

Master Plan Variance

Property Name: Brule River State Forest

Date Master Plan was Approved: December 4, 2002

Variance to the Master Plan:

The variance being proposed is the addition of a recreation management prescription to Area 6 to authorize a re-route of the snowmobile trail. Text which currently exists in the master plan is shown, with the addition indicated in **bold** text.

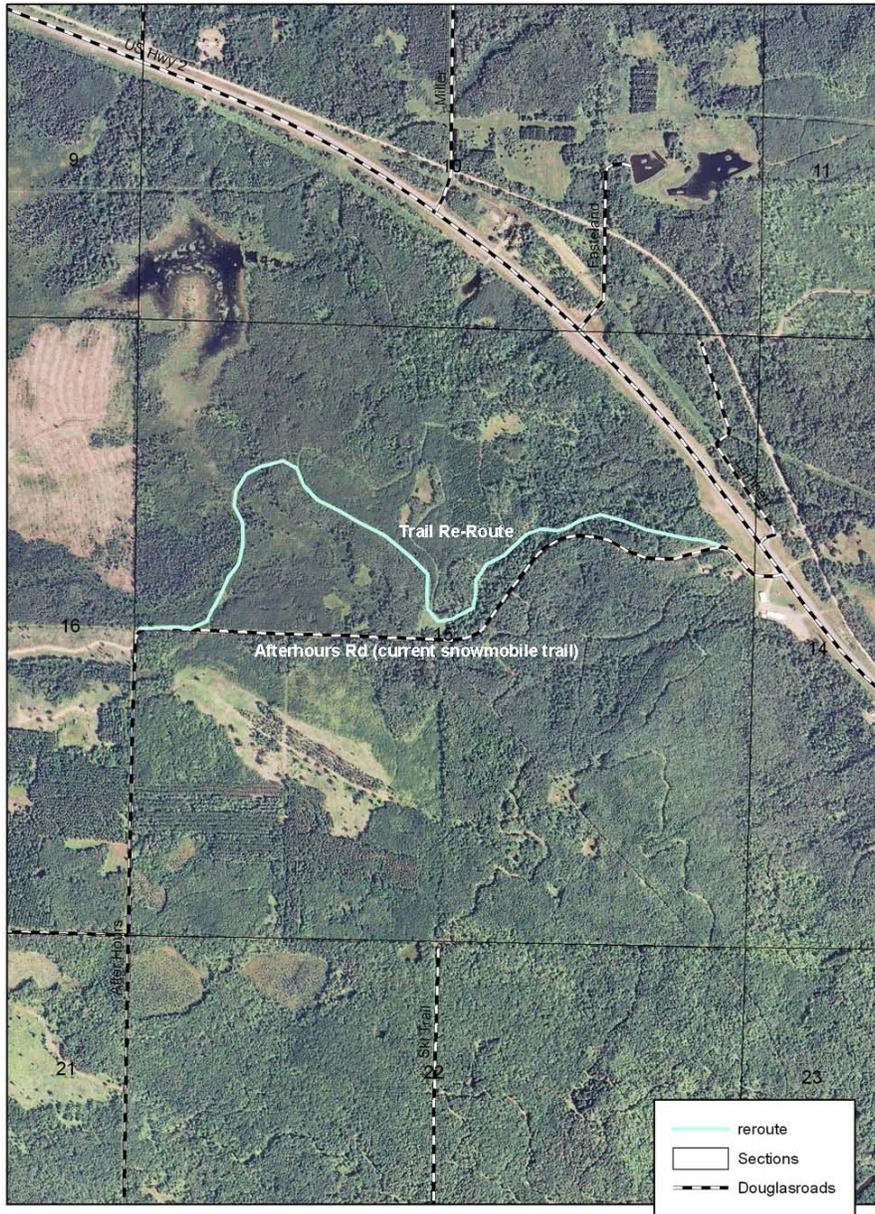
Area 6 – Afterhours Recreation Area – Recreation Management Prescriptions (page 89):

