users have that a trail-free area be designated. Personally I thought the area known as the Camplake area was a trails-free area. With mapping and the use of signage it should give the citizens the information needed for an established trail-free area.

Provide concrete, reasonable points for making an area trail-free.

I would support creation of such zones especially to protect areas designated state natural areas. However, I would allow foot trails as a means of the access you envision in the question. I would further favor restricted silvicultural management to permit only conservation objectives such as invasive or pest control.

The Chippewa County Forest area, seen as part of a larger mosaic of public forests, is relatively small, lies close to major population centers, and is among the southern-most forest areas in the state. As such, I feel its highest and best use needs to be shifted from active silviculture for revenue purposes to serve other public goals and needs. These include recreation and climate mitigation.

Trail free zones are a must in the Chippewa County forest as it is put under increased recreational pressure. Trail free zones should be established in areas that are environmentally sensitive, have rich and diverse wildlife populations, and will fall under increased pressure in the future. Areas that come to my mind are the Tealey Creek area, Spence Lake area, Ruby swamp area.

I see no specific issues or concerns regarding establishing trail free zones.

1. If rec demand is not met through managed design and user conflicts and resource degradation is promoted.
2. There are more than 34,000 acres currently in the County Forest System; the footprint of recreational trails and infrastructure is a very small percentage of the total land base.
3. Professional trail design, construction and integrated trail management with stakeholders is an ongoing best practice to address 'trail-free' zones.

B. Questions relating to the spatial extent of non-motorized recreational trails.

1. Approximately 22 miles of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (IANST), one of the eleven National Scenic Trails in the United States, cross the County Forest connecting the City of Cornell with the Chippewa Moraine State Recreation Area. There are approximately 9 miles of the single track trail built to National Park Service standards by the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA). Approximately 13 miles of trail are on permanent secondary access roads, town roads, and private land. A primary goal for the IANST is to systematically locate the entire trail on single track trail that is dedicated for foot traffic only and is permanent. Efforts will be made to relocate current trail segments that are on infrastructure used for timber harvest operations or in forest stands planned for even-aged management (i.e. clear cut). What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to increasing the extent of the IANST as required to achieve the objectives described above? Please explain.

RESPONSES

The only issue I see is a broad one, be certain that the establishment of these types of trails is always held secondary to the effective management of the forest ecosystem. The primary goal of the county forest is timber management, recreation is a secondary benefit.

Good communication between the IANST, loggers and County is key to making sure all stakeholders needs are met.

The IANST alliance should definitely be allowed to locate any trails that are on permanent secondary access roads, town roads and private land onto a single track trail system. Any time a section of any newly developed IATA might deem necessary to share a section of horse trail would be agreeable to the Chippewa Valley Trailriders. We are both silent sport, non-motorized users and are compatible trail users.

The harvesting of the forest resources should not be hindered by any trail system. When there is harvest practices as we have seen in the Chippewa County Forest it is what the forest was established for. The recreational use is second. The forest looks devastating after a timber sale, but within a short time the area is alive with regrowth and wildlife. If sections of the forest is left in a natural state and is never harvested, the wildlife will not live in the area and the forest becomes more prone to disease. The areas are more susceptible to natural disaster damage. The harvesting of the forest should be viewed as a natural occurrence of the forest.

Every effort should be made to make the expansion of the IANST a permanent trail without the thought of moving the trail in the future.

Make sure that hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities are not infringed upon. Make sure that land management practices can continue up to the edge of the trail systems.

I would take issue with the premise of this question. I do not believe this is a primary goal for the IANST, though it guides new trail development and construction. The task of linking existing segments, replacing existing trail lost to ownership changes, public and private funds available, all impact the capacity for this to be a "primary goal". In addition, using existing forest grades minimizes additional disruption and landscape modification, and offers segments that are more accessible to a wider variety of users. About 15 years ago the IAT managing committee was told by the then-DNR forester that keeping the trail on existing ridge-top grades was preferable from a logging operational standpoint to moving the trail down slope onto the side hill. Finally, due to the highly managed nature of the forest, the definition of aspen stand seems to have a wide range, the effect of which is often converting mixed stands into aspen stands. The same process can work in the opposite direction, leading to conversion of a trail corridor that is permitted to progress to mixed forest types. This would be consistent with the elevation of the recreation goal of the forest from secondary to primary.

The character of the "permanent secondary access road" matters, of course. Traditional grades meeting this classification make fine trail routes, and are rarely confronted with logging operations. Some of the more recent versions of this would be less desirable as a trail route, as they seem to have been built to town-road standards, laying bare a wide swath and significantly altering the grades and landscape.

National Scenic Trails have requirements that are above and beyond those followed for locally-focused trails, including Natural Heritage Inventory and Archaeological Assessments. As a result, constructing new tread is not a simple matter of just moving it. As a result, short term or emergency relocations almost always have to use existing grades, while permanent relocations involve extensive planning and cost. Because of its nature, the IANST aims for routes that are scenic and meet objectives that include highlighting geological features. This, taken with the ridge and swale nature of the landscape, significantly narrows the options available or desirable. It should not be necessary to state the obvious, but the IANST is a nationally-significant asset for Chippewa County, which highlights this nationally-significant landscape.

It is important that the Ice Age trail is in the Chippewa County Forest. When locating new trail, to reduce hiker/logger conflict, and to minimize trail rebuilding after logging, trail should be built on the edge of timber stands so that equipment would never need to cross the trail. Clear cuts adjacent to the ice age trail are okay in my opinion. Signage should be used to explain what is going on during a logging operation and why it is done that way.

1. There are 11, not 22, existing miles of the IANST in the Chippewa County Forest. Please correct this.
2. Of the 11 existing miles on County lands, 7 are single track and 4 are on secondary forest rds.
3. ~Two NEW dedicated miles of the IANST are needed on County lands for the IANST to be connected.
4. The IANST, by County agreement and state and federal statute, is restricted to foot-travel use
5. The IANST is a partnership project with the County, the Ice Age Trail Alliance, the Natl. Park Service & WDNR. This statement - "Efforts will be made to relocate current trail segments that are on infrastructure used for timber harvest operations or in forest stands planned for even-aged

management (i.e. clear cut)" needs to be vetted for cost, timeline, interim use-management, roles and responsibilities or partner concurrence.

6. IANST relocations off forest roads, due to regulatory compliance, fundraising, volunteer mgt. etc., require 8 to 24 months lead time before shovels hit the dirt. Issue is the County & the Ice Age Trail Alliance need to systematically develop a plan and timeline to relocate IANST off secondary etc. forest roads vs. being reactive.

