

NORTHERN HIGHLAND - AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST

PROPOSED AMENDMENT to the recreation portion of the 2005 MASTER PLAN



October 2, 2017
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT PROPOSAL

Property Name: Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

Date Master Plan was approved: October 2005

A. Overview

The purpose of this proposed amendment is to address evolving needs and opportunities to the recreation experiences provided at the Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest (NHAL). The NHAL has long been a top recreation destination in Wisconsin and for generations has drawn campers, hunters, anglers, boaters, cross-country skiers, birdwatchers, snowmobilers, and many others to enjoy the property's deep woods and clear lakes.

The existing master plan was approved in 2005. Since that time, several trends in recreation participation, along with changes to the use and management of surrounding public lands, have placed different and new demands on the property. An additional factor is the number of local governments that now allow motorized recreational vehicles, such as ATVs and UTVs, on local roads. To adapt to these changes and to ensure that the department continues to provide high-quality experiences to NHAL visitors, changes are proposed to camping, non-motorized trail, motorized trail, and boating opportunities provided at the property.

The proposed amendment is based on input and information from a variety of sources. The department sought input on potential updates to the master plan at open house meetings in April 2017 and through a public input form that was available in April and May, both in hardcopy and online formats. A total of 497 responses were received. In addition to this data set, a study of NHAL visitors had been previously conducted by UW-Stevens Point and DNR staff in 2013 and 2014.¹ That survey focused on the importance of the property to people and their recreation experiences. Finally, the department recently completed work on a Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) for the Northwoods Region.² The results of that effort, particularly the identification of recreation needs throughout the region, were instrumental in developing the proposed amendment.

The department hosted another open house meeting on August 31, 2017 to describe the proposed amendment and to gather public input. Seventy people attended the open house meeting and submitted 27 input forms and three letters. In addition to comments received at the meeting, 214 people provided comments about the proposed amendment through an online comment form and an additional 26 people submitted comments by mailing in letters, emails, and hard copy input forms.

This amendment does not propose any changes to the land management classifications of the NHAL; it does clarify that the rustic and modern campgrounds and day use areas are all "Recreation Management Areas - Type 4" under NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code.

As frequent visitors to the NHAL well know, the forests on the property are actively and strategically managed. Department staff involved in recreation and forest management coordinate activities to ensure that visitors continue to enjoy high-quality experiences while maintaining a healthy forest ecosystem. At times, visitors will see and hear a variety of logging operations designed to keep the forest vibrant and provide a critical supply of

¹ McIntyre, Laura Anderson and Melissa Baker. 2014. *Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest (NHAL) 2013 – 2014 Visitor Survey Study Report*. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. 78 pages.

² See dnr.wi.gov, keyword "ROA."

material for local mills. Occasionally, trails, campsites, and other parts of the property are temporarily closed to facilitate these forestry activities and protect visitor safety.

The 2005 NHAL master plan addresses what recreation facilities are and will be provided, where they will be located, and how they will be managed at the property. Except for the portions addressed in this amendment, the components of the 2005 master plan related to recreation use and management remain unchanged.

B. Amendment to the NHAL State Forest master plan

This amendment focuses on the recreation portion of the master plan and as such, the recreation management staff on the NHAL will be tasked with implementing the proposed changes described here. Recreation management staff and supervisors will work with experts in forestry, wildlife, fisheries, rare and endangered resources, law enforcement, cultural resources, water and wetland protection, and other areas to ensure that the recreation facilities that are proposed here are constructed and operated in ways that provide high-quality experiences for visitors while maintaining and protecting the natural resources of the property.

For several of the recreation facilities (including trails) proposed in the amendment, only a somewhat general location to effectively meet a need is known. The specific locations or alignments of the recreation facilities proposed in this amendment will be determined later and will be a function of the amount and timing of available funding, site assessments (e.g., rare and endangered species, archaeological resources, and wetlands), forestry operations and harvesting schedules, and other factors that may arise. It is possible that several or many of the proposed facilities or trails will not be developed for a variety of reasons.

For example, a new group campsite is proposed at Sweeney Lake. This is a desirable place for a group campsite because the lake is entirely owned by the department, it is moderate-sized with lots of upland shore, and there are several nearby existing DNR roads that could provide access. The exact location of the campsite will be determined when it appears funding will be available; the process to identify the right place will include an assessment of forest resources and management plans, the presence of rare, endangered, archaeological or sensitive resources, habitat conditions, and other appropriate factors at that time.

As another example, the plan proposes general locations for bicycle touring trails. Map H shows general locations of potential bicycle touring trails to create a number of connections between local communities and the existing network of trails. One possible connection would link the existing trail that parallels CTH K (and connects Manitowish Waters and Boulder Junction) with the DNR campground at Upper Gresham Lake. The actual location of this trail will be determined based on the locations of wetlands, road crossings, opportunities to pass by points of interest or businesses, and other factors.

In other cases, a need is known as well as the characteristics of the desired experiences, but the location(s) to best meet the need are not yet fixed. A good example is siting new boat launches. Boating has been and continues to be a popular activity at the NHAL and over time the department has needed to add additional boat access sites to meet demand.

To address the evolving and ongoing demand for water access, the proposed amendment authorizes the department to add 30 new boat launches over time as needs and opportunities emerge. The intent is to provide additional access sites where it is needed, but not to provide developed launches at all lakes. Indeed, a primary goal for the NHAL is to provide a range of types of access to the over 900 lakes within the NHAL boundary – from remote undeveloped lakes without any improved access to large lakes with multiple developed boat launches. A set of factors that the department will consider when evaluating the appropriateness of constructing a new boat launch is described on page 16.

A final example is the case where a recreation need is known as well as the characteristics of the desired experiences, but the location(s) to best meet the need are dependent on the actions of other parties. The desire

to have a network of ATV/UTV routes that provide connections east-west and north-south across the NHAL is a prime example. Some existing ATV/UTV routes are currently available to riders on local roads. Based on a preliminary evaluation of DNR roads that intersect with these routes, the proposed amendment would designate about 42 miles of existing DNR roads as ATV/UTV routes to extend the network (Map G). Additional assessments of these proposed routes (and other nearby DNR roads) with DNR staff, ATV/UTV clubs, and local officials are needed to ensure that the most appropriate roads are ultimately selected, but these appear to be a good start to help make connections across the NHAL.

In the future, local governments may designate additional ATV/UTV routes on their roads, which in turn influences which DNR roads would make the most sense for the department to designate as routes to continue building connections across the property. To meet these future opportunities, in addition to the 42 miles of DNR roads to designate as routes as part of this amendment, the department seeks authority in the master plan to designate an additional 160 miles of ATV/UTV routes and trails on existing DNR roads that help build the overall network and that meet certain criteria.

The following changes to the existing master plan are proposed:³

1. Camping opportunities.

Historically, camping at the NHAL focused on providing relatively simple accommodations in campgrounds nestled along lakes. As the property's popularity has grown over the decades, campgrounds have been upgraded and expanded. Currently, there are four modern and 14 rustic campgrounds.⁴ Modern campgrounds on the property typically have more than 75 campsites, paved roadways, flush toilets, shower buildings, and dump stations, but no electric hook-ups. Rustic campgrounds typically have 20 to 70 campsites, usually with wider spacing than modern campgrounds, and minimal facilities such as hand-pumped water and vault toilets.

