



Northern State Forests Public Involvement Plan

Land Management Classification Planning

September 26, 2016 rev.

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: 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 land management classifications variance 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.

This review and master plan variance process is directed and guided by 2015 Wis Act 55 which directs the department to designate 75% of State Forest lands combined, excluding Southern State Forests and Governor Knowles State Forest, in the Forest Production land management classification. State statute, 28.04(3) further defines the objectives and provisions for the Forest Production land management classification.

(1) STATE FOREST PLAN VARIANCE. Before March 1, 2017, the department of natural resources shall propose a variance 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 so that 75 percent of all the land in those state forests combined is classified as a forest production area as provided in section 28.04 (3) (am) of the statutes. 2015 ACT 358

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 use the best available data for a thorough and in-depth analysis of the property and region.

Phase 2- Classification proposals and considerations

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

Phase 3-Final Approval

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 land classification proposals.
- Public review and comment on the draft Master Plan variance

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

GovDelivery

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.

To send written or email comments or request paper documents:

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