



Northern State Forests Public Involvement Plan

Motorized Road Access Planning and Land Management Classification Planning

March 10, 2016

Overview

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recognizes sound planning is a partnership effort with the people it serves and that the end product must be broadly supported as well as fit the capabilities of the property. The WDNR encourages and provides opportunities for citizen involvement throughout the planning process.

This document outlines the strategy for soliciting public review and feedback for: 1) Motorized Road Access Planning, and 2) Land Management Classifications on six Northern State Forests, including; the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (Oneida, Vilas, and Iron counties, totaling approximately 235,000 acres), Peshtigo River State Forest (Marinette County, totaling approximately 11,000 acres), Flambeau River State Forest (Rusk, Sawyer, and Price counties totaling approximately 90,000 acres), Coulee Experimental State Forest (La Crosse County approximately 3,000 acres), Black River State Forest (Jackson County, 70,000 acres), and Brule River State Forest (Douglas County, 47,000 acres). Governor Knowles State Forest is not included in the land management classification process.

Master Plans are guided and influenced by: existing statutes, administrative codes, scientific data, capacity of the forest resources, surveys, judgment of forest management experts, and public input.

The planning process is guided by the following state regulations:

- A. State Forest plans will be developed within the parameters of Administrative Code NR 44, which governs Master Planning for DNR properties;
- B. State Forests are designated under Wisconsin Statute 28.04, and will be administratively managed by WDNR's Division of Forestry; and
- C. State Forests will be managed and developed in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter NR 1 – Natural Resources Board (NRB) Policies.

Background

The planning process will focus on two specific elements: motorized road access and land management classifications. The process will be conducted simultaneously for all Northern State Forests. In combination with the Brule River State Forest 15-year Master Plan review, to gain efficiencies and consistency in process, and to make engagement and review from interested publics and partners more streamlined.

The first plan element would implement and comply with Wis. Stat. s. 23.116(2) and s. 23.116(3) that state: "The department shall inventory and map all roads that are located on each department property. Each map shall designate which roads are open to the public for the use of motorized vehicles and shall state when each road is open or closed for such use. For each department property, the department shall work with members of the public, governmental units, and other interested parties to prepare a plan for allowing the public to use motorized vehicles on the department property." Northern State Forests have approximately 1,000 miles of existing roads open to public vehicles.

The second plan element will implement and comply with ACT 55 2015, which states the department of natural resources shall propose an amendment to the master plans of all state forests except for the southern state forests, as defined in section 27.016 (1) (c) of the statutes, and except for Governor Knowles State Forest to incorporate the requirements in section 28.04 (3) (am) of the statutes, as created by this act, with respect to land classified as a forest production area.

The Planning Process

The planning process is divided into three primary phases:

Phase 1-Inventory and Analysis

Up-to-date information on the properties' current resources and public uses using the best available data for a thorough and in-depth analysis of the property and region.

Phase 2-Issue Identification and Opportunities

Phase two begins with a formal announcement of the master plan amendment process. This is followed with a process to review current conditions and identify important issues to be addressed. This culminates with the development of the Draft Master Plan amendment. Additional opportunities for public involvement will be scheduled as needed.

Phase 3-Final Draft Approval

Presentation of the draft Master Plan Amendment will be presented to the appropriate approval body.

Opportunities for Public Participation

The Department's goal for public involvement in master planning is to offer the public meaningful ways to be involved in shaping the future management and use of their favorite properties, and to provide a means for staying informed about the property and planning progress.

Public review and comment will be formally sought at two milestones. Formal public input opportunities are listed below:

Phase 1

- Property assessment and issues and opportunities

Phase 2

- Engage public input for alternatives if the need arises
- Develop draft Master Plan Amendment proposal
- Public review and comment on the draft Master Plan Amendment

Phase 3

- Approvals

Ways to Make Your Voice Heard

You may review planning materials and leave your comments on the State Forest planning website. You may also email directly, use postal mail, or comment by phone using the contact information at the end of this document.