Several factors drive the need to amend the camping portion of the 2005 master plan. The demand for camping has continued its decade's long evolution. In the past, most campers visiting the NHAL slept in tents on the ground. Now, many prefer RVs, pop-up campers, trailers, and other similar motor vehicles. In addition, demand for more conveniences, such as showers and flush toilets, at campgrounds remains strong.

The recently completed Recreation Opportunities Analysis found that there is a high need for both rustic and developed camping facilities in the Northwoods Region. Both types of camping experiences are provided at the NHAL and it is the department's experience that the more developed campgrounds here are in substantially higher demand than those with more basic accommodations.

As more and more campers shift to RVs and other types of campers, there is increasing demand for electricity to power various items. Because electric hook-ups are not currently provided at any of the NHAL campgrounds, many campers in RVs and other campers use generators during their stays. Although generator use is limited to the hours of 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., they can detract from the camping experience of visitors that do not use them. The department will seek ways to reduce the use of generators at the campgrounds in the NHAL over time.

³ Appendix 1 contains a table summarizing the proposed changes to the recreation facilities of the 2005 NHAL master plan.

⁴ A fifth modern campground is currently authorized at Carrol Lake to replace the existing rustic campground that is planned to be converted to a day use area (picnic area).

One of the unique niches that the NHAL has long filled is providing rustic campsites on and near the many clear lakes that dot the property. As more and more campers use RVs, pop-up campers, trailers, and other similar motor vehicles, those pursuing more traditional “car camping” and sleeping in tents have voiced a desire for campgrounds that are quiet (without generators powering televisions, radios, and other electrically-powered conveniences).

The following changes to the 2005 master plan are proposed:

Modern campgrounds⁵

The department proposes to convert four existing rustic campgrounds (Big Lake, Indian Mounds, Sandy Beach, and Upper Gresham) to modern campgrounds (Map I). As a result, there would be nine⁶ authorized modern family campgrounds with a total of 497 existing campsites. The 2005 master plan authorizes an additional 157 sites over these nine campgrounds. Based on visitation patterns, topography and landscape setting, not all of these are practical or needed. In addition, in order to bring the spacing between campsites into alignment with department policy, not all of these additional campsites are possible. This proposed amendment seeks to reduce the number of authorized campsites at modern campgrounds by 39. This will result in a total of 615 campsites (existing plus authorized). The facilities at modern campgrounds will continue to be upgraded over time as funding allows. Improvements could include new or expanded shower buildings, flush toilets, dump stations, electric hook-ups, paved roads and bicycle trails, and other allowable amenities.⁷

The nine modern campgrounds are classified as Recreation Management Areas – Type 4 setting under NR 44.06 and NR 44.07.

Rustic campgrounds⁸

There are currently 338 campsites at the nine (remaining) rustic campgrounds. The 2005 master plan authorizes an additional 70 campsites at these campgrounds. Based on visitation patterns, these sites are no longer needed. Adding more campsites to these campgrounds would likely not improve management efficiency. As with the modern campgrounds, there are several places in the rustic campgrounds where the campsites are too close together and additional spacing is needed. The department will seek to relocate

PROPOSED CHANGES TO CAMPING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE NHAL:

- Convert four rustic campgrounds to modern campgrounds.
- Maintain the existing 497 campsites within the modern campgrounds. Reduce the number of authorized (but not yet built) campsites from 157 to 118.
- Maintain the authorization to convert the existing rustic campground at Carrol Lake to a day use area and to establish a new modern campground on the east side of the lake.
- Maintain the existing 319 campsites within the remaining rustic campgrounds. Eliminate the existing authorization to build additional 70 campsites at the rustic campgrounds.
- Designate two rustic campgrounds, with a total of 77 campsites, as quiet areas (no generators or amplified sound allowed).
- Add two new group campsites.
- Increase the number of primitive campsites; 28 new non-reservable water-access campsites and 10 new reservable water-access campsites.
- Eliminate the authorization to build a 10-unit rustic, backpack campsite.
- Eliminate the authorization to build an equestrian campground.

⁵ Modern campgrounds typically have 75 or more campsites and provide a moderate to relatively high level of user comfort and convenience. The following types of facilities are often provided at modern campgrounds: electric hook-ups, pressurized water supply, flush toilets, shower buildings, and a dumping station on-site or nearby.

⁶ The 2005 master plan calls for the existing 19-unit campground at Carrol Lake to be converted into a day use area and a new 60-unit modern campground to be constructed at a more suitable location on the east side of the lake. This amendment makes no changes to that proposal.

⁷ See Wis. Stat. s. 23.01(15) and NR 44.07(7), Wis. Admin. Code.

⁸ Rustic campgrounds typically have fewer than 75 total campsites and provide basic user needs and comforts. The following types of facilities are often provided at rustic campgrounds: tent pad, fire ring, picnic table and parking for a vehicle and trailer or a RV unit, a hand pump water supply, and vault type toilets.

some of the existing sites to meet spacing goals and does not need additional capacity. As a result, this proposed amendment seeks to eliminate the authorization for these 70 campsites and have a new authorization of 319 campsites.

Section NR 45.04(3)(e), Wis. Adm. Code, prohibits anyone from running an electrical generator for day-use or camping on department-managed lands unless the property manager has issued a written permit to allow it. Although the department's general policy is to limit the use of generators at campgrounds without electricity to those people with a medical condition requiring the use of electric devices, programs have flexibility in developing guidance to property managers to balance the needs of day-users or campers with the serenity that other guests expect at our properties. At the NHAL, the policy has been to allow generators between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. without the need for a permit. The use of generators has increased over the last two decades at the property.

To meet the demand for quiet campgrounds, the department proposes to designate the Cunard and Starrett campgrounds as quiet zones.⁹ These sites have a combined total of 77 campsites. Boaters on both Cunard and Starrett lakes are restricted to using only electric motors. The remaining rustic campgrounds, with a combined 261 existing campsites, will operate following existing policies.

The nine rustic campgrounds are classified as Recreation Management Areas – Type 4 setting under NR 44.06 and NR 44.07.

Group campsites¹⁰

Currently, two group campsites exist – one at Jag Lake and the other at Big Muskellunge Lake – and both are heavily used. These sites are occupied nearly the entire camping season and there is clearly demand for more group camping opportunities on the property. A third group site was authorized in the 2005 master plan on the north shore of Buffalo Lake. A fourth group site, at the Rainbow Flowage, was authorized in an amendment that was approved in 2013.

Upon further evaluation, various factors lead the department to conclude that the Buffalo Lake site is no longer a desirable location. The potential area for the campsite is limited in size and the lake already experiences a high level of use from the existing campground and from private land holdings on the lake. The department proposes to eliminate the authorization to construct a group campsite at Buffalo Lake, retain the authority to construct a group site at the Rainbow Flowage, and build two additional group sites; one at Sweeny Lake and another at Cunard Lake. Both of these lakes are entirely owned by the department and have several stretches of upland shorelines that could provide high-quality campsites. The existing campground at Cunard Lake is proposed to be designated as a quiet zone. The group site here would be located to have minimal impact on the existing campground and may be smaller than typical for group sites.