7. County staff time and dollars should be included in annual work-plan budgets for IANST maintenance; some or all of County budgeted dollars should be available for NGO and qualified parties who contract to do the work prescribed by the IANST Land Use Agreement management team.

8. The IANST brings considerable economic value through tourism to local businesses

9. The IANST supports forest goals and is a high public demand therefore should be a priority to complete and a priority to maintain.

2. At this time, the Friends of Hickory Ridge Trail (FOHRT) have not expressed desire to increase the total length of the ski trail. The majority of the ski trail is also used as part of the Hay Meadow Horse Trail. A primary goal for the ski trail is to designate approximately 8 KM consisting of the Dog-Island Loop, Highland-Lowland Lakes Loop, and the connecting segments as dedicated use to develop and maintain a trail surface that can be skied under low snow conditions (~3"). **The desired "dedicated" 8km is currently not used as part of the Hay Meadow Horse Trail. This 8km is currently open for non-motorized hiking, hunting, trapping, etc. and would remain open if "dedicated" for low-snow ski trail.** What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to maintaining the current extent of the Hickory Ridge Ski Trail and designating approximately 8 Km (~5 miles) as ski trail only to protect the trail surface? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I have no issues with dedicating this portion of the trail for low-snow skiing. Unless I am missing something here, it really changes nothing except to limit further uses of that segment in the future. It is already well used and no further uses should be allowed, especially by motorized traffic.

FOHRT picked that section of trail because it is not shared with horses. That is key as the horses leave hoof prints that hold water and because the horses follow one another it creates a path rainwater follows and erodes trails. FOHRT has also spent time and money on the Dog Island trail. Also, with them changing weather, snow does not always come in the amounts we need to cover trails that may have a rougher surface. It is important to have a smoother surface to be able to utilize the trails when low-snow ski conditions do occur.

I would be supportive of a "dedicated" low-snow ski trail allowing only non-motorized hiking, hunting, trapping, etc.

We have no objections to the 8km around Dog Island and Highland Lowland Lakes to be deemed low snow ski trail with other non-motortized uses to include hiking, hunting, trapping. Horseback riders are not seeking use of this trail and would advise putting up "no horse"" signs on the entrances off the North Ski/Horse trail so riders do not become confused and accidently turn onto trails leading to this area. The horse trail is well-marked in this section, but there are always some that become confused. Large NO Horse signs would hopefully solve that problem.

The biggest issue I see at this time is the educating of the general public as the damage that can occur on the trail that non-designated users can cause. Horses or motorized vehicles going on low-snow trails can be devastating to the trails. Like most trail systems the loop type are the most desired. With proper education such a trail as suggested would be welcomed by many.

I would like to see it in writing that the trail system will stay open to hiking, hunting, fishing etc. and no motorized travel, including electric powered motorized bikes will be allowed.

These trails were constructed and developed as ski trails and should be dedicated for this use, unless off-season use as described in the question does not impact the tread.

The hickory ridge ski trail system is a very high quality trail system and highly praised around the state. People come from long distance because of the terrain and the high quality grooming at all times. Designating 8km of trail to ski trail only would bring many skiers in times of low snow, and would bring tourism dollars to the area as well.

I see no specific issues or concerns regarding an 8km low snow trail development.

Defer comment to those user-groups

3. In recent years, the Hickory Ridge Mountain Bike and Snowshoe Trail has experienced a significant increase in year-round use. The Friends of the Hickory Ridge Trail desire to expand the amount of trail mileage to approximately 30 miles to connect the South Trailhead to the Marten’s Warming House at the Dog-Island Lake Trailhead and become a premier mountain biking destination in the Upper Midwest. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to the expansion explained above? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I see a couple of things here. The biggest being the creation of a “premier mountain biking destination”. I am not really in favor of this. Are the facilities able to handle a significant increase in visitors (users)? Things such as parking areas, toilet facilities, and waste disposal need to be carefully taken into consideration before allowing this expansion. What will the costs of expanding infrastructure to handle the increased use be? How will the environment be affected by significant increased usage? Much thought needs to go into this before proceeding.

I think it is important to note that FOHRT have been able to layout, build, maintain and work cooperatively with County on logging operations around the trails and repairing trails after logging operation have ceased at no added cost to county taxpayers.

I would be supportive of any trail expansion.

This area is already congested with horse trails/bike trails/ and ski trails. While the horseback riders are not opposed to expanding the bike trails, we would prefer that the bike trails are kept separate from the horse trails in that North Ski/Horse trail section. The North Ski/Horse trails has already been along established horse trail and is heavily used. We would like to maintain the quiet unobtrusive experience that horse trail offers the horse riders. Many times horses are startled by the speed at which the bikes travel on their bike trails that are within eyesight distance to the horse trails. It would be our suggestion that any bike trail expansion be well away from the existing horse trails.

Assuming that this trail is paid for by the users as in the past, this trail expansion would be an asset to the county forest trail system. These sports are increasing rapidly and providing the proposed trails will be a plus for Chippewa County tourism. The biggest issue I see coming with the expansion is vehicle parking. The extra parking requirements needs to be addressed prior to any expansion.

Same as question 2 above.

1. The Ice Age Trail Alliance asks that potential expansion of the HR trail system not impede or overlay the IANST; and, to be included in conversations should expansion plans move forward.

Trails are designed and purpose-built for specific uses. They are not generic, and no assumptions should be made that because one use is on snow and the other is not that the two can co-exist. This can be the case if the tread is specifically constructed for dual use. There may be situations where the two don't impact each other, but that should be by agreement of both user groups. If realignment of an existing use is desired, the costs are borne by the new user under long-standing agreement and policy.

Being that mountain biking, fat tire biking, and snowshoeing are quiet, low environmental impact activities, the trail should be allowed to connect to the Martens warming cabin. Hickory Ride is slowly becoming a mecca in the mountain biking world. People traveling to ride 30+ miles of singletrack would bring tourism dollars to Chippewa County.

I see no specific issues or concerns regarding expansion.

4. The increase in the use of the Hickory Ridge Trail System has necessitated a larger fleet of maintenance equipment and more space for storage and user accommodations. The Friends of the Hickory Ridge Trail desires to make structural improvements at or near the South Trailhead, including: expansion or replacement of the existing maintenance shed, increased parking capacity, indoor changing/warming/rest area, and water. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to the improvements described above? Please explain.

