



Peshigo River State Forest, Marinette County, WI
Master Plan Variance
July 2012



PROPERTY NAME

Peshigo River State Forest

DATE MASTER PLAN WAS APPROVED

September 2007

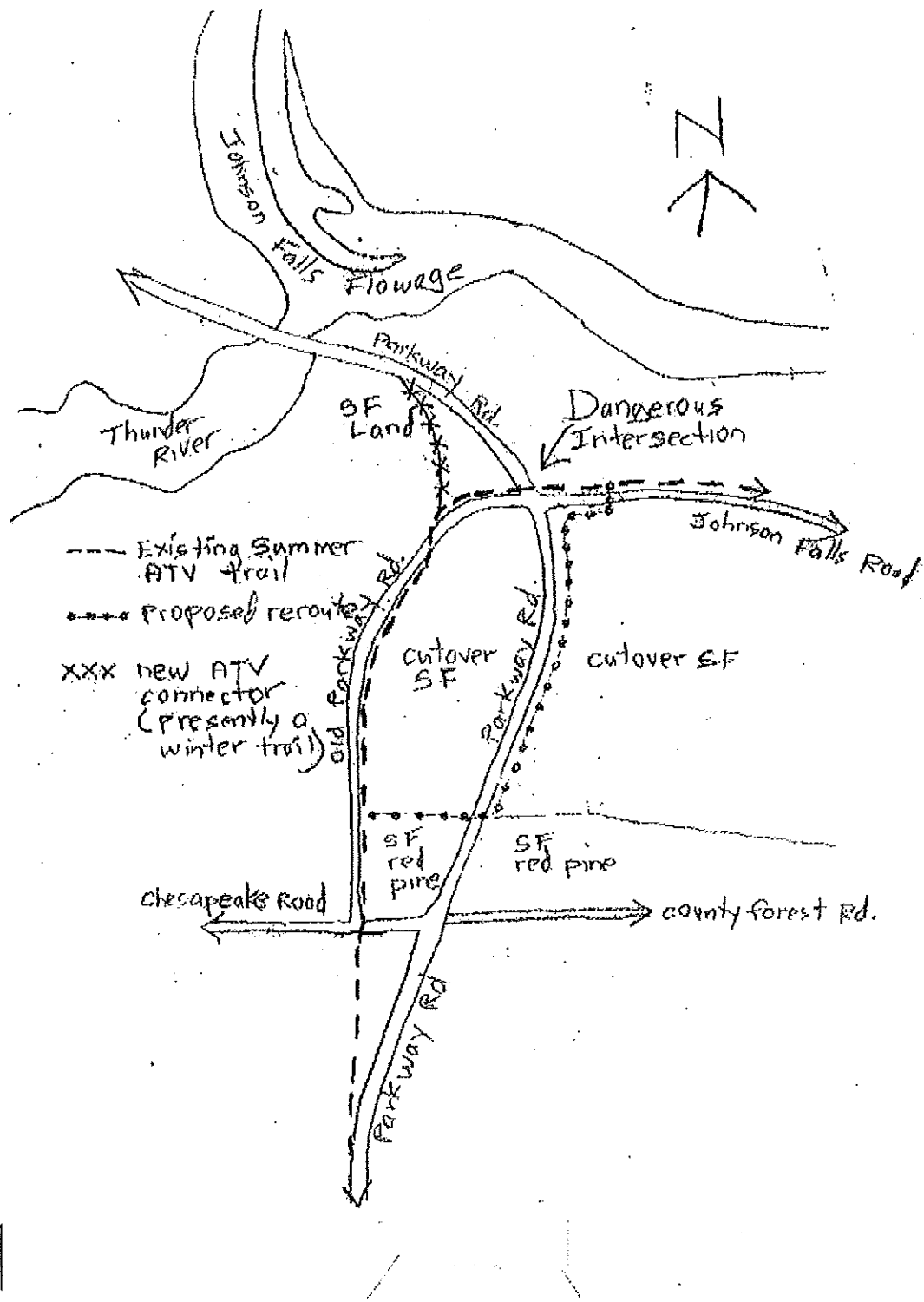
VARIANCE TO THE MASTER PLAN

Re-route ¼ mile of existing ATV trail to address concerns regarding safety at the intersection of Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road.