Thus, in total the department will have the authority to operate five group campsites on the NHAL State Forest. The group campsites are classified as Recreation Management Areas – Type 4 setting under NR 44.06 and NR 44.07.

⁹ See NR 45.04(3)(k), Wis. Admin. Code.

¹⁰ Group campsites typically accommodate 50 or more campers and have basic accommodations. These sites often have open areas for many tents to be placed, picnic tables and fire rings, hand pump water supply and vault type toilets. Group campsites provide an important camping opportunity for large groups to enjoy rustic camping experiences while not affecting other campers.

Primitive and other camping¹¹

One of the unique opportunities at the NHAL is to camp at a site that is only accessible from the water. Campers access these sites from canoes, kayaks, or other boats. The existing sites are well used and the department believes that providing additional opportunities will prove popular. One hundred two (102) canoe and reservable-remote campsites are currently authorized by the 2005 master plan. The 2013 amendment authorized an additional three reservable, water-access group sites (accommodating up to 15 people each) and 10 water access sites on the Rainbow Flowage. Currently, a total of 109 sites exist.

Because these sites can be accessed by various water-based means (not just canoes), this proposed amendment renames these sites as “non-reservable, water-access campsites” and “reservable, water-access campsites.” To meet the growing demand, the proposed amendment increases the number of non-reservable, water-access sites from 102 to 130 and the number of reservable, water-access sites from 21 to 31. The non-reservable, water-access campsites and reservable, water-access campsites are classified as Recreation Management Areas – Type 3 setting under NR 44.06 and NR 44.07.

No changes are proposed to the existing opportunities for dispersed backpack camping or the dispersed, remote “deer camps” that have historically been set up during the fall deer hunting season. Although the public input during the ROA process found a strong demand for more rustic and primitive camping opportunities, the department’s experience at the NHAL is that there is little, if any, interest in a designated rustic backpack camp site. It is likely that this sort of camping experience is adequately addressed by the dispersed backpack camping system that is in existence at NHAL. As a result, the previously authorized (but unbuilt) 10-unit site is proposed to be removed from the master plan.

The demand for an equestrian campground has not materialized and as such the previously authorized (but unbuilt) horse campground is proposed to be deleted from the master plan.

2. Non-motorized trail opportunities.

For generations, residents and vacationers have enjoyed hiking and walking in the NHAL woods. Hiking opportunities are plentiful with over 90 miles of trails currently provided. An additional 25 miles are authorized in the 2005 master plan at two sites. With the Sandy Beach campground proposed to be upgraded to a modern campground there is a need to add additional hiking trails there to supplement visitor experiences.

Although biking has historically occurred in the area, the recent construction of paved bike trails has become a large draw. The first paved trail, constructed in 1997 from the North Trout Lake campground to Boulder Junction, proved very successful. Since then, using a combination of local, state, federal, and private funds, approximately 50 miles of bicycle touring trails have been constructed along road rights-of-way linking campgrounds and sites on the NHAL with local communities. These trails are cooperatively maintained by the department and local communities. They are heavily used by visitors and residents.

The existing master plan authorizes the DNR to cooperate with local communities in developing bicycle touring trails (referred to in the 2005 master plan as road bike trails) along road rights-of-way through the forest. The department wishes to help expand this network by linking together more of the campgrounds and

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL OPPORTUNITIES AT THE NHAL:

- Add up to 5 miles of hiking trails.
- Add up to 30 miles of constructed mountain biking trails and up to 20 miles of off-road bicycle trails.
- Add up to 60 miles of bicycle touring trails, including the ability to construct trails on the property outside of public road rights-of-way.

¹¹ Primitive campsites are single, remote sites that are typically widely dispersed. Facilities are limited to a fire ring, picnic table and box latrine, except for designated disabled accessible sites which may have an improved surface, improved water access and other appropriate facilities. Three types of primitive camping opportunities are provided on the NHAL: water-access reservable and non-reservable sites, dispersed backpack camping, and dispersed deer hunter camping.

local communities (including communities beyond the NHAL boundary). Based on the opportunities to link campgrounds and picnic areas to the existing trail network and its understanding of existing proposals and community interests in the bike trail network, the department expects that an additional 60 miles of bicycle trails on DNR land within the NHAL would prove beneficial to the agency and local communities. The department also believes there is value in potentially locating some stretches of the bicycle touring trails outside of road rights-of-way in locations where they will have minimal impacts on forest habitats or forestry operations.

Many of the bicycle touring trails in the NHAL are operated under agreements with local communities. The department supports allowing motor bicycles (sometimes referred to as electric bikes, or E bikes) on the bicycle touring trails, but will need to work with these communities to assess their interest in allowing motor bicycles on the existing and future touring trails.

In addition to bicycling on paved trails, there is growing interest in adding more off-road and constructed mountain biking opportunities at the NHAL. Currently, there are three off-road bicycle trails systems (McNaughton, Madeline, and Razorback Ridges) and one mountain biking system (Raven) on the property.

The department entered into an agreement to allow a partner to develop off-road and constructed mountain bike trails, in part, on department land between Winchester and Manitowish Waters. This complex, known as WinMan, is very popular and the owners are evaluating options to expand operations. In addition, there is interest by several communities to develop off-road bicycle trail networks using combinations of existing primitive logging roads and newly constructed trails. The department will continue to enter into land use agreements with partners to facilitate bicycle use on the NHAL.

Given its northern setting, the ample and predictable snow fall, and the quality of trails, the NHAL has long drawn cross-country skiers during the winter. Forty miles of cross-country ski trails are groomed on the property and many additional miles are groomed by clubs or other groups. In addition, dozens of miles of groomed trail are open to the public on neighboring lands. The department isn't proposing to groom additional miles of ski trails in this amendment, but will continue to work with partner groups to maintain existing and potentially additional groomed trails on the property through agreements.

Winter biking on "fat tire" bikes has increased in popularity over the last several years. There is increasing demand to accommodate this activity and to allow partner organizations to groom trails. The department will enter into land use agreements with partners to facilitate winter biking on the NHAL.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF BICYCLE TRAILS

Over the years, the diversity of types of bikes and riding experiences has grown considerably. The types of bicycling trails described in this amendment include:

Bicycle touring trails

Easier trails that are generally level, paved or surfaced with compacted screenings, and appropriate for all ability levels including young children. In many parts of the state, these trails are located on former railroad corridors. In the NHAL, almost all existing trails are paved and most run parallel to roads.

Off-road bicycle trails

Intermediate-level trails, often meandering through natural settings with some topography. These trails can have a variety of surfaces, from native soil to wood chips. These trails are appropriate for more adventurous riders on hybrid or mountain bikes.

Constructed mountain bike trails

Specially constructed, challenging, narrow-width trails built to the trail standards of the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA).

Winter/fat-tire bike trails

Trails designed primarily for winter use by bikes with wide treads (3" or greater). Trails can cover a wide range in level of difficulty.