RESPONSES

So already we have the need for a larger fleet of maintenance equipment. How much more will be needed? How much more space for storage and user accommodations? Is this something that will be paid for by private organizations or are the taxpayers going to end up footing the bill for this? Will increased bike traffic discourage some current users as it will make their enjoyment of the area less desirable?

Sounds like a win-win situation for County and FOHRT.

I would be supportive of any expansion or improvements.

The CVT have no objection to the Friends of Hickory Ridge Trail making structural improvements at their South Trailhead.

These issues that need to be addressed prior to any work:

1. Who will be the owner of any structure and who pays for the maintenance of the structure?
2. Is Chippewa County providing the insurance on the structure?
3. If sometime in the future the Friends of Hickory Ridge disbands, will Chippewa County take over ownership?
4. Will the hours of operation be manned by volunteers or County employees?

How will this be paid for? Who will pay for this and will this give individuals or groups special rights? Who pays for the additional maintenance? Will it be open to all individuals?

The county should expect and participate in making the access point a well-designed and architecturally attractive and useful facility that Chippewa County residents can be proud of and drawn to. The ski structure in Eau Claire County has proven to be a useful, multi-purpose facility, capable of being used year-round.

Parking capacity improvement, replacement of the maintenance shed, water, and a warming house would be good uses of funds for the Hickory Ridge system. I see no specific issues or concerns regarding expansion.

Defer comment to the Friends group.

5. The Hay Meadow Horse Trail System (HMT) is approximately 24 miles in length and includes two parking areas. It is a primary goal of the Chippewa Valley Trailriders (CVT) to increase trail mileage to 30 miles to provide a destination for riders traveling from out of the region and State, who desire a 3-5 day riding and camping experience. The CVT has identified options to extend the HMT by approximately 6 miles, which may require shared use of up to 2700 linear feet of a secondary access road currently occupied by the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to expansion of the HMT to provide up to 30 miles of trail for the purpose discussed above? Please explain.

RESPONSES

Here we go again. How much is enough?! The target group of users does not pay any taxes in Chippewa County to maintain this system. Why would we expand it for them? I don't see them spending enough money to offset the increased costs of expanding the current system by 25%. Unless this effort is totally funded by private donations, I would definitely oppose it. Further, how will this affect, if at all, the primary use of the forest which is timber production? If this trail travels through good production forest areas, are we next going to have to provide a buffer section of non-harvested timber to "preserve the aesthetic value" of the trail ride experience. I would be very opposed to doing this type of thing!

As long as CVT can take care of trails they currently have, i.e., erosion, wet and muddy areas, I think it would be great.

The Chippewa Valley Trailriders have a long successful history of working with LCFM leadership to develop and maintain a premier horseback riding trail in west central Wisconsin. The CVT club performs several documented hours of trail maintenance every year to keep the trails in excellent riding condition.

It is our goal to expand the trail riding experience to 30 miles of maintained trails for riders looking for a 3-5 day riding and camping experience. Increasing the mileage to 30 miles will take pressure off of some of the heavily used trails and place people further from the camps to experience a 5-6 hours round trip ride.

The Chippewa Valley Trailriders and the Ice Age Trail Alliance are working on a MOU and it is in its final stages as of May 2020. The MOU states that approximately a 2700 foot section of the Ice Age Trail will be shared with horseback riders to provide a looping trail on the new High Ridge Horse trail that was completed in 2019. Adding this section will increase trail mileage by 1 mile. Along with former Forest Administrator, Mike Dahlby, we have identified several other looping trail opportunities that do not come in contact with any other existing trails, but instead loop off from our existing horse trails and put the rider back on a main trail. These areas have already been identified and we are requesting permission to move forward with this trail expansion which will accomplish the 30 miles goal.

Issues the need to be addressed prior to expansion is safety of all parties involved on the shared trail. With the many user groups using teh county forest, I see the need to share maore areas to lesson the impact on the forest. Also, the discharge of animal waste on the shared trail needs to be addressed.

What conflicts could this generate between HMT, CVT, and IANST? Will it impact or restrict any other individuals or groups from using the trail? Will it restrict hunting, fishing or trapping activities?

A portion of the proposed expansion lies on county forest land which is encumbered by a conservation easement which was accepted as part of acquiring the property. This easement expressly prohibits bicycle and horseback riding trails. Therefore, a portion of that loop should not even be considered.

There are many concerns about multiple use of a trail corridor, including safety, maintenance standards, tread design, inability to manage users in potentially dangerous interactions, and stimulating conflict between citizens. All trails are purpose-built or purpose-maintained for the intended use. Horses need unique trails because they can react unpredictably or out of control of the rider. Casual walkers may not understand how to safely encounter the animals, and assuming they do can lead to dangerous situations. Any injury is not easily accessed by public safety or first responders.

Currently an agreement is under consideration between the two maintenance entities on how that might work.

Regardless who takes the lead in maintaining the corridor, it will ultimately fail to meet the other's standards expectations, or operational needs, so this is not a stable solution.

I see no issues with the horse trail sharing 2700' with the Ice Age Trail. All trail expansion should happen under direction and supervision of LCFM staff.

1. The Ice Age Trail Alliance and CVT are in active and near-final discussions to cooperatively manage a proposed temporary shared use portion of the IANST for hike/horse users; this will take form as a M.O.U. with County, CVT and Alliance signatures.
2. The Ice Age Trail Alliance owns a conservation easement that specifically restricts horse & bike use on 80 acres of the proposed HMT.
3. The Alliance & CVT are working cooperatively to achieve mutual goals.

C. Questions relating to the spatial extent of motorized recreation

1. Snowmobile Trail – Winter snowmobiling is currently allowed on all permanent, secondary, and temporary roads within the County Forest, except roads and trails maintained as ski trails and the IANST. The Chippewa Valley Snowmobile Organization (CVSO) intends to continue to actively maintain ~ 20 miles of snowmobile trail within the County Forest as part of a County-wide system that totals approximately 500 miles. The trail will continue to allow the CVSO to provide an adequate amount of trail miles to attract riders from out of the area, under adequate conditions. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account in the event there is demand to expand developed snowmobile trails within the County Forest? Please explain.

RESPONSES

Again, when is enough, enough? With 500 miles of trail already in the county wide system, we DO NOT NEED ANY MORE snowmobile trails. They are a very noisy distraction to the serene and peaceful winter woods environment.

If it is decided to set aside a large block of county forest for no new development, this would need to be taken into consideration by this group. And, as long as their trail development doesn't displace another user group, as is past practice, I would support their efforts.

