

ORV PLANNING

Volume 2, Issue 1

January 2007

CHIPPEWA AREA FORESTS

FS "NEPA" Team Starts Their Engine

OK, it isn't exactly NASCAR, but it is exciting to see the ORV Road Travel Analysis Team get started, and using your comments from the public meetings in October 2006. And work is progressing quickly.

Since their initial meeting in October, the team has drafted four alternatives to analyze: a No Action alternative, the Proposed road system that was mailed to many of you in September, an alternative that emphasizes resource protections for both motorized and non-motorized uses and an alternative that increases ORV access to economically benefit communities.

Next, resource specialists will report on each alternative's potential impacts to a specific resource. The team plans to assemble a Draft en-



vironmental assessment document in February, and provide it to you for comment in March. A decision is expected in May 2007.

Do we really need to go through so much work? Yes! It's a legal requirement to evaluate potential changes, but the resulting deci-

sion should also gain more social and environmental acceptance than if we hadn't undertaken this task.

If you'd like the opportunity to review the proposed decision, make sure you are on our mailing list to receive the completed document.

Mixed Use Evaluators Hit the Road

As January arrived, Forest Service Districts completed a field check of roads suggested for Mixed Use. A Mixed Use Analysis is a systematic process that determines the safety and liability when allowing both highway licensed and unlicensed motor vehicles on the same roadway at the same time. Because the Forest Service is an

official road management agency, allowing use of unlicensed vehicles on high standard roads (designed for passenger vehicles) must be analyzed. The decision to allow mixed use must be documented and approved by an authorized person. The Mixed Use Analysis is planned for completion at the same time as the NEPA

Team completes their environmental analysis. The May decision will consider both processes to provide the best network of roads open to ORV use overall.

And...Roads can be added or subtracted annually based on public comment and review of information in the Mixed Use Analysis.

Other ORV Planning Efforts:

- All comments from the ORV Public Meetings in October were shared with the Forest Service, MN DNR, Beltrami, Cass, and Itasca counties to use in their individual ORV planning processes.
- FS and DNR teams plan to meet and compare final recommendations and effects to provide you the best possible system of road designations across different land ownerships.
- A decision by the DNR Commissioner on state forest classifications and route designations on state lands is expected in March 2007 and will be posted on the DNR website.
- Beltrami County lands are now classified as "Managed unless restricted", and they are in the early stages of planning ATV trails on an area northwest of Bemidji along the old Soo Line corridor.

Tracking the Signs

You may not have realized it, but the signs they are a'changing!

Throughout the past year Chippewa National Forest employees and contractors have been posting updated road number signs on all Forest Service System Roads.

Even better, this can help you identify what kinds of traffic a road is designed for.

Generally, a road number posted horizontally implies a road designed for licensed passenger vehicles only, and a road that receives a higher level of traffic and maintenance.

A road number posted vertically is generally a low maintenance and low traffic road, that may require a high clearance vehicle. Many of these are open to

ORV use.

And simply put: woods "roads" without road numbers are not roads for ORV travel. Use of these is considered cross country travel, which is prohibited.

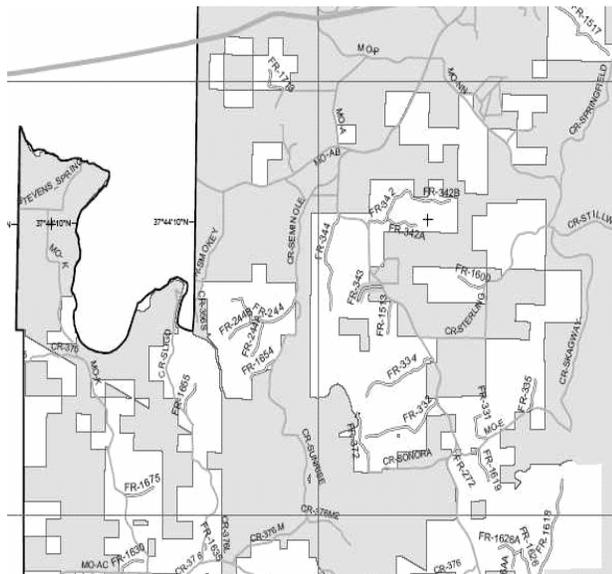
To date, over 600 signs and posts have been installed, with over 1400 more signs and posts soon to be installed. Contractors are scheduled for summer 2007 to complete this major task and help ensure that we're prepared to issue the Motor Vehicle Use map in January 2008!



Motor Vehicle Use Map

"MVUM" is a frequently mumbled abbreviation in the Forest Service these days. A Motor Vehicle Use Map will be the official guide for where you can ride ORV's in a national forest. Our MVUM map will be available as both a paper copy and posted on the Chippewa website. It is expected to be updated each year. That means it will take some effort on your part ,and ours, to keep up to date, but an annual update also means changes can be proposed and made more clearly.

What will a MVUM look like? Here's a preview!



For more information
Blackduck District
Nancy Salminen
218-835-3116

Deer River District
Mike Martin
218-246-3479

Walker Ranger District
Mitch Bouchonville
218-547-6002
Ext. 121

MN DNR Trails &
Waterways
Jack Olson
218-833-8716