The following changes to the 2005 master plan are proposed:

Hiking

The proposed amendment authorizes up to five miles of hiking trails at the Sandy Beach picnic area and campground. Five miles would provide campers and picnickers an enjoyable experience and is consistent with the capabilities of the surrounding area. These trails will be classified as lightly developed under NR 44.07.

Bicycling

The proposed amendment authorizes up to 60 miles of new bicycle touring trails, with the department continuing to collaborate with local communities and groups to construct and maintain these trails. Many of the potential trails would link sites on the property with nearby communities or link communities together. As such, these trails are likely to be located parallel to existing local roads. However, these trails may be sited outside of the road rights-of-way to provide bicyclists with a more nature-based experience as feasible and desired, so long as they are designed to have minimal impacts to habitats, forestry operations, or sensitive resources. An example of this approach is the trail that runs parallel to STH 47 near the Indian Mounds campground. The bicycle trail here is about 100-200 feet outside of the right-of-way in stretches and separated from the roadway by a swath of trees.

The existing and new bicycle touring trails that the department controls are authorized to allow motor bicycles, contingent on the concurrence by those local governments that the department has entered into land use agreements for the use and management of the trails.¹² Any bicycle touring trails open for motor bicycles will be appropriately signed for this use.

The bicycle touring trails will be classified as moderately or fully developed under NR 44.07, with the anticipation that many of these trails will be paved. A list of potential trails and their approximate distances, and a map of their general locations are provided in Appendix 1 and Map H.¹³ The locations of the potential bicycle touring trails are conceptual in nature and are not intended to prescribe specific locations. Actual alignments of these trails will be determined in the future when funding is available and will involve an evaluation of a variety of factors.

The proposed amendment authorizes up to 15 miles of off-road and constructed mountain biking trails at the Muskie Mountain site. This site has considerable topography and offers an excellent opportunity to develop both technically challenging as well as more moderate biking opportunities. Fifteen miles would provide a high-quality experience and is suitable for the site. The department proposes to continue working in partnership with local clubs and communities in the development and management of these trails. These trails will be classified as primitive or lightly developed under NR 44.07.

The proposed amendment authorizes up to an additional 15 miles of off-road and constructed mountain biking trails to be established on department land adjacent and connected to the WinMan trail complex. Department lands here are capable of supporting this use and the additional mileage would add to the quality of the riding experience provided. These trails will be classified as primitive or lightly developed under NR 44.07.

¹² NR 45.05(3)(em) enables the department to allow motor bicycles on trails that are specified in a master plan.

¹³ The mileage figures shown in the table in Appendix 1 are estimates. The intent of authorizing additional miles of bicycle trails is that the authorized number (in total) may be applied in different places on DNR lands within the NHAL boundary. That is, the department would not need to seek an amendment or variance if a trail from one destination to another listed in the table ended up being longer than the estimate listed. The department would need to seek a revision to the master plan if it wished to have more than 60 miles of bicycle touring trails constructed on the property.

To meet the demand for off-road bicycle riding on trails that wind through the forest, the proposed amendment authorizes the construction of up to 20 miles of primarily native-surface trails on DNR lands. This amount of trail will enable the establishment of two or three networks of trails of adequate size to provide high-quality experiences. The department proposes to continue working in partnership with local clubs and communities in the development and management of these trails. These trails will be classified as primitive or lightly developed under NR 44.07.

Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and winter fat-tire biking

The proposed amendment authorizes the grooming of 12 miles of trails for winter/fat-tire biking at the existing Lumberjack and Shannon trail networks. To meet the demand for winter activities, the proposed amendment authorizes the grooming of the existing and new bicycle touring, off-road and mountain biking trails for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, or winter fat-tire biking.

3. Motorized access and recreation opportunities.

The NHAL has a large number of existing roads, most of which are used to support logging and other forestry activities. Public access to roads on the NHAL and their management classification¹⁴ are:

ROAD STANDARDS	PUBLIC ACCESS			Total
	Open to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	Open seasonally to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	Closed to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	
Fully developed road	21	3	0	24
Moderately developed road	10	19	2	31
Lightly developed road	21	129	59	209
Primitive road	453	192	517	1162
Total	505	343	577	1425

The department addresses motorized use of department roads in the master planning process and the proposed amendment is an opportune time to examine and update what types of motorized vehicles are authorized on which DNR roads on the NHAL. This amendment establishes that the department's goals for public motorized access on the NHAL are to:

- Provide public access on roads to developed sites and designated use areas (e.g., campgrounds, picnic areas, and boat launches).
- Provide public access on a network of roads – ranging from developed to primitive – to outlying parts of the property as a means to facilitate auto touring as well as to access sites in more remote areas (e.g., carry-in canoe launches, trail heads, and prime hunting locations).
- Provide motorized recreation opportunities for snowmobiles, ATV/UTVs, off-highway motorcycles, and licensed 4-wheel drive vehicles, with a focus on connecting regional trail and route networks.

Many of the roads on the NHAL support forest management activities, particularly logging. As different forest stands are selected for harvests, the roads in the area (most of which are typically in a primitive condition) are often cleared of debris and re-graded to accommodate haul trucks and machinery. When harvesting is complete, these roads are typically used by visitors interested in collecting firewood (with a permit), picking berries and mushrooms, hunting, or other activities. Over time, these roads revert back to their earlier condition.

The 2005 master plan authorizes the department to designate ATV trails and routes on the NHAL when appropriate locations are identified. After approval of the master plan in 2005, the department, in collaboration with a stakeholder group comprised of local communities, clubs, and government representatives, undertook a process to identify potential trails and routes on the property. Emphasis was placed on opportunities to facilitate the connection of existing regional trail networks. In April 2008, the department presented the Natural Resources Board with two sets of options to establish ATV riding opportunities at the NHAL, but recommended that the NRB not approve either because of their high costs and other logistical issues. The NRB did not approve the proposed ATV trails and routes.

The NHAL boundary includes parts or all of 15 towns. In 2005 when the master plan was approved, few town governments had designated their roads as ATV/UTV routes and as a result there were very limited options on

¹⁴ See NR 44.07(3) for definitions of the different road classifications.

the NHAL to help connect regional trail/route networks. ATV riding, and increasingly UTV driving, are popular activities in the region and many of the towns where the NHAL is located have now designated ATV/UTV routes on their local roads. Several others are considering designating routes, too. In addition, several towns adjacent to the state forest have also designated ATV/UTV routes. The department anticipates that more town boards in the region may pass resolutions designating town roads as ATV/UTV routes. As a result, there are many more options now (and likely more in the future) than there were in 2005 to use DNR roads to help link a larger regional ATV/UTV network.

The NHAL boundary includes parts or all of these towns (bolded names have at least one road within the town open for ATV use):

Oma	Plum Lake
Mercer	Arbor Vitae
Winchester	St. Germain
Presque Isle	Woodruff
Land O'Lakes	Newbold
Sherman	Sugar Camp
Manitowish Waters	Lake Tomahawk
Boulder Junction	

Towns surrounding the NHAL that allow ATVs or UTVs on town roads include:

Conover	Minocqua
Phelps	Woodboro
Three Lakes	Cloverland

In addition to linking regional trail networks, there is growing interest in using ATV/UTVs and other four-wheel drive vehicles to access more remote portions of the property for hunting, wildlife watching and other activities, particularly in the fall. This demand has grown, and is likely to continue growing, as the state's population ages and as more people with various mobility limitations pursue experiences in remote outdoor areas.