The snowmobile clubs do an excellent job of maintaining their trails; CVT has no objections to any future requests to expand the snowmobile trails.

In the past there were many more miles of snowmobile trails in the Chippewa County Forest. Any expansion should use existing trails that are not used in the trail by other users if they meet the criteria for a snowmobile trail. Expansions of any kind should be allowed with the least amount of impact on the county forest.

Will this create restrictions for other individuals or groups? Will this restrict or hinder access to other parts of the county forest?

If they are currently on all existing infrastructure, that only leaves building new trails, perhaps to connect existing roads. So it sounds like their reach is pretty universal. I think that should be limited so that they are not in proximity to areas used or silent sports. One of the attractions of winter forest users, whether on ski, snowshoe, or foot, is the quiet and possible opportunity to spot a critter or tracks. Presence of snowmobiles eliminates those attractions. Where these trails intersect with or overlap silent sports trails are possible danger areas. Motorized use tends to mean exclusive motorized use due or the reasons stated above.

I have no specific issues or concerns with expanding snowmobile trails in the County Forest.

1. The IANST is not open for snowmobile, ATV, UTV use. By existing agreements with the County and by state/federal statues, IANST is non-motorized and open for 4-season travel on foot.

2. ATV/UTV Trail – ATV/UTV trail riding has experienced continual growth over the last 15+ years. Nearly all of trail miles in the State of Wisconsin, are on public land. The County Forest is the only public land in Chippewa County with developed ATV/UTV Trail. The Chippewa Valley ATV Council (CVATVC) now maintains the original 19 miles of ATV/UTV Trail that was developed between 2005 and 2009 along with 12 additional miles of trail that were constructed in 2018. The recent addition has resulted in a looped trail system totaling more than 40 miles including trails and connecting road routes. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account in the event there is demand to expand the extent of the developed ATV/UTV trail within the County Forest? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I was on the original county committee that developed the first ATV/UTV trail system several years ago and was in favor of setting up a trail system. Since that time there has been some expansion of the system within the county forest not to mention the fact that many town roads have been opened up to the machines as well. Given those facts, further expansion is NOT needed.

Again, as noted above, these machines can be noisy and they distract from the peaceful setting of the county forest that many of us want to enjoy (and I say that even though I own three such machines and enjoy riding from time to time). There are ample routes both in the forest and on public roads to handle this sport. To expand it further will infringe on other people’s enjoyment plus open up other areas to possible damage as some folks, though a minority, find it necessary to go off trail to explore every small side trail they see where a berm barrier has been placed.

I live on a town road open to machine traffic and it is usually not a big deal as 98% of the riders are respectful, but as with anything else, a few are just out to tear around. I don’t think the Sheriff’s department has the resources to amply patrol for this type of violation so I definitely would not favor any expansion.

I would be concerned for CVATVC using roads that are busy or have many blind corners as connectors to short stretches of trail. Safety comes first!

The CVT and ATV clubs worked together to accomplish a section of trail that the ATV’s requested back in 2018 which was existing horse trails. A satisfactory agreement was worked out between the concerned parties. If there are any future plans to develop and expand the ATV trail system we would request the ATV trails not be located within the horse trail footprint. The ATVs are noisy and detract from the entire camping/horseback riding experience with their excessive noise. The use of the Deer Fly Trail and Hickory Ridge forest roads have caused much erosion making the roads impassable in certain sections for the casual automobile sightseer .

Before any expansion of the ATV/UTV trail system, parking issues need to be addressed. Currently there is a real shortage of parking in the two ATV/UTV parking lots.

Who will monitor its use, what law enforcement agency will enforce the laws, will they have the time? Will it hinder or restrict access to other parts of the county forest? Will it keep certain individuals or groups from access to the trail? IE: hunters trappers etc. If undue stress is created to the property by over-use or inappropriate use will the trails be modified or shut down to protect the property?

Most of the same reasons given for the snowmobile question apply to the ATV question. Motorized vehicles (and they are becoming more and more like motor vehicles) cheapen or eliminate the experience offered to silent sports users, in addition to causing hazards where they intersect. There has been a recent massive expansion, and any further expansion in the near future seems unjustifiable unless it is to correct problems or to make spot improvements. There are places where the erosion caused by the existing trail has spoiled large areas of the adjacent landscape, so there is a need to focus on maintenance and hardening the current route before undertaking new routes.

When planning for ATV/UTV motorized trail expansion, noise and erosion should be considered. Noise can negatively impact other user group experiences, and erosion can damage fish, wildlife, and water quality in the surrounding areas.

1. Concern is uncompensated displacement of existing non-motorized trails (this happened in 2018) if further expansion is proposed.
2. Motorized and non-motorized require their own/dedicated trail systems

3. The ATV/UTV Trail is generally open for public use from the 1st Saturday in May through November 15. There is a public demand for year-round ATV/UTV trail riding opportunity. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to winter-time use of the ATV/UTV Trail? Please explain.

RESPONSES

Definitely NO to year round trails. It is bad enough to deal with snowmobile traffic noise in the winter without adding ATV noise. Also, I can see conflicts between the two types of machines. Again, who is going to pay for maintaining these trails and there will definitely be damage to the forest during wet seasons. When winter comes, it is time to put the ATV's away until spring!!

A safety issue comes to mind as ATV/UTV trails are used by snowmobiles in the winter. How can the trails be shared in a way that both groups have safe and equal access? By the nature of how their trails are groomed can a trail be shared?

The ATV/UTV should continue to be restricted to the May through November time period. In our opinion, there would be too much conflict between users groups during the winter months if the ATV's were granted permission in the winter.

The Chippewa Valley ATV Council is not in favor of opening the ATV/UTV trail to year around use. The extra revenue for maintenance does not cover the expense of maintaining the trail for the added months. Another issue would come from opening the trail for winter use is that part of the trail is also used as a snowmobile trail. The snowmobile trails goes onto private property and the ATVs do not have permission to ride on these trails. This could cause closure for the snowmobile trails if there is no plan in place to police the ATV's off the snowmobile trail. The policing would be very taxing on the ATV maintenance budget. Another issue that would need to be issued if the trail was open in the winter, is the plowing and maintaining of the parking lots.

I don't think the trails need to be used year round. It has been proven that the more a trail is used, especially by motorized vehicles, the further from the trails the animals will stay. Give the animals a chance to relax more during the more stressful time of the year they need to live through by providing them with more undisturbed area to use.

It should not be permitted in areas where silent sports are clustered for reasons given in C1. In addition, year-around use opens up use during periods when the base is weak and unstable or even wet or inundated. Such areas have historically served as magnets to some ATV users, leading to total trail breakdown.