- Provide the necessary vegetation maintenance along the trails to facilitate grooming and safe recreation.
- Provide existing levels of trail facilities, grooming and maintenance for cross-country skiing. These would be fully developed trails cleared 20 feet or more and maintained 16-20 feet wide.
- Interpretive signs will be placed along the trail describing the role forest management plays in providing recreation opportunities. For instance, most trails were built for forest management. Some of the trails were even rail grades from the early 1900s that served the timber industry.
- An Adirondack-style warming shelter would be constructed at a concealed location near a river overlook to provide a rest area and picnic opportunity.
- A pit toilet would be provided along the trail at a point roughly the furthest from the headquarters.
- Expand the Afterhours Ski Trail by building an additional loop.
- **Re-route 1.04 miles of existing snowmobile trail located on Afterhours Road, a Town administered road, to State Forest land. The new, re-routed trail will be approximately 1.37 miles long and will use 0.96 miles of existing lightly developed forest roads. The trail will be designed for snowmobile and winter ATV use. The trail will be gated when it is closed for the season.**

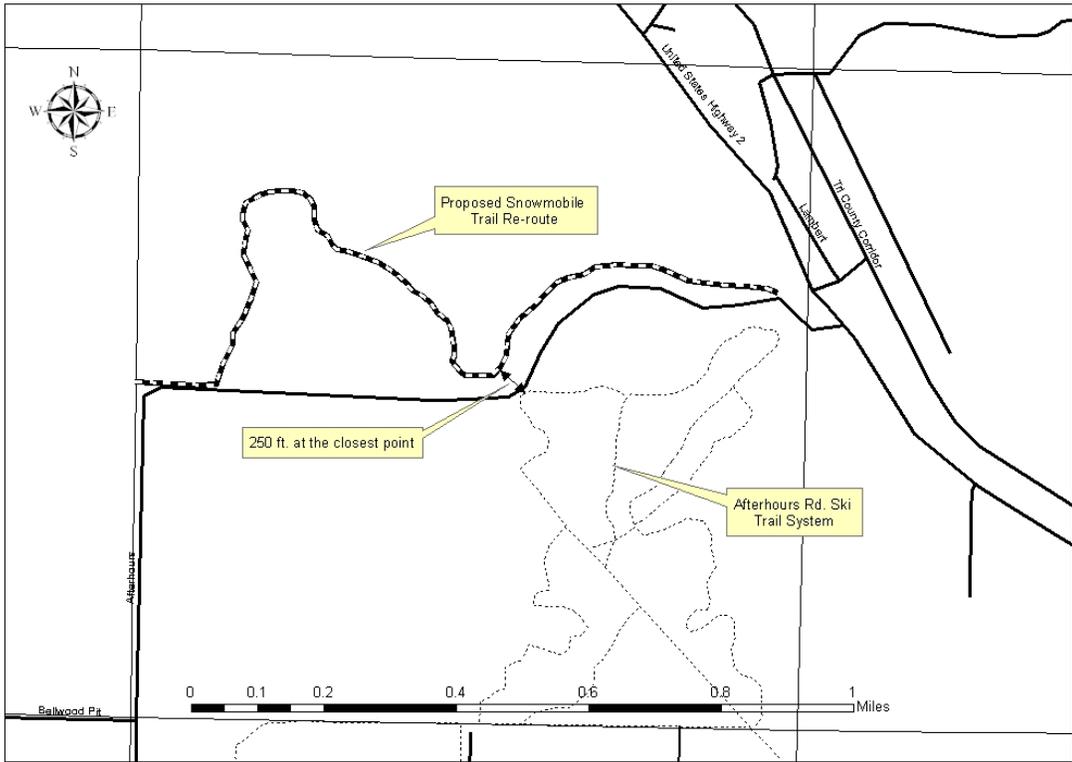
Map provided on next page.

Approved: _____ **Date:** _____
Administrator, Division of Forestry

Proposed Snowmobile Trail Re-route - Afterhours Trail 1.37 Miles



Brule River State Forest Proposed Snowmobile Trail Re-route



Variance Initiator/Author: Dave Schulz

Title: Superintendent, Brule River State Forest

Supporting Approvals

_____ Date: _____
Property Manager

_____ Date: _____
Department Master Planning Manager, LF

_____ Date: _____
Regional Forestry Leader

_____ Date: _____
Program Bureau Director

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Variance:

The snowmobile route is currently on Afterhours Road, which is considered to be part of Area 6 – Afterhours Recreation Management Area. The town has started to plow this road, creating a safety hazard for trail users. The trail needs to be re-routed off of the road in order to provide a safe recreational setting for trail users and a safe atmosphere for users of the town road.