Another form of motorized recreation that is gaining in popularity in the region (and throughout the state) is off-highway motorcycle (OHM) riding. There is a wide range of motorcycles that can be driven "off-highway," including those that are licensed, street-legal vehicles (sometimes referred to as dual-sport motorcycles) and those that are not registered with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (and thus not street-legal) but are registered with the DNR as recreational motorcycles (e.g., dirt bikes). Licensed, off-highway (dual-sport) motorcycles are allowed on all of the approximately 505 miles of DNR roads open to street-legal vehicles; unlicensed motorcycles (or other unlicensed vehicles) are not allowed on these roads. "Off-highway" does not mean "off-trail riding" or "free riding," which is allowed on some designated portions of some public properties (notably in western states). Many dual-sport motorcycle riders piece together longer-distance tours that combine stretches on private and public roads and trails.

A third type of motorized recreation in demand in the region is 4-wheel drive (4WD) vehicle driving. As with motorcycles, there is a wide range of 4WD vehicles that are used in this activity; some are licensed and street

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN....

Road:

Department roads vary in their condition and in amount or type of public access.

Condition – can range from primitive surface to fully-developed paved roads.

Public access – can be open, closed, or seasonally open (in the NHAL these are mostly roads open in warm weather months but are snowmobile trails or accessed from snowmobile trails in the winter).

Local, county, and state roads also vary in their level of development.

Open DNR roads and local, county and state roads are open to all vehicles registered with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (they are commonly referred to as "street-legal vehicles").

Trail:

A linear feature designated for specific recreation uses such as hiking, bicycling, ATV riding, horseback riding, or off-highway motorcycle riding. Some types of activities require registrations to access public trails or routes (e.g., ATVs, bicycles and off-highway motorcycles). These registrations are sometimes referred to as "stickers."

Route:

A road that is open to street-legal vehicles registered with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation that is also designated by the controlling authority for use by a specific use, such as ATV, UTV, or off-highway motorcycle.

Tour:

A formal or informal collection of coordinated roads, routes, and/or trails intended to provide users with an enjoyable, well-designed trip. In many cases these may be mapped or signed.

legal, others are not. Similarly, there is a range of desired experiences. Some participants wish to drive on rough, primitive roads in remote areas while others seek challenging, slow-moving, steep climbing adventures that test their driving abilities and their vehicle's performance. Licensed, 4WD vehicles are allowed on all of the approximately 505 miles of DNR roads open to street-legal vehicles.

In addition to the NHAL, there are opportunities for motorized recreation on forest roads on County Forest lands adjacent to and near the NHAL, on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, and on public lands in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. As a consequence, there are more opportunities now than in the past for the NHAL to provide important linkages in the regional motorized recreation network.

Although the NHAL is very large and has over 1400 miles of various types of existing roads, several factors limit the degree to which these roads can provide connections in the regional network of motorized recreation activities including:

- Gaps in the state's ownership throughout the overall boundary.
- Communities, resorts, and developments nested within the property.
- Over 900 lakes within the property boundary.
- Wetlands that cover more than 25% of the property.
- State Natural Areas, semi-remote areas, wild lakes, scenic and wild resource areas, and other sensitive resources.
- Areas where recreation use is concentrated, including campgrounds.

Together, these factors make it impractical to solely use DNR roads to develop connections across the property to help link the regional motorized recreation network. Successfully creating linkages across the NHAL to connect the regional network of routes and trails will require a combination of DNR and local roads. On rare occasion, the department may need to construct a short stretch of new trail to connect existing department roads designated as ATV/UTV routes.

The following general criteria were used to identify DNR roads well-suited to provide linkages to the regional network of ATV/UTV routes and in determining when the use of motorized vehicles is proposed to be restricted or temporarily prohibited on DNR roads in the NHAL. To the degree feasible, roads open for motorized vehicles:

- a) Should be consistent with both local residents' and visitors' opinions and desires for motorized and non-motorized access to the property.
- b) Should enhance and make connections to local and regional transportation and recreation trail and route networks, including adjacent public lands and existing town and county road, route and trail networks and the types of motorized use on each.
- c) Should be safe for users and operationally feasible for the department to maintain based on the anticipated level of use.
- d) Should not substantially impact natural resources or existing recreational uses based on the anticipated level of use.
- e) Should be physically capable of supporting the anticipated level of use (or could be capable with modest repairs to existing infrastructure).
- f) Should provide net economic benefits.
- g) Should be consistent with the property's legal and policy framework.

- h) Should be consistent with the forestry operations on the property and with the recognition that DNR roads, routes, or trails may be temporarily closed to some or all public access in order to facilitate forest management activities and maintain public safety.

Public input during the comment period in April and May 2017 regarding the public's use of the existing road network was a mix of a desire to see more roads opened for some or all forms of motorized access with an opposing desire to keep motorized recreational uses out of the forest, especially in the warm weather months. Given the range of opinions and the lack of compelling reasons to adjust the existing network of open, seasonally open, and closed roads, **this amendment does not propose changes to the existing network of 505 miles of roads open to use by licensed, street-legal vehicles.**

The following changes to the 2005 master plan are proposed:

ATV/UTVs riding

The proposed amendment authorizes the department to designate a total of 202 miles of ATV/UTV routes and trails on the NHAL. This authority will be split into two "buckets":

Bucket A

The proposed amendment authorizes the department to designate 42 miles of DNR roads as ATV/UTV routes or trails, as indicated on Map G. These roads were identified based on an initial analysis because they connect to existing ATV/UTV routes on local roads, help connect the larger regional network, and appear well-suited to provide high-quality ATV/UTV experiences. One section of road, north of the Rainbow Flowage, is shown as a dashed line to indicate that it is a key connection but that some issues remain to be resolved before the department selects how best to provide an ATV/UTV connection. Several osprey nests are located on transmission line poles north of the Rainbow Flowage and the department will be undertaking additional evaluations to determine the most effective way to make a connection between the communities of Woodruff and Sugar Camp in this area.

Bucket B

The proposed amendment authorizes the department to designate an additional 160 miles of existing DNR roads on the NHAL as ATV/UTV routes (those roads that are currently open or seasonally open to the public for licensed, street-legal vehicles) or ATV/UTV trails (those roads that are currently closed and will remain closed to street-legal vehicles). These routes and trails will include department roads that help to connect the larger regional network as well as "loops" of routes or trails that can provide additional riding opportunities. Because the locations of these routes and trails will be identified later, they are not currently mapped.

As part of the 160 miles, the proposed amendment also authorizes the department to construct short stretches of new ATV/UTV trail to connect existing DNR roads that are designated as routes or trails. The department may also conduct any necessary improvements to the roads designated as routes or trails to improve their sustainability.

