



Black River State Forest Master Plan Variance November 14, 2011



PROPERTY NAME

Black River State Forest

DATE MASTER PLAN WAS APPROVED

January 2010

VARIANCE INITIATOR/AUTHOR

Peter Bakken, Superintendent, Black River State Forest

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR PROPOSED VARIANCE

The Black River State Forest (BRSF) currently does not have any designated trails for winter hiking (e.g. snowshoeing); a winter activity that continues to grow in popularity. Demand for snowshoe trails on the BRSF has been increasing – each year the property receives phone calls and emails inquiring about snowshoeing opportunities on the property.

In addition, the Black River Forest Trail Foundation, the official Friends group for the property, has indicated a desire to have designated snowshoe trails within the Overmeyer Hills Recreation Area. The Trail Foundation has approximately 15 members and while they are primarily focused on cross-country ski trails, they have expressed an interest to add this type of use to the property.

VARIANCE TO THE MASTER PLAN

The variance being proposed is the incorporation of winter hiking (e.g. snowshoe) trail development/designation into the 2010 master plan.

1) Create a new section within the Recreation Management Plan (p. 109-110) describing winter hiking (e.g. snowshoe) trails:

Winter Hiking Trails

A new lightly developed winter hiking trail designated for snowshoe use will be developed within the Overmeyer Hills Recreation Area. The one to two mile short loop will originate from the Smrekar Trailhead/parking lot and will be located within the interior of the existing Central Loop cross-country ski trail. The trail will also be available for hiking in the summer.

2) Add a winter hiking section to Table 2.28 on page 109.

3) Add winter hiking trail information to Area 18 Overmeyer Hills Recreation Management Area (text which currently exists in the master plan is shown with specific changes indicated in **bold** text):

- **Develop a one to two mile lightly developed winter hiking trail designated for snowshoe use. The trail will originate from the Smrekar Trailhead/parking lot and be located within the interior of the existing Central Loop cross-country ski trail. The trail will also be available for hiking in the summer.**
- Install electrical service at the warming shelter located at the Smrekar Trail parking lot.
- Abandon the existing well along the Central Loop trail system and install a new well and accessible hand pump at the trailhead located at the Smrekar Trail parking lot.
- Construct a new storage facility at the Smrekar Trail parking lot and abandon the storage facility at the Wildcat Trail parking lot.

ANTICIPATED BENEFITS OF PROPOSED VARIANCE

The primary benefit of adding designated snowshoe trails on the property is that it would meet the public demand for this winter activity. It would add a compatible use to the hike/bike/ski area known as the Overmeyer Hills.

An additional benefit would be that snowshoe enthusiasts would be able to utilize the Smrekar warming shelter, currently only used by skiers.

UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Initially, there may be some user conflict with snowshoe enthusiasts mistakenly assuming cross-country ski trails are available for snowshoe use. The Black River State Forest work will cooperatively with the Black River Forest Trail Foundation on signage and informational materials to minimize potential adverse impacts.

There may be minimal environmental impacts associated with construction of the new trail segments. In addition, because use of the trail would primarily be low impact, any long-term environmental impacts from use should be negligible.

THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS USED

The variance was posted on the Black River State Forest's [website](#) from November 3, 2011 to November 13, 2011. Notice of the proposed variance was also included in the property's weekly current conditions update, which generates an automatic email that over 1,300 individuals receive. A discussion of the variance also occurred at the November 9, 2011 meeting of the Black River Forest Trail Foundation.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT AND/OR OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED VARIANCE AND ANY UNRESOLVED ISSUES OR CONCERNS

The Black River Forest Trail Foundation, whose primary purpose is to maintain and improve the Hike/Bike/Ski trail system within the Overmeyer Hills, unanimously supported this proposal. No other public comments were received.

HOW THE MASTER PLAN SUPPORTS THE PROPOSED VARIANCE

The master plan variance is consistent with the following goals and objectives in the master plan:

Property Goals (p. 9) - #6 Provide a range of quality outdoor recreational activities and settings, both motorized and non-motorized, ranging from primitive to developed, consistent with resource capabilities.

Area 18 Overmeyer Hills Recreation Management Area (p. 88-91)

- Long-term Management Objective – “Maintain and enhance silent sports recreation opportunities within a relatively extensive acreage of older, intact, connected forest that provides aesthetic appeal.”
- Short-term Management Objective – “Provide a system of aesthetically pleasing, sustainable trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and mountain biking that offer opportunities for quiet enjoyment of the forest.”

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.