ATV/UTV riding should not permitted in the county forest outside of the current May-Nov timeline.

1. Concerns are environmental impacts/rutting during wet conditions and not riding on designated ATV trails.
2. Concern is audible impacts to hunters, hikers, nature observation, silent sport groups.

4. The Chippewa Valley ATV Council has requested that the County open approximately 3 miles of secondary access road known as the Camp Lake Game Trail, which was originally developed for timber harvest operations and public use as a walk-in access trail, for ATV/UTV use. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to ATV/UTV Use on the Camp Lake Game Trail? Please explain.

RESPONSES

NO, NO a thousand times NO. People always want more and when you give them more they soon want even more. It is just human nature. Using the town and county roads that are already open and the county forest ATV trails in this area makes it more than ample for riding opportunities. The camp/Spence lake area is a beautiful area that needs to remain non-motorized and I say this even though I used to ride in the area to pick berries or go fishing prior to it being closed to motorized traffic. The noise, potential damage, and interference with logging operations should indicate that this is a large area that should remain closed to motorized traffic. It is a no-brainer in my book.

In past discussion of this topic, a number of trail possibilities were looked at. It was determined at that time it was not a good option to open access in this area because of the numerous blind corners on Highbank, Sand Lake and Cty M.

If this section is a connector trail leads to already established ATV trails then we agree it should be considered, if not, then what is the purpose of using a short 3 mile section?

It has been asked in the past to expand the ATV trail in this area. This area has been recognized as a non-motorized area. The last time this request was reviewed the public strongly opposed it. An issue that needs to be addressed prior to such an expansion is where would this trail lead to? Is this a trail request that Rusk County is proposing to join the Chippewa County trail system, or one that local users are requesting?

This goes back to the question on remote area access. This will take away areas that other groups are asking to create. That seems to be taking a step backwards. Should not do it.

No comment.

What is the objective of adding this section to the ATV system? Given the scope of the current system, it seems that more than a desire would be necessary. If the objective is to connect to Rusk County's system, that would be undesirable.

The area in question is one of the more remote areas in the county forest area and it appears that this would be a prime area to designate as a roadless area as described in question A2, and I would support that highly. I hiked this trail many years ago (1980's) when it was marked as an Ice Age Trail segment. At that time it did extend north into Rusk County and terminated at Old D Road. It was a beautiful route.

The camp lake game trail should not be opened for anything other than walk in access. It is a very remote area that should be considered for a trail free zone. The game trail was not designed for ATV/UTV use and would be negatively effected by ATV/UTV use. Noise and erosion would increase in the Camp Lake area.

5. The County issues off-trail ATV/UTV use permits to legally disabled individuals. At the present time, secondary and temporary roads are open for off-trail ATV/UTV use by legally disabled individuals who possess a valid permit. Each year approximately 30 individuals request annual permits. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to off-trail ATV/UTV use by legally disabled individuals who possess a valid permit? Please explain.

RESPONSES

Given the low number of permits, I do not see this as an issue IF the operation is for hunting and/or gathering needs. However, I do not see the need for even these folks to use these areas just for recreational riding.

Use of these secondary and temporary roads is a privilege for legally disabled individuals. We do not want this privilege of traveling these roads to be abused by letting others use the ATV/UTV. If this occurs the permit should be revoked and the driver fined.

No comment

The ATV/UTV needs to be identified as a machine being used for a disabled individual. The Chippewa Valley ATV Council has worked hard at keeping individuals from going off trail. There are several individuals that do a lot of off trail for their bear hunting baiting. This makes it very difficult to police off trail operation as the machines are not identified. Without indentifying the ATV/UTV, the people patrolling the trail have no way of telling if the individual has a valid permit.

What liability issues does this create for the county, the disabled individual, and individuals operating legally licensed and permitted motorized vehicles on the same roads. Are the roads in question marked and posted enough to minimize those liabilities?

They should be restricted to the actual secondary and temporary roads, and barred from those treads that make up parts of other trail systems. Speed should be limited, and they should be restricted during soft-ground conditions. My reason is that when ATV's are used on trails not designated for them, in this case appropriately, they leave behind an invitation to non-authorized users. This is especially true when the ground conditions are soft.

I see no issues with ATV/UTV use by legally disabled individuals on secondary and temporary roads in the county forest.

1. Concern is impact to non-motorized single track rec trail users safety, and inappropriate use on trails managed and designed for pedestrians.
2. Concern is where, on and off-trail, motorized use is introduced on lands not managed for this use.
3. May contribute to the spread of invasive plants.

6. Off-highway motorcycles are currently prohibited from the ATV/UTV Trail system. As of October 1, 2016, the State of Wisconsin implemented an Off-highway motorcycle registration system and associated trail development and maintenance grant program. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to allowing motorcycle use on the ATV/UTV Trail system? Please explain.

RESPONSES

No motorcycle use, period!!! There will be way too much conflict between them and the ATV riders. Additionally, these types of individuals tend to be much more aggressive in the way they ride and as such would be a hazard to other riders on the trail not to mention that they tend to go off trail much more often and cause much more damage to the land. Again, we DO NOT HAVE TO ACCOMMODATE EVERY TYPE OF RECREATIONAL USE IN THE FOREST, THE PRIMARY USE IS TIMBER PRODUCTION!!!

Since off-highway motorcyclists are paying fees to have access to grants for trails and maintenance, they should be provided a place where they can build, maintain and enjoy their sport. Safety will be of utmost priority if using shared trails.

We would strongly discourage off highway motorcycle use of the ATV trail system. These two vehicles travel at different speeds and would not be compatible on the existing ATV trails. Adding motorcycles will add to the noise and just put more people in the county forest on already long established trails. There is enough noise in the forest on weekend.

The Chippewa Valley ATV County presented this question to its six clubs that it represents. The vote was overwhelming to not open the trail to motorcycles. Questions that were asked are as follows:

1. What financial support would the motorcyclist add to the trail maintenance?
2. What labor support would the motorcyclist provide on the trail?
3. Noise could be an issue, would factory installed exhaust be required?
4. Would speed limits be imposed?

How will this affect the volume of trail use?
Are the trails designed for this type of use? Increased cost for maintenance. Liability.
How will increased use affect habitat and wildlife? Increased stress.

Although not familiar with the issues, I would refer back to the fact that trails that are purpose-built for ATV's are not necessarily suitable for motorcycle use, which would exacerbate the existing erosion problem. Despite being designed for off-road use, the weak soils and slopes present would require substantial hardening for motorcycle use.