The DNR roads that are appropriate to open for ATV/UTV use in the future will, of course, depend on which roads town and county governments designate as ATV/UTV routes. The department

Proposed changes to motorized recreation opportunities at the NHAL:

- Designate up to 202 miles of existing DNR roads as ATV/UTV routes or trails.
- Allow construction of up to 36 miles of singletrack off-highway motorcycle trails.
- Work with partners to develop "preferred tours" for dual-sport motorcycles and 4-wheel drive vehicles on existing open DNR and local roads as well as the newly authorized trails.

anticipates this to evolve over time and thus recognizes the need to remain flexible in identifying DNR roads as routes or trails.

The department will work with local governments, ATV/UTV and snowmobile clubs, and other stakeholders to identify potential routes and trails on DNR roads that would most effectively help connect the larger regional network. The department will consider the following factors when evaluating where to establish new ATV/UTV routes and trails on department roads on the NHAL:

- Impacts to environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas and resources based on the anticipated level of use.
- Level of community support and compatibility with existing recreational uses.
- Impacts to logging and other forestry operations.
- Connections to existing designated routes and trails.
- Ability of the road to sustainably support motorized recreational use based on the anticipated level of use.
- Ability of the department or partners to maintain and operate the route or trail based on the anticipated level of use.

The department will designate ATV/UTV routes and trails that help to facilitate the connection of the regional network across the property. That is, the department will designate DNR roads as routes or trails that connect to and further enhance the broader regional network. At such time that towns or counties designate adjacent, connecting routes or trails to DNR roads on the NHAL, the department will move forward with designation of the connecting routes or trails on DNR roads. **Department designation of these routes will include public notification and inclusion on department-produced maps showing designated ATV/UTV facilities.**

Before an ATV/UTV route or trail can be established on DNR roads, appropriate signage must be installed. In addition, many of the DNR roads that may be identified as routes or trails may require some level of management to bring the road into a condition that can support ATV/UTVs and dual-sport motorcycles. The department may authorize partner organizations to place signs and conduct road management work.

Seasonal (winter) use of ATV/UTVs on DNR routes and trails would be coordinated with the applicable town or county policies. ATV/UTV routes and trails would be classified as primitive to fully developed under NR 44.07.

Off-highway motorcycle riding

Licensed, off-highway (dual-sport) motorcycles are allowed on all 505 miles of DNR roads on the NHAL that are open to street-legal vehicles. About 450 miles (90%) of these roads are classified as primitive roads and provide quality experiences for many motorcycle riders.

OFF-HIGHWAY MOTORCYCLES

This master plan amendment provides opportunities for the two types of off-highway motorcycles (OHM):

DUAL-SPORT

Some motorcycles that are licensed with the Department of Transportation and are street-legal are also designed to be ridden on trails, forest roads, or other rough terrain. These motorcycles are often referred to as dual-sport.

Dual-sport motorcycles are allowed on all roads open to licensed vehicles.

LIMITED USE (UNLICENSED)

Limited use motorcycles (sometimes referred to as “dirt bikes”) cannot be legally driven on local roads or open DNR roads at this time. Although local units of government can designate “off-highway motorcycle routes” on their roads, by law the department can only allow unlicensed motorcycles on trails designated for their use or on DNR roads closed to all licensed vehicles.

A change to the law allowing department roads open to licensed motor vehicles to be selectively designated as OHM routes would be required before any OHM routes could be established on department roads.

Limited use and dual sport motorcycles can be operated on a designated off-highway motorcycle trail on department land at this time.

Currently, the department is not aware of any locally-designated routes for limited use, unlicensed motorcycles from which connections through the NHAL could be made.

The proposed amendment would authorize licensed, off-highway (dual-sport) motorcycles to be ridden on the same network of DNR roads and trails that are designated for ATV/UTVs. Because dual-sport motorcycles are already allowed on all open DNR roads, this proposed change is allowing dual-sport motorcycles on the ATV/UTV trails. The proposed amendment authorizes the designation of OHM routes for the purposes of OHM travel between trails and allows designation of OHM routes when allowed by law. The amendment also allows for development of up to 36 miles of singletrack off-highway motorcycle trails. Trail systems like this are usually stand-alone trail systems similar to a singletrack mountain bike (bicycle) trail, and may involve roads to connect trail segments. These trails will be classified as primitive or lightly developed under NR 44.07.

The department will work with off-highway motorcycle clubs and other stakeholders to identify potential off-highway motorcycle route and trail locations. The department will consider the following factors when evaluating where to establish new off-highway motorcycle routes and trails, when allowed, on department property and roads in the NHAL:

- Impacts to environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas and resources based on the anticipated level of use.
- Level of community support.
- Impacts to logging and other forestry operations.
- Connections to existing designated routes and trails.
- Ability of the trail or road to sustainably support motorized recreational use based on the anticipated level of use.
- Ability of the department or partners to maintain and operate the route or trail based on the anticipated level of use.

Department designation of these trails and routes will include public notification and inclusion on department-produced maps showing designated OHM facilities.

Before an OHM route or trail can be established on DNR lands, appropriate signage must be installed. In addition, many of the DNR roads that may be identified as routes or trails will require some level of management to bring the road into a condition that can support OHMs. The department may authorize partner organizations to place signs and conduct road and trail management work.

An additional opportunity that could be provided is a coordinated network of motorcycle tours that allow riders to more clearly and easily travel on open roads through the property. The department will work with clubs and interested partners to develop and map “preferred tours” through the property; an example of such a tour is shown on Map J.

4-wheel drive vehicle driving

Licensed, street-legal, 4-wheel drive vehicles can be driven on all DNR roads that are open to licensed vehicles. Many of these 505 miles of roads meet the demand for rough, primitive driving experiences in remote areas. As is proposed for dual-sport motorcycles, there is an opportunity to develop a coordinated network of roads that allows drivers to more clearly and easily travel through the property. The department will work with clubs and interested partners to develop and map “preferred tours” through the property for 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Currently, there is not a “challenge course” on the NHAL. Given the limited topographic relief and lack of large-scale, steep, rocky slopes, it is likely that attempting to site a challenge course on the NHAL is not practical nor would it provide a high-quality experience for drivers.

Snowmobiling

Currently the NHAL has an extensive network of approximately 485 miles of snowmobile trails and routes that link state land with county and regional trail systems. This amendment proposes no changes overall to the snowmobile trails located within the NHAL, however additional uses such as ATV/UTV and OHM may be proposed to be added to certain snowmobile trails or routes.

At the discretion of the property manager, changes to the NHAL snowmobile system may be made to ensure safety, consistency with management goals of the property, and in response to loss of access (of connecting trails on non-NHAL lands). Access on unplowed roads (roads otherwise open to street legal motorized traffic) may also be allowed at the discretion of the property manager. Snow cover of 6" shall be a required condition of snowmobile operation on unplowed paved roads. Such requests shall be approved if determined to not interfere with management goals for the property or present potential issues with adjacent landowners or adjacent road authorities.

Snowmobile routes and trails are classified as primitive to moderately developed under NR 44.07.