APPROVED: _____ **DATE:** _____
Administrator, Division of Forestry

SUPPORTING APPROVALS

_____ Date: _____
Property Manager

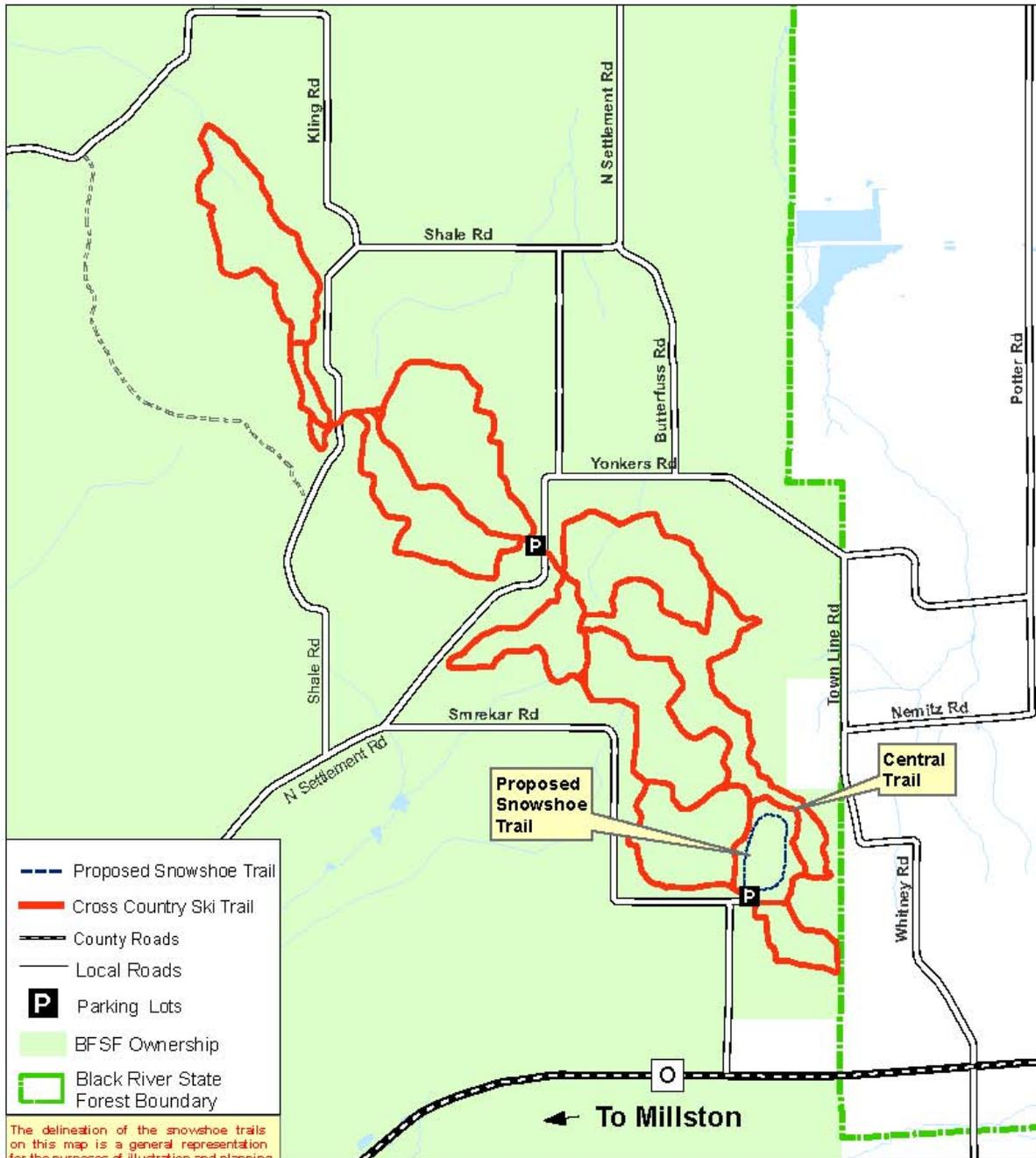
_____ Date: _____
Department Master Planning Manager, LF

_____ Date: _____
Regional Forestry Leader

_____ Date: _____
Program Bureau Director



Black River State Forest PROPOSED SNOWSHOE TRAIL



The delineation of the snowshoe trails on this map is a general representation for the purposes of illustration and planning and does not reflect the exact final location. More detailed locations will be produced as improved, on-the-ground, environmental information becomes available, including topography and other site features.