Closing the existing ATV trail crossing at the intersection of Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road would alleviate many safety concerns. A one quarter-mile re-route of the trail would allow ATV riders to use the newly built firebreak on the east side of Parkway Road to reconnect to the regional trail network along Johnson Falls Road under much safer conditions. In addition, use of the existing state forest's snowmobile trail (about 450 feet) would allow safer access to the section of Parkway Road just north of the intersection, which was recently designated as an ATV route by the town.

Map provided on next page.

Approved: Paul Dehong *kydj* Date: 7/25/12
Administrator, Division of Forestry



Supporting Information

Purpose and Need for the Proposed Variance:

According to the 2007 Master Plan, the Department supports the development and maintenance of ATV riding opportunities on appropriate trails, particularly trails that contribute to regional trail networks. The plan also states that existing trail conditions and design will be evaluated regularly to improve the trails as needed in compliance with current ATV design standard.

The ATV trail crossing at the busy intersection of Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road has raised safety concerns due to traffic and road conditions. The crossing is situated on a curved hill and has been the cause of unsafe conditions for ATV riders and other motorists. In addition to the unsafe nature of the road crossing itself, ATV's throw gravel onto the blacktop while crossing the intersection, which has caused accidents and even a fatality in the past.

A re-route of the trail would be required in two places to reduce the safety concerns with this intersection. First, a re-route along the east side of Parkway Road to reconnect to the regional route along Johnson Falls Road, would allow ATV riders to use the newly built firebreak. Second, use of the existing state forest's snowmobile trail (about 450 feet) would allow safer access to the section of Parkway Road just north of the intersection, which was recently designated as an ATV route by the town. Allowing this re-route would link the Parkway Road ATV users to the re-route and towards the regional network.

Granting the use of this short stretch of snowmobile trail for ATV users supports the safety of both riders and motorists and helps maintain the flow of traffic at this particular intersection. This action does not sanction ATV use of all snowmobile trails or other state forest lands to bypass roads and intersections within the State Forest. Requests for additional changes will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Anticipated Primary Benefits of the Proposed Variance:

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

Additional Anticipated Benefits:

- Provide easier connectivity of ATV trails to the regional network.
- Would be easy to create with very little cost of renovation.
- Would utilize a pre-existing firebreak along Parkway Road.
- Would utilize a pre-existing snowmobile trail to access Parkway Road.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts:

- Potential erosion problems along the downhill section of the reroute to Johnson Falls Road. This must be corrected by armoring trail with rock.
- Potential erosion in the open grassy area of the snowmobile trail heading downhill towards the river. This must be corrected by armoring the trail with rock.

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 provision in the Peshtigo River State Forest Master Plan (2007), and complies with the objectives of the Master Plan.

The Master Plan designates that existing trail conditions and design will be evaluated regularly to improve the trail as needed in compliance with current ATV design standards.

The Public Review Process Used:

Information was posted on the Peshtigo River State Forest master plan webpage (http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/tsp_pesh/) beginning on July 5, 2012. The comment period was July 5, 2012 through July 23, 2012.

The property superintendent presented the variance at a special board meeting of the Town Board of Stephenson on July 5, 2012. The variance was on the agenda for the meeting, therefore it was public knowledge. Interested and affected stakeholders present at the meeting were members of the Iron Snowshoe Snowmobile Club. The variance was presented for a second time on July 11th at the regular monthly meeting of the town board. The town board resolved to support the variance if the DNR approves it.

Randy Harden, President of WATVA, was e-mailed a copy of the variance and provided comments in favor of the variance. The Marinette County Forest Administrator, John Scott, and the Marinette County Parks Administrator, Eric Aleson, were e-mailed a copy of the variance and provided no comments. State Representative, Jeff Mursau, telephoned the forest superintendent to support the variance. No other comments were received.

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

All comments received were in favor of the variance because it would make conditions safer. No opposing comments were received. There are no unresolved issues or concerns. ATV funds are available to accomplish the trail work.