Licensed, street-legal vehicle driving

Many residents and visitors enjoy driving the network of open DNR roads on the property to sightsee, hunt, fish, access berry picking sites, watch wildlife, and many other activities. No changes are proposed to the roads on the NHAL that are open to licensed, street-legal vehicles.

Roads are classified as primitive to fully developed under NR 44.07.

4. Other recreation opportunities.

Boat launches.

There are over 100 boat launches on the NHAL. Given the abundance of lakes and the popularity of boating, fishing, and paddling, these sites are well used. The proposed amendment would authorize the department to construct and maintain ten additional boat access sites at underserved lakes of each of the following types: cement plank entry, gravel entry, and canoe slide. Department staff believe that 30 additional sites will likely meet existing and future demand for different types of public access to waters within the property.

The NHAL has a mix of types of access to lakes and rivers on the property. Some waterbodies have several fully-developed access sites (some operated by the department and some by other entities) while others, by design, have no developed access. The levels and types of access provided are matched with the management goals of the lakes and reflect the desire to manage some waterbodies for non-motorized use, some for electric-motor-only use, and others for motorized use. It is the department's intent to maintain this range of levels and types of use of lakes within the NHAL to the degree that the department has an ability to control access. The 2005 master plan identifies a range of special lake categories including: wilderness, wild, research, non-motor, electric motor, and scenic. Following the department's current approach, no new developed (cement plank or gravel entry) boat launches would be constructed on wilderness or wild lakes.

Department staff will use the boating access standards (NR 1.91, Wis. Adm. Code) and a variety of information in identifying waterbodies that may be appropriate for developing cement plank entry, gravel entry, and canoe slide access sites including:

- Existing use levels and the types of boating allowed in the waterbody.
- Existing level of residential, commercial and other developments around the waterbody.
- Nature and type of aquatic invasive species present (or not) in the waterbody.

- Public interest in access to the waterbody and use levels of existing access sites (if any).
- Presence of rare species or other sensitive resources.

Day use areas.

Three sites (White Sand Lake, Sparkling Lake, and along the Wisconsin River) are no longer functioning as day use areas and the proposed amendment would eliminate their designations as such.

Visitor use of the Indian Mounds day use area has declined and the department does not believe the site warrants the staffing and resources needed to maintain the facility. The proposed amendment would un-designate the day use area. The existing boat launch would be maintained.

The existing master plan authorizes the conversion of the 19-unit Carrol Lake campground into a day use area, which the amendment would not change.

C. Changes in Land Use Classification

This amendment does not propose any changes to the land management classifications of the NHAL.

D. Consistency in Operations

This amendment does not propose any changes to the structure or process in the department's interactions with partner groups and local governments at the NHAL. The department may continue to engage in collaborative projects with various partners and to enter into agreements as necessary to seek mutually beneficial outcomes.

The department acquired lands around the Rainbow Flowage from the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company (WVIC). Lands around the flowage that are within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project boundary are subject to a series of plans describing habitat and recreation management. With this update to the 2005 master plan and the 2013 amendment, there may be a need to revise the management plans for the parcels within the FERC project boundary to ensure they are consistent with this amendment. If necessary, the department will work with FERC and WVIC to revise management plans for department-owned lands within the FERC project boundary around the Rainbow Flowage.

The department will continue to use and require best management practices (BMP) for erosion, noise and dust control for all construction activities, including proper erosion/siltation control during construction of the proposed recreation facilities. Areas of particular interest in ensuring minimal impacts during construction and operation - if they are built - include the bicycle bridge over the Manitowish River, trail construction near Toy Lake Swamp State Natural Area, and new boat landings. All facilities would continue to be constructed according to department facilities design standards.

Prior to the construction or designation of any trails, routes, campsites, campgrounds, boat launches, or associated facilities described in this amendment, department staff will consult with experts and databases to ensure that appropriate actions are taken to minimize impacts to rare species, high-quality native communities, cultural and historic features, or other sensitive resources.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The NHAL straddles three counties in northern Wisconsin and encompasses 236,000 acres (Map A and Map B). A variety of recreation facilities are currently provided (Map C), including an extensive road network (Map D). The property is largely wooded with some extensive wetlands interspersed among the over 900 lakes (Map E).

In addition to the material presented in Chapter 3 of the 2005 master plan, the following background information provides context for the proposed amendment.

A. Updates on what has been completed at the NHAL since the master plan was approved in 2005

The 2005 master plan had an ambitious list of plans for recreation. Some items have been accomplished while others have not. The following is a brief explanation of the status of some of the more notable activities related to the recreation portion of the 2005 master plan.

1. Trails

The trail program since 2005 has emphasized rehabilitation to sustainable standards. The master plan authorized mountain bike trails at the Raven site if they could be maintained and operated sustainably. The Raven system of mountain bike trails has essentially been fully rehabilitated and a skills area developed in partnership with the Lakeland Area Mountain Biking Organization (LAMBO). The proposed network of trails near Vandercook was not developed due to limited interest and funding. Since 2005 interests in mountain biking trails have evolved and the proposed plan suggests a network near Muskie Mountain where downhill features can be developed.

A paved trail was constructed between Indian Mounds campground, Clear Lake Campground, Clear Lake Picnic Area, and Carroll Lake Campground. This four mile trail is likely to be an anchor for future community trails.

The 2005 plan authorized a hiking trail around the Bittersweet Lakes area. The funding request has been submitted but has not yet been funded.

A network of trails was approved for the Jute Lake area in 2005. However, due to limited interest and funding this project was not a priority and has not been completed. A trail around Clear Lake was not completed but it has been planned and may be completed by 2020 using mostly existing woods roads and trails. Short sections of boardwalk may be required.

2. Camping

Shortly after the 2005 master plan was approved some additional research was done to determine the amount of camping on the property compared to historic levels, which were higher than current levels. Lower current demand may be a reflection of changing tastes in camping and the forest's lack of electrical hook-ups. Following that research a number of campground expansion plans were given a low priority. The recession and subsequent reduction in funding for recreation development also impacted plans for camping expansion. There has been no campground related campsite construction accomplished since 2005.

Limited camping elements were accomplished with materials on hand at the Bittersweet Lakes area. Five campsites were added on the Rainbow Flowage and Wisconsin River, out of ten that are authorized.

A group camp authorized for Buffalo Lake was not constructed due to a concern for the already high intensity of use on the small lake from residents and an existing campground. Alternative locations were considered and this plan proposes a change to construct two group camps in the southern part of the forest.

B. Purpose and need for the proposed master plan amendment

Demands for, and trends in, outdoor recreation are continually changing. Since the adoption of the 2005 master plan, changing recreation demands and opportunities at the property and in the region necessitated the department evaluate changes to the master plan. Department staff involved in management of the property and in daily interactions with visitors have noted several recreation issues that need to be addressed in order to continue providing high-quality visitor experiences. In addition, the department just completed an analysis of recreation opportunities and needs in the Northwoods Region. This assessment, known as the Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA), identified several important recreation needs in the region and those which the NHAL appears well-suited to address.¹⁵ Similar analyses will be conducted throughout the state over the coming year in the remaining seven regions.