WDNR staff will hold informal public informational meetings at key points during the plan review process. The purpose of these meetings is to present and discuss information on the property and plan proposals, and to listen to your comments and suggestions for improving the plan. Meetings will be held in the vicinity of the property and in other locations as appropriate.

How the Department Provides Planning Information

E-Gov Delivery

A majority of interested stakeholders will receive updates via a subscriber-based email distribution system available on the WDNR home web page and linked to individual State Forest web pages

Issue Press Releases

Press releases will be issued to announce the public meetings and to solicit comments.

Direct Mailings (postal and email)

Mailings at key points in the planning process will provide information about the proposal and planning issues, to announce meetings and the availability of drafts for review, or to inform about other planning developments. A mailing list of interested and potentially affected parties will be developed and maintained. You may sign up for the contact list using the address or phone number given at the end of this document. You may also subscribe to email notices about state forest events and master planning on the WDNR's internet home web page. <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIDNR/subscriber/new>

Web Page

The department will set up a special web page where planning information may be viewed, including: information about the Brule River State Forest 15-year master plan revision, the master plan amendment process, draft documents, public notices, and other important planning information.

Public Meetings

Opportunity to converse with resource management experts is provided during informational public meetings scheduled at key points in the planning process. Map displays and paper copies of planning documents are provided as appropriate.

Other Government Involvement

As needed, throughout the planning process the department will consult with federal, state, county, town and local units of government, local agencies and Indian tribes. The department has established procedures for the tribal consultation process based upon a dialogue with and agreement of the tribes.

How Decisions will be Made

To make sound master plan recommendations the department must, on one hand, consider technical data and meet statutory and code requirements and department policies; and, on the other hand, must listen to the many and varied voices of the public. Decisions on which ideas to include in the master plan and on how to best incorporate them will be made based on the property's purpose (i.e. state forest), its physical/biological capabilities, the best role of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of WDNR staff. Every reasonable effort will be made to communicate the reasons for key plan decisions.

While a broad range of public interests and staff recommendations will be listened to and considered in developing a proposed master plan, the final decision-making responsibility and authority on the plan rests with the WDNR's citizen policy-making Natural Resources Board.

To send written or email comments or request paper documents:

Robert Dall
WDNR Service Center
107 Sutliff Ave.
Rhineland, WI 54501
(715) 365-8993
robert.dall@wisconsin.gov

For additional information or questions :

Steve Petersen
Northern Highland-American Legion State forest
8770 Highway J
Woodruff, WI 54568
(715) 356-5211 Ext: 225
steven.petersen@wisconsin.gov

Peter Bakken
Black River State Forest
W10325 Hwy 12
Black River Falls, WI 54615
(715) 284-4106
peter.bakken@wisconsin.gov

Ryan Severson
Peshtigo River State Forest
N10008 Paust Lane
Crivitz, WI 54114
(715) 757-3965
ryan.severson@wisconsin.gov

James Halvorson
Flambeau River State Forest
W1613 County Road W
Winter, WI 54896
(715) 332-5271 Ext: 105
james.halvorson@wisconsin.gov

Kevin Schilling
Coulee Experimental State Forest
3550 Mormon Coulee Road
La Crosse, WI 54601
(608) 785-9007
kevin.schilling@wisconsin.gov

Kyle Anderson
Governor Knowles State Forest
325 ST RD 70
Grantsburg, WI 54840-0367
(715) 463-2898 Ext: 115
kyleo.anderson@wisconsin.gov

Statewide Contacts:

Teague Prichard
WDNR Division of Forestry
101 S Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 264-8883 (Desk)
Teague.prichard@wisconsin.gov

Diane Brusoe
WDNR Planning
101 S Webster Street
Madison, WI 53703
(608) 267-7469 (Desk)
diane.brusoe@wisconsin.gov