

Chapter 700 – Access Management

Executive Summary of Draft Amendments

Bayfield County is in the process of updating Chapter 700 of the current Bayfield County Forest 15-Year Land Use Plan. Chapter 700 addresses access management or, more specifically, permitted recreational uses of the forest, including authorized recreational uses on current and future trails.

The current 15-Year Land Use Plan was approved in 2006. However, specific permitted uses on inventoried trails were only completed on a small portion of the forest. As part of the current document, access management plans were approved in the Cable and Southern Barnes blocks of the county forest. In essence, the plans for Cable and Southern Barnes have been unaltered as part of these draft amendments. As always, public feedback is welcomed on all parts of the plan, but priorities are on the portions of the county forest where access plans have not yet been approved.

Trails were inventoried over the summer of 2012 and were rated based upon condition at the time of inspection, current use designations and ability to accommodate motorized recreational use (in addition to other criteria). Trails that were in very poor condition or were not suitable for one or multiple form(s) of motorized use were indicated during the inventory.

If, during the time of inspection, motorized use did not appear to have the potential to increase the risk of resource degradation or conflict with current, well established non-motorized uses, the determination was made to allow motorized use of the trail. However, a distinction was made between licensed highway vehicles (i.e. pickup trucks) and off-highway vehicles (i.e. ATV's, UTV's).

On heavier soils or those that contain significant components of silt or clay, licensed highway vehicles have the potential to create a significant amount of damage, when compared to off-highway vehicles. Highway vehicles were restricted on most of these trails. Off-highway vehicles were permitted where light use would not significantly impact the resource.

Trails designated as open to motorized use may be closed at any time, if the permitted use is causing or has the potential to cause, significant natural resource degradation, as determined by the Administrator or Committee.

Below is a summary of the major draft amendments proposed as part of this draft revision:

1. General Trail Use. All trails are closed to all forms of motorized use unless posted open or designated open as per an area classification (see #2 below). This is the same policy as before, however, the only trails posted open were state funded recreational trails, county forest primary roads and secondary roads in southern Barnes and Cable, where access plans were previously completed.

The following table summarizes the permitted motorized uses on inventoried trails before and after the draft revisions:

Permitted Motorized Use - Before and After Revision
(as a percentage of total inventoried miles)

Type of Motorized Vehicle	Before	After
Licensed Highway (car, truck, etc.)	4%	42%
Registered Off-Highway (ATV, UTV, etc)	6%	72%
Snowmobile	8%	91%
Total Miles of Trails	1,206	

2. Area Classifications. Area classifications were created to designate all or most of the trails within large geographic locations as either open or closed to motorized use. Three area classifications were created:
 - a. High Motorized Area – where all or most of the trails are open to licensed highway vehicle use (HV) and registered off-highway vehicle use (OHV). These areas are generally located on deep outwash sands, with little topography or hydrology. Areas will be signed at strategic locations to designate permitted uses. If a trail needs to be closed, a sign, berm or gate will designate closure. Otherwise all trails will be open to motorized use in High Motorized Areas. Roughly 28% of the forest is designated as High Motorized.
 - b. Moderate Motorized Area – where most of the trails will be open to OHV use (signed if closed) and closed to HV use (signed if open). Many trails were not built to accommodate 4 season motorized recreational use and many will not support recreational vehicles. Soils in these areas vary from clay to loam to sand, the topography is often very rugged and many contain numerous riparian features. Roughly 50% of the forest is designated as Moderate Motorized.
 - c. Low Motorized Areas – where all or most of the trails are closed to all forms of motorized vehicles. Trails located in these areas were not built to accommodate motorized recreational use or are part of existing, well established non-motorized trail networks. Areas will be signed at strategic locations to designate permitted uses. A few select trails may be open for certain motorized use. If so, a sign will be posted to designate the permitted use. Existing state funded trails (typically snowmobile) run through many of these areas. These trails will continue to exist. Roughly 22% of the forest is designated as Low Motorized.