I assume there would be conflict with ATV's due to differing speeds used, so that would have to be regulated.

For County Forest Use, Off Highway Motorcycles should be treated the same as UTV/ATVs and be used on ATV/UTV Trails.

1. Safety concerns are compounded for the primary intended user group.
2. Unauthorized motorized use off-trail and on non-motorized trails
3. Noise pollution
4. Negative impacts to natural resources

NOTE: Resolution 41-15 amended the 2006-2020 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan to allow for vehicular access to ~ 5 miles of permanent secondary (i.e. gated) roads, in the Town of Ruby, under frozen ground conditions. On May 15, 2019, the Land Conservation and Forest Management Committee took action to “allow trucks, snowmobiles, and ATV’s on frozen ground (on the Tealey Creek Game Loop) with one-way signage. The Draft 2021-2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan will include language which effectuates the May 15, 2019 Committee Action. If approved the total frozen ground motor vehicle access to secondary access roads will be approximately 8.7 miles.

D. Questions relating to use and maintenance of County Forest roads.

1. There are 18.3 miles of ungated, County Forest roads such as the Deer Fly Trail, O’neil Creek Trail, and others classified as permanent primary roads and which receive road aid from the WisDOT. At the present time, approximately 6 miles of permanent primary roads are open for ATV/UTV use as part of the trail system. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to allowing ATV/UTV use on all 18.3 miles of permanent primary roads? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I would have no objection to opening these roads up to ATV use provided there is some enforcement action taken to enhance compliance with speed restrictions. Speeds on these roads should be 25mph maximum. The purpose of riding these roads is to enjoy the environment, not to see how fast one can traverse it. Additionally, these roads are very hilly and winding in spots severely limiting visibility of oncoming traffic. Higher speeds will cause loss of control on the gravel surfaces of sharp curves and possible accidents with other vehicles that also use the area. Are we prepared to properly patrol the area? If not, then the answer to the expansion has to be no.

Note: I was up to the Tealey Creek Game Loop this winter. It looked to me like there would have to be trail improvements before you would be able to drive trucks on the trail. Since there is no user group assigned to these roads, the cost for all work related to improvements goes to the taxpayer, like in Ruby, for a small group of users.

There is 18.3 miles of ungated county forest road that can be used year round with the exception of when frost goes out. Why do we need to open up more roads?

We would have to take a good look at safety concerns such as blind corners and speed limits.

We strongly recommend no more ATV use on the forest roads. The roads are basically ruined by excessive speed and banking around corners. Unless the WisDOT is going to grade every Monday so that automobiles and regular passenger vehicles are use the roads, we strongly disagree with this request. ATV riders evidently have no speed limit nor do some of them abide by the signs already posted in the forest. There is considerable ATV use on Hay Meadow Trail Forest road. Our Horse Camps set along this section and we would like to maintain the no ATV use. ATV’s pose a significant safety concern for the horseback riders because there are too many blind corners and rises. The ATV’s can access the forest on their own trails or on O’Neil Flowage road. Please keep Hay Meadow Trail forest road ATV free. By adding more access for the ATV’s many user groups will lose the quiet solitude the forest provides.

Signage would need to be installed. What would be the reason to expand Deerfly north from Bass Lakes as there are no ATV trails off Deerfly? Would the added revenue that Chippewa County receive by opening these roads to ATV/UTV's cover the expense for maintaining these roads? Who is requesting the opening of the county forest roads? I see opening of these roads will lead to more off trail riding and damage to the forest.

Maintenance cost. Who pays?

One issue would be additional maintenance required to maintain the roads for ordinary road vehicle use. The county forest roads don't exist in a vacuum, but generally feed into public town or county highways, not all of which permit ATV's or comply with the requirements necessary to permit it.

Allowing ATV's on roads where would legally have to stop and turn around is an invitation for users to drive on illegal roads and highways. For example, an ATV reaching the north end of Deer Fly Trail would have to turn around and go south, rather than continue onto County Highway M. I believe it would result in ATV's operating on that highway illegally (and dangerously). Even if legal, the additional use on town roads that permit ATV's primarily to accommodate residents disadvantages local residents in costs and town road conditions.

ATV/UTV use should only be permitted on permanent primary roads if there are adequate funds to maintain the road for ATVs and UTVs making the gravel surface loose and easily erodible.

1. Safety for car/truck drivers

2. The 18.3 miles of permanent primary roads are not plowed or sanded unless it is needed for timber hauling purposes. When needed as determined by the County Forest Administrator in consultation with logging contractors, snow plowing and/or sanding is typically conducted by the County Highway Department, Town, or logging contractor depending on the distance and location. These roads remain accessible for public use during winter and spring at the vehicle operator's own risk. There is a period of time each spring when segments of the roads are ice-covered, followed by periods of un-even freeze and thaw patterns. Use under these conditions degrades the condition of the roads and presents danger to motorists and emergency service providers. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to closures of all permanent primary roads during spring thaw periods? Please explain.

RESPONSES

It makes sense to close all of these roads as needed during the spring thaw. There is no need for folks to access this area during this period. Turkey hunters are the only ones I can think of that might want to access the area and they will just have to walk. This is no different than banning heavy trucks from the highways during spring thaw.

I think it needs to be done, it's a good idea. It will help protect the roads.

The current policy should remain in effect. The roads become too damaged if vehicles are allowed access during spring thaw.

Roads should be signed that they are closed to vehicles for safety reasons. If you should decide to operate on these roads during the spring thaw, you are liable for your actions.

Use temporary road bans like the townships impose. Easy to follow and enforce.

My observation is that currently some individuals ignore the road closed signs, or worse move them to the side, leaving an ambiguous situation that invites others to drive on the road and inflict the damage that the closure is designed to minimize. Currently, authorization is given for appropriate access for maintenance by user groups when needed and when conditions permit. That should continue, but a more serious effort should be made to close the road otherwise, by publicizing the closure dates or by other enforcement during this period. I don't think violators realize that the road closed sign is not simply a courtesy advisory that there may be something that either they are supposed to check out, or perhaps wasn't intended for vehicles as well-equipped as theirs, but rather is there to protect the road surface from damage.

All primary roads should be closed during spring freeze/thaw conditions to preserve road conditions and to protect the publics safety. It is invidible that emergency works will need to take the risk to bail users out that venture down the roads and get stuck/injured/ect.

Temporary closure decisions should be make based on damage assessment to roads if left open, which can result in higher repair costs and longer closures.

