

Master Plan Amendment Proposal

Property Name: Northern Highland American Legion State Forest

Date Master Plan was Approved: October 2005

Summary of the Proposed Amendment(s) to the Master Plan

The master plan amendment involves a land management classification change, 20 acres of Forest Production to Recreation Management to allow the Town of Boulder Junction, under a landuse agreement, to develop a winter park recreation facility to serve local residents and area visitors. The new Recreation Management area is in Township 42N, Range 7E, Section 21, Vilas County. The winter park will include a warming shelter, lighted ice skating rink, 20 car gravel parking lot, and lighted one mile loop hiking/snowshoe/cross country ski trail. Attachment A contains the specific master plan amendment language describing the proposed management and development.

The Amendment Requires the Following Change in Land Use Classification(s)

Changes 20 acres from Forest Production to 20 acres Recreation Management, establishing a new management area. Refer to Proposed plan language.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Plan Amendment

The Town of Boulder Junction is proposing a five acre intensive recreation facility development for winter recreation and with one mile of trails on 15 acres of adjoining land. The facility developments would include a 20 car parking lot, a warming house, an ice skating rink, and a lighted trail. The developments will require electricity and a well.

The proposed development site is located east of the town boundary and is shown on the Map in Attachment A. This site currently is classified as Forest Production in the NHAL Master Plan. The type and level of development would require a change in land management classification from Forest Production Management to Recreation Management, thus establishing a new management area. The Town is seeking approval to use Department land, through a 15-year land use agreement.

Anticipated Primary Benefits of the Proposed Amendment:

The proposed development will provide winter recreation opportunities not currently available in the area. The Town of Boulder Junction is surrounded by State Forest and does not have land available for this development. The proposed recreation development will provide ice skating and night skiing opportunities for residents in and around the

town of Boulder Junction as well as provide forest visitors recreational opportunities that are currently not available on the forest or in the area. The developed core area will serve as a trail head to a larger network of state forest trail.

How the proposed plan amendment is consistent with or relates to the master plan's vision and goals:

The proposed development is consistent with the goals identified in the master plan including the goal to “provide a variety of recreational settings and activities, ranging from primitive to developed”. The location of the proposed development is inconsistent with the site’s current land management classification - Forest Production. The proposed development would require a change in the land management classification from Forest Production to Recreation management.

Additional Anticipated Benefits of the Amendment:

- Increase opportunities for winter recreation areas for residents and visitors, particularly in the evening hours.
- Increase economic vitality of local and regional businesses.
- Provide a unique recreational experience not available in the area.
- Provide a destination point that connects to a larger network of trails.
- Meet growing demands for winter recreation activities. Skating rinks were identified as one of the activities that was growing in demand by the 2005 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Compatibility with Statutes, Codes and Department Policies:

The proposed development is compatible with Statutes, Codes and Department policies. The proposed plan change needs to comply with NR 44 master plan amendment procedures. This is a Type 3 Action under NR 150.

Federal Aid Limitations:

No federal aid money is involved with the management of the property.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Twenty acres of land will be removed from the Forest Production classification. Sustainable forestry practices will still occur but not at the same level as currently stated in the plan. Five acres of the area will be intensively used for recreation and will be removed from forest production while the remaining acreage will continue to be managed using sustainable forestry practices. All developments will follow proper siting criteria, which will be outlined in the land use agreement. No significant adverse environmental impacts are expected from the proposed development.

Summary of Alternatives Considered:

Alternative 1: Convert twenty acres of land from the forest production classification to recreation management. Issue a land use agreement to the Town of Boulder Junction for a 5 acre recreation development and 1 mile of trails.

Alternative 2: Keep the twenty acres of land in the forest production classification and do not issue a land use agreement to the Town of Boulder Junction.

The Public Review Process Used

The project proposal will be presented at the NHAL annual state forest meeting scheduled for May 12, 2006. Public notice and a focused meeting will occur in June of 2006. Before a decision is made, an opportunity for public review and comment will be provided. This notification ensures the chance for public input on the proposal. All comments will be compiled and reviewed. The public review process follows the requirements for a Type III action under NR 150 which requires issuance of a news release or other public notification.

Recreation Management Classification
Boulder Junction Winter Park
Area 23

This language will be inserted into the approved October 2005 NHAL Master Plan on page 144.

Summary of the Area

This 20 acre area is located in the north east portion of the forest property and a subset of Area 3-Vilas Sandy Plains North. The rolling pitted outwash topography and sandy soils represent the most common landscape feature of NH-AL.

Description of the Recreational Setting

This small 20 acre property includes a land use agreement with the Town of Boulder Junction to create a Winter Recreation Park. The Winter Recreation Park will be 5 acres with about 1 mile of recreational trails in the adjoining 15 acres. The land use agreement includes construction of a warming house with suspended radiant heaters, lighted ice skating rink, lighted parking lot, and a recreational trail for hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Long and Short Term Objectives

- Maintain the area as an attractive and safe setting for intensive and non-intensive types of recreation use such as picnicking, trail activities, and ice skating.
- Provide opportunities for modern, high quality, intensive recreational uses featuring modern warming house, lighted ice skating rink, lighted parking lot, and a recreational trail.
- Increase red and white pine as a dominant community type in some stands and as a greater component in others.

Resource Management Prescriptions

The General Timber Type Management Prescriptions and all of their associated management activities (described in the Land Management Section of the Master Plan) apply, except as limited by the prescriptions below:

- Conduct forest management activities at times that will have the least conflict with recreational use.
- Adjust management techniques to minimize negative visual impacts on recreational areas.
- In the intensive 5 acre recreation development; limit forest management activities to those that promote larger diameter, longer lived species; removal of hazard or unsightly trees; plant trees to promote visual aesthetics and encourage a natural setting.

Recreation Management

Expand recreational facilities within the area as described in the property-wide management plan and consistent with the standards for a Type 4 Recreational Use Setting and day use areas in NR 44.07(7)(e)5b. Specific new developments or management actions include a Land Use Agreement with the Town of Boulder Junction to construct:

- 5 acre recreation park that includes a warming house, lighted ice-skating rink, and lighted 20 car parking lot
- One mile lighted recreation trail to be used for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and hiking.
- Refer to the land use agreement for site design restrictions.