The trail will only be open in the winter for snowmobiling and winter ATV use and will be gated when closed for the season.

Anticipated Primary Benefits of the Proposed Variance:

The trail re-route will provide a safer riding experience for users of the snowmobile trail and a safer setting for vehicles and other users of the town road.

Additional Anticipated Benefits:

An additional benefit is that the re-routed trail will provide users a more aesthetically pleasing riding experience because the trail will be located in a more forested setting.

The re-routed trail will also benefit users of the cross-country ski trail by moving the snowmobile trail farther away from the ski trail. The closest the re-routed trail will be to the ski trail is approximately 250 feet (see map on page 3).

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts:

There will be minor impacts to soil as a result of the construction of portions of the trail on approximately 0.41 miles. However, the re-route has been planned in a way that will minimize any additional impacts by following the topography and avoiding drainages. In addition, approximately 0.96 miles of the trail will be located on existing logging roads or open corridors which will further minimize impacts by avoiding the need for additional trail construction.

Compatibility with Statutes, Codes and Department Policies:

The proposed master plan variance is compatible with NR 44.04(a) which reads as follows:

NR 44.04

(1) DEFINITIONS.

(d) “Master plan variance” or “plan variance” means a change in management activity or use described in the master plan that is consistent with the area’s land management classification and does not constitute a change in an objective for management or public use of the area as specified in the plan.

Federal Aid Limitations:

There are no Federal Aid limitations.

How the Master Plan Supports the Proposed Variance:

This proposed recreation management prescription is supported by the following provisions in the Brule River State Forest Master Plan (2003), and complies with the objectives of the Master Plan.

Goal Statements (page 21):

- Provide and accommodate a range of land and water based recreational opportunities while protecting the natural beauty and quiet experiences.

Property-Wide Management Objectives – Recreation (page 22):

- These prescriptions are designed to support the following numbers of visits or user-days...19,000 snowmobilers...The prescribed management, facilities and staffing levels are designed to provide the necessary support for the public use levels.

Property-Wide Management Provisions – Health and Safety (page 24):

- Within designated use areas such as campgrounds, picnic areas, parking lots, and high use trail systems, trees or other natural elements that are deemed as hazards to those using these areas would be identified and removed. All facilities will comply with federal, state, and local health and sanitation codes; such as well testing, campground licensing and wastewater treatment.

Area 6 – Afterhours Recreation Area – Long-term Management Objectives (page 88):

- Maintain a Type 3 recreational use setting for high quality cross-country skiing opportunities and snowmobiling in the winter and provide hiking and hunting opportunities during the other seasons.

Area 6 – Afterhours Recreation Area – Recreation Management Prescriptions (page 89):

- Provide the necessary vegetation maintenance along the trails to facilitate grooming and safe recreation.

The Public Review Process Used:

1. Information was presented at the Brule River State Forest annual spring public meeting on April 25, 2009 and a summary of the variance was provided.
 - a. Meeting was advertised in local newspapers, via email, via word of mouth, and via DNR website (events calendar and Brule River State Forest webpage).
2. Information was available on the BRSF webpage (webpage link was included in the summary, which was shared at the spring public meeting).
http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/Brule/
3. Comments were also available to be received via e-mail, phone, and written letter to Dave Schulz, BRSF superintendent, from April 25, 2009 to May 25, 2009.

Description of the Support and/or Opposition to the Proposed Variance (including reasons for the various positions taken) and Any Unresolved Issues or Concerns:

In general, the variance was well received by the public. Most understood the need for the snowmobile trail re-route due to the current safety concerns.

One comment was received via email, the rest of the comments were received verbally at the spring public meeting. All expressed support of the snowmobile trail re-route. Clarification regarding ATV use on the re-routed trail was offered to the email comment, explaining that ATV use will only be allowed in winter, and that the Town of Brule will continue to designate Afterhours Road as an ATV route (outside of the jurisdiction of the State Forest).