The Table below describes the total miles of permitted recreational use on inventoried trails located within each area classification. The table lists total miles for each use type. Many trails are dual use i.e. highway vehicles, off-highway vehicles and snowmobiles are permitted on the same trail. The non-motorized mileage refers to the amount of trail

where no motorized recreation is permitted. In most cases, non-motorized use is permitted on all trails that can be driven with motorized vehicles.

Summary of Permitted Motorized Use by Type per Area Classification (miles)

Area Classification	Acres	Type of Permitted Use				Total
		Highway Vehicles (HV)	Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV)	Snowmobile	Non-Motorized (NM)*	
High Motorized	47,017 (28%)	354 (95%)	368 (99%)	368 (99%)	5 (1%)	373 (31%)
Moderate Motorized	84,086 (50%)	148 (25%)	488 (82%)	590 (99%)	106 (18%)	594 (49%)
Low Motorized	36,024 (22%)	3 (1%)	6 (2%)	143 (60%)	233 (98%)	239 (20%)
Total	167,127	505 (42%)	862 (72%)	1,101 (91%)	344 (28%)	1,206

* amount of trails where motorized recreation is not allowed (excluding snowmobile use).

3. ATV Use. Off-Highway Vehicles (ATV's, UTV's, etc.) are allowed on most trails located within High and Moderate Motorized Areas, and a few select trails in certain Low Motorized Areas. If an individual trail or area is not signed permitting ATV use, then the trail in question is closed. Most of the trails are undesignated (meaning they are not part of the state funded trail system). Undesignated trails are intended and suitable for light, local use, but are not built to accommodate the type of traffic designated trails receive. Trails will be monitored and closed if use is causing or has the potential to cause resource degradation, as determined by the County.
4. Snowmobile Use. Snowmobiles are permitted on nearly all inventoried trails within High and Moderate Motorized Areas, and on designated trails within Low Motorized Areas, when the ground is snow-covered. Snowmobiles are not allowed on trails being maintained for another purpose i.e. cross-country skiing.
5. Licensed Highway Vehicle Use. Licensed highway vehicles are allowed on most trails located within High Motorized areas and many of the trails located within Moderate Motorized areas. However, current County Ordinances prohibit the use of highway vehicles on designated, state funded ATV trails. These ordinances will be re-evaluated in the near future. If an individual trail or area is not signed permitting highway vehicle use, then the trail in question is closed. Trails will be monitored and closed if use is causing or has the potential to cause resource degradation, as determined by the County.
6. Non-Motorized Recreation. Mountain biking, cross-country skiing, dog-sledding, snowshoeing, horseback riding and other similar non-motorized recreational activities are permitted on all trails throughout the forest, unless posted closed to a particular use or otherwise addressed in the plan. The entire forest provides an abundance of recreational opportunities, but Low Motorized Areas provide the best opportunities for those looking for non-motorized recreational experiences.
7. Trail Designations. Individuals or groups requesting specific trail development or use must present a plan for long term funding and maintenance. All plans must be approved by the Forestry and Parks Committee. If approved, individuals or groups must apply for

a 10 year recreational use agreement, which requires the responsible parties to carry a one million dollar liability policy, as well as other specifications. Basically the same criteria as before, with the exception of the mandatory liability policy. What does this mean? For example, one scenario could involve cross country skiing. In this plan, individuals can cross country ski on any inventoried trail on the forest (other than groomed designated snowmobile trails). Say a group wanted to develop a ski trail network that required grooming, maintenance, signs, parking areas, trail heads, promotional advertising, etc. This would go above and beyond typical individual recreational use of the forest. A group or organization would be required to maintain the trails for this type of use. They would assume the liability for the designation, not the County.

The Bayfield County Forest is a vast, diverse public resource, covering nearly the entire length of the county. When combined with the National Forest and other state and federal lands, nearly half of Bayfield County is in public ownership. Recreational opportunities are nearly endless.

One major objective of the plan is to accommodate as much recreational use of the forest as possible, without invoking unnecessary restrictions and without causing degradation to the natural resources. Motorized recreational use on undesignated trails will be closely monitored. If degradation to the resource is occurring or has the potential to occur, the trail in question will be closed.

The plan is a living document, meaning it is always evolving. Participation from the public, those that are impacted the most from the decisions we make, is a very important component in the development of this, or any, plan.