E. Questions relating to general recreational use

1. Mountain bikes have relatively extensive access to the County Forest. Electric bicycles, commonly referred to as E-bikes, are bicycles with an integrated electric motor that can be used to propel the bike, however the bikes also have functional pedals. E-bikes are increasing in prevalence. E-bikes are currently regulated as mountain bikes in the County Forest. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to regulating E-bikes as non-motorized mountain bikes? Please explain.

RESPONSES

At this time I do not see an issue with these as they are, by definition, limited in horsepower and are rather quiet.

The National Forest Service handles it like this: pedal assist is allowed, throttle assist is NOT allowed. Simply put, this allows people that could not enjoy the trails a chance to be on them. As long as there is not a problem, it is one less thing we have to enforce.

I would be supportive of continuing to regulate E-bikes as mountain bikes.

E-bikes are not mountain bikes as was recently determined by the National Forest Service. This spring the National Forest Service does not allow ebikes on mountain bike trails unless they are non-motorized. E-bikes are considered motorized and should not be allowed on mountain bike trails.

There is already enough congestion on the horse and mountain bike trails in the County Forest adding a motorized option would pose a huge safety risk with horseback riders. Please do not allow e-bikes on the county forest bike trails unless there are located in the Dog Island section of trails.

There was recently a huge controversy regarding this very issue in California where the National Forest Service allowed ebikes on the mountain bike trails. The National Forest Service was taken to court regarding this decision and just this spring was ordered to ban ebikes from mountain bike trails. Look it up.

Where does the definition of the E-bikes vs motorcycles define what would be legal on the bike trail? This needs to be adressed prior to the trail opening for the E-bikes.

E-bikes ARE motorized vehicles and should be regulated the same other motorized vehicles.

I assume mountain bikes do not have access to other designated trails.

E-bikes should not be regulated as mountain bikes in the County Forest. Ebikes are much faster, have much more torque, and are much heavier than mountain bikes. Ebikes should not be allowed on MTB trails. MTB trails were not designed or constructed to handle ebike use. Ebikes should be allowed on primary forest roads as would any other motorized vehicle.

If allowed, E-bikes should be restricted to ski (non-snow conditions) or motorized trails

2. At the present time, there are no defined campsites with developed amenities, no registration requirements, and no limits on the number of “camps” that can be occupied at any given time. This dispersed-type camping is allowed on the County Forest for a period of up to 14 days. Over the years, the County has experienced issues of vagrancy, vandalism, litter, and user conflicts resulting from current policy. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account if the County were to consider establishing a limited number of campsites throughout the County Forest and/or implementing a registration system to identify occupants of campsites? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I would not be in favor of designated campsites. We have plenty of campgrounds in the area and thus the county should not be in the business of competing with private campgrounds for business. I would be in favor of requiring anyone camping in the forest to have a permit. Such permits could be issued out of the courthouse and thus we would know who is in an area and how long they have been there. Such permits should have a fee to offset staff time to issue them. Anyone camping in the forest without a permit should be subject to a citation. Permits would be required to be displayed to any law enforcement officer or county forest employee requesting it.

I think that a registration system is a good idea. Fines for vandalism and litter could go toward enforcement.

The horseback riders have two camp/trailheads that we maintain. On occasion there are non-horseback riders camping in the horse camps which they are allowed to do for the 14 days. People would be allowed to disperse camp where ever they can. We are in favor of keeping the current camping policy in effect.

Does the County have enough resources to maintain established camping sites that include toilets so people are not defecating in the nearby forest. As a result of the closure of the toilet at Bass Lake the area is now littered with toilet paper. It is disgusting. Portapotty’s could be rented, as the CVT does for Hay Meadow 3, but those too, have been vandalized over the years. We just pay the fee to have them replaced or fixed and have never asked the county to assist with any fees, even though people travel from all over the forest to use this nice clean porta pot.

Would the campsites be primitive? Would restrooms be provided? Would county employees be required to maintain the campsites, to collect fees, and garbag service? Even if development of the campsites never happens, shouldn't there be some recording of who is staying in the forest in case of emergency?

If this will help minimize the problems then it should be implemented. Make sure enforcement is very visible the first few years campsites are open. Consider carefully the location of any camp sites near areas that have specific hunting opportunities. IE: Placing a camp site next to a flowage that has good waterfowl opportunities impacts the waterfowl hunters ability to set up and hunt it correctly. This has happened with one of the flowages with the horse camp sites.

From the standpoint of the Ice Age Trail, there are actually two campsites designated and to some extent maintained, on the trail. These are designed as backpack sites for long-distance hikers. I don't think there would be a problem with a registration requirement, as long as it is a steel box or pipe type where the hiker can register there on the spot, mainly to leave a record. I suspect any miscreant won't bother, however.

One significant asset that the IAT in Chippewa County has to offer is the miles of trail that pass through county forest lands that permit dispersed camping without fee or regulation. I would hope that opportunity would not be rescinded. The alternative would be the need for substantially more sites being created, and maintained, which themselves can be a magnet for non-backpack users who are looking for a free weekend campsite. This situation actually occurred recently when a group of campers brought in a several day supply of camping gear and food via wagon to the Harwood Lakes campsite, making it unavailable to backpackers, whose etiquette would have caused the occupants to offer to share.

The Ice Age Trail Alliance has developed a model for campsites that are created called a Dispersed Camp Area (DCA). This was the concept used to establish the Picnic Lake campsite. There are a defined set of rules posted (generally) that users are asked to follow, and they are consistent across the IANST state-wide. These sites are located beyond convenient range of trailheads, and must be built away from the main trail and connected with a spur trail. See this page, toward the bottom, under Backpacking Camping Options: <https://www.iceagetrail.org/backpacking/> (The site currently lists Harwood Lakes (rather than Picnic Lake) as a DCA.) Beyond the IANST, establishing designated but low-maintenance sites may bring a lot of unwanted problems, because it may encourage partying and other abusive use. The DCA model deliberately puts sites far enough away from roads to discourage partying.

Dispersed camping is one of the great benefits of public land. The issue is when the few bad actors mess it up for every one else by littering, vandalizing, and creating user conflicts. The county should not consider establishing campsites with a registration system in the forest, but should encourage the local law enforcement agencies to have a heavier presence in problem areas to deter individuals from making problems in the forest.

1. Concern is: cost, spread of unauthorized activities, environmental impacts resulting from road and other infrastructure construction.
2. Dispersed Camping for multiday users of the IANST is currently allowed and should remain allowed

3. Chippewa County requires daily removal of tree stands and ground blinds that are used for hunting. The State of Wisconsin allows two portable devices per hunter to be left overnight, on a continuous basis, on state-owned lands between September 1 and January 31. No device may be unoccupied by the owner unless the owner's DNR Customer Number or name and address has been attached in a manner that is legible to a person on the ground or near the entrance of a ground blind. What specific issues or concerns should be taken into account relative to adoption of a policy that is the same or similar to the State's? Please explain.

RESPONSES

I do not normally hunt public land but I would not be in favor of adopting the state's policy. If you allow this, then folks can "claim" an area for hunting by putting up a number of stands for the duration of the season. The county forest is for all users and no one should be able to claim a specific area for their use. Additionally, conflicts WILL arise between hunters if this is allowed.

I think this is a good idea.

No comment

Please keep it the same as the state to reduce issues.

Staying consistent with state policy would be the best way to go.

Because of the irregular and sometimes difficult to identify boundary between county and private land, allowing overnight tree stands may cause problems. Allowing a tree stand to be established overnight essentially bestows exclusive use of the area for the owner of the tree stand for as long as the rules permit, whether he intends to use it or not. I don't think that is consistent with the goals of the county land, to maximize opportunity for access, given that some spots are more desirable than others.

Hunting is another great benefit of public land. By leaving a stand, even if over night, an individual is able to stake a spot out and have a greater advantage over someone else. No stands or blinds should be left in the woods over night. Pack it in, pack it out.

DNR policy is consistent and adequate; should not be relaxed or minimized.

4. Are there any other topics relating to public access and recreation that are an issue or concern that should be taken into consideration? Please explain.

RESPONSES

In the ATV trail ordinance, it states the trail closes November 15th. At the time that the ordinance was developed, it had been requested that the trail should stay open thru the last Sunday prior to the gun deer season. Many hunters use the trail scouting out areas they plan to hunt and they do it on the Sunday prior to the opening of the gun deer season. The CVATVC would like Chippewa County to consider this change to the ordinance.

Also, with the state talking about a change in the gun deere season as to length of the season, if the date were to change to an earlier season, the ordinance would be in place.

Chippewa County Forest Horse Trails requests and suggestions:

- We would like to suggest fire numbers be placed at all main entrances to the County Forest to assist emergency personnel in a speedy response to emergencies.
- Request that all horse trails in the County Forest be closed during frozen ground/snow weather. This would assist with horseback riders parking in the ski parking lot and riding on ski trails during the snow season. We would prefer not to put dates on this ordinance but instead word it as frozen ground/snow conditions.
- The Chippewa Valley Trailriders currently maintain approximately 25 miles of horseback riding trails. We would like to increase the horse trail system to 30 miles of maintained horse trails. We have identified several opportunities to make looping trails off from our existing trail system. We have already identified several options and will work closely with the LCFM department to achieve this goal.
- We have had several requests to provide non potable water at both Hay Meadow 2 and 3 horse camp/parking areas. We would like the opportunity to pursue this request at some future date.
- If necessary, we would like to expand either one or both of the Hay Meadow horse parking areas. Along with permission to on occasion maintain and replace the gravel in the lots. This would be in conjunction with LCFM department as many more people than just horseback riders use these areas to park and camp.
- We would like to set a few picnic tables and possible install a hitching post at a few select sites along the horse trails so riders have an opportunity to take a break and tie up their horses. Again we would work with LCFM to identify the sites.
- Suggest keeping the current wording on “horseback riding is only allowed on designated horse trails. No off trail riding”
- We had one member who also would like to see horseback riding allowed anywhere in the Chippewa County Forest system and not be assigned designated trails. They also acknowledged that horses should not be allowed on other user groups trails, but should be entitled to ride anywhere else.
- The County will continue to empty the manure pits in the Chippewa County Forest Trailheads.
- Request the opportunity to have the County assist on agreed to projects involving heavy equipment such as providing materials and equipment to regravell the parking areas; repair of washouts around culverts that would impede safety of horseback riders; and any other agreed to projects that the CVT might need assistance with equipment and base materials to enforce trails.

Old Abe Horse Trail and Parking areas

Additional signs on the Old Abe Trail for showing the proper yield etiquette as there are multiple users along this section of trail. We could use numerous signs along the trail including no hunting and tractor crossing signs that were originally put up, but have disappeared.

The North end of the Old Abe Horse Trail needs to be re-established or reclaimed starting from 198th Street in Jim Falls North to Highway S. The trees that were planted on both sides of the bike trail in back of the Falls Dairy have matured and are encroaching that trail also. They will have to be trimmed and/or an area specifically designated for the horses in order to complete the horse trail North to Hwy. S where it ends with a slash/horse sign still in place. Also signage of the entire horse trail should be addressed – especially from the parking lot in Jim Falls where there are NO SIGNS at all. Previous existing signs have been knocked down. This was all documented by Mike Dahlby in the Spring of 2019 when he toured and inspected this area with George & Eunice Pitts and Sandy Lueck.

Any time land use is going to change hunting, fishing, and trapping should be considered carefully. Those activities generate a lot of money for the area and many of the people that I know that pursue those activities are great stewards of the land. It is an insult to them to re-develop an area for other activities and then think about restricting them from it.

There was discussion about connecting the Chippewa County ATV/UTV trails with the Rusk County system. I would be very concerned about this. Rusk County has very relaxed rules and regulations about county land use with ATVs/UTVs. In many parts of the county atvs/utvs can travel anywhere they want when on county land. This has resulted in most all of the logging trails getting damaged to the point that they are very difficult to walk. If I go up to walk the trails in Rusk County I know that I have to wear knee-high boots to do so and even then I will have to leave the trail at times because the puddles from ruts are too deep. Usually I don't even walk to trail because trail are too rough. I am concerned that this type of trail riding might find its way into Chippewa County.

If the trails are connected I would suggest a considerable amount of sign posting at and into Chippewa County a long ways along the trails. I would also recommend higher law enforcement visibility until trail riders prove they recognize the transition from Rusk County rules to Chippewa County rules.

This questionnaire did not address the so-called special use areas in the county forest. As these provide important recreation opportunities, but seem to be an overlooked resource in limbo between county park and forest, it seems to me that they could receive more focus and emphasis. The official park system is mainly camping areas and does not really offer other assets, while these properties do seem to do that. These seem to be rarely publicized or made particularly desirable for public use with trails (other than River Road). I think this component of the county forest should be given some focus in the plan.

N/A

Not at this time.