Recreation needs in high demand in the nine-county Northwoods Region are:

- ATV/UTV riding
- Bicycling - bicycle touring/road riding
- Bicycling - mountain biking/off-road biking
- Camping - developed
- Camping - primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Fishing - lake fishing from a boat, canoe, or kayak
- Fishing - lake fishing from shore or a pier
- Fishing - stream or river fishing from shore or wading
- Four-wheel drive (4WD) vehicle driving
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Hunting - big game
- Off-highway motorcycle riding
- Participating in nature-based education programs
- Snowmobiling

C. Proposed amendment's consistency with the existing master plan's vision and goals

The proposed amendment is consistent with the property master plan's vision of providing a range of cultural, social, economic and ecological benefits within its capabilities for present and future generations and in managing the forest in consultation with the people who live, work and recreate in and around the property.

The construction and operation of additional bicycling trails within road rights-of-way through the forest is consistent with the master plan. The proposed amendment would also enable the department to work with local communities to construct and operate bicycle trails through the forest (outside of road rights-of-way) in strategic locations where they will have minimal impacts to forestry operations, habitats, or sensitive resources, including providing opportunities for loop trails.

Providing a wider range of camping opportunities and providing different types of camping at different campgrounds will improve visitor experiences. Expanding the number of modern campgrounds would respond to growing demand for more camping amenities, while designating some rustic campgrounds as quiet zones will provide high-quality experiences for those seeking a more tranquil experience.

¹⁵ The Northwoods ROA can be found at dnr.wi.gov keyword "ROA."

The 2005 master plan authorizes the department to designate ATV trails and routes on the NHAL when appropriate locations are identified. The proposed amendment identifies a series of proposed routes and criteria to identify future potential routes and trails that are consistent with the master plan.

D. Anticipated outcomes if the proposed amendment is implemented

The 236,000 acres within the NHAL State Forest are interwoven with many communities and countless cabins and cottages. Uses on department-owned lands affect – in both positive and negative ways – other visitors to the property as well as landowners within and adjacent to the property boundary. With its deep forests and clear waters, the department's ownership here is a primary reason many people visit and own residences in the region. More than most department properties, the recreational uses and resource management activities here have large influences on the local communities and the people that live, work and play in the area.

The anticipated outcomes are arranged by recreation activity.

1. Camping

Over the last several years the NHAL has recorded about 45,000 campsite-nights annually. Usage of most of the modern campgrounds has remained consistently high, while many of the rustic campgrounds have experienced slight but gradual decreases in visitor numbers over the last decade. The proposed amendment will provide different types of camping experiences at different campgrounds, which is likely to lead to more people camping at the property overall.

The conversion of four rustic campgrounds to modern campgrounds is expected to help meet demand for more amenities and result in increased use of these areas. Currently, the four existing modern campgrounds are heavily used during summer weekends (typically over 90% full). Based on the department's experience, the inclusion and updating of facilities such as flush toilets, showers, and electric hook-ups at the modern campgrounds is expected to increase visitation both mid-week during the summer as well as during the spring and fall seasons at the four existing modern campgrounds.

Four campgrounds are proposed to be upgraded with more modern facilities (Big Lake, Indian Mounds, Sandy Beach, Upper Gresham). These improvements will occur when funding is available and are expected to occur over many years. As the improvements are made, the department expects that the occupancy rates at these campgrounds will rise to levels seen at existing modern campgrounds that share similarities in such factors as the number of campsites, overall setting, and lake uses. As a result, the department expects the occupancy rates in the spring and fall may double and may rise by 50% in the summer. Summer weekends would likely see the highest use levels with occupancy rates about 90%. Over the course of the year, this would result in about a doubling of campers at these campgrounds.

The rustic campgrounds at the NHAL have been popular with people who prefer simpler accommodations (vault toilets, no showers). However, the increasing use of generators in these campgrounds may have resulted in some campers choosing other quieter locations. The department anticipates that designating two rustic campgrounds as quiet zones (where no generators or amplified sound will be allowed), will be popular with many tent campers.

Because the NHAL has been such a popular camping destination for generations, it has developed patterns of use over time. In some cases the same family or group of friends have camped at the same campground (or even the same campsite) the same week for years and years. This ongoing visitation has built a sense of community and place. As is evident from past surveys, visitors who have come to the NHAL for generations feel a passionate and understandable connection to the property. A few of the larger changes to the camping opportunities (converting four rustic campgrounds and designating quiet zones) may require a portion of campers to change their years-long patterns. For some, camping at a new site or campground that provides

an equal or better experience will be seen as positive; for others, it is possible that they may dislike the change.

The additional group campsites and water-access campsites are expected to be popular and result in modest increases in overall usage.

Together, the changes to the camping opportunities at the NHAL are expected to result in an increase in camping participation at the property in the range of 10 to 20%. This is anticipated to increase the economic benefit to local communities a proportional amount, increase camping revenues at the property, and result in some management efficiencies for department property management staff.

Costs for amenities at modern campgrounds are estimated as follows:

- Shower building with flush toilets - \$450,000
- Flush toilet building - \$250,000
- Dump/lift station - \$250,000
- Electric hook-up: \$4,000 to \$5,000 per site (at an existing campsite)
- New paved bike trail - \$100,000/mile

The proposed changes to the camping facilities and opportunities are expected to have some short-term impact on the environment in the immediate vicinity of the facilities. Upgrades such as shower buildings and flush toilets require installing pressurized water systems which cause localized soil disturbances. Installing electric hook-ups would also cause soil disturbances. With the exception of the proposed new campground at Carrol Lake, all of the areas where these facilities may be constructed are already developed settings and have experienced various levels of disturbance over the decades as a function of installing and maintaining facilities at these sites. Any impacts from upgrading the four rustic campgrounds to modern status are anticipated to be minor and temporary. Establishing the new campground at Carrol Lake and converting the existing campground to a day use (picnic) area are anticipated to create disturbances to these sites. However, these disturbances are likely to be similar to the impacts associated with establishing the other modern campgrounds at the NHAL and, as such, are likely to be modest in scope and temporary in duration.

2. Non-motorized trail activities

The construction of paved bike trails in the NHAL has added a popular component to visitors' experiences. Indeed, it is estimated that more than half of campers at the NHAL now participate in bicycling during their stay. The proposed amendment would authorize the construction of up to 60 miles of additional bicycle touring trails and would allow siting the trails outside of road rights-of-way where feasible and desired to provide a more natural setting for cyclists.

The department anticipates that these trails will be well used and will further support visitation in the area, especially families with younger children who prefer riding on trails rather than on road shoulders. As with many recreation activities, there is a "tipping point" where the amount of available opportunity is high enough to become a destination and draw visitors from long distances. The number of visitors (as opposed to residents) using the existing network of paved bicycle trails is unknown. The department anticipates that the approximate doubling of miles of trails would result in the network becoming a destination experience (especially for families with children) and thus visitor use would likely increase substantially. This network is also likely to be heavily used by year-round and seasonal residents and continue to increase the desirability of living in the area.

The increase in visitors and use of the trail network will have economic benefits to a wide range of local businesses including resorts, hotels, restaurants and taverns, and shops. The amount of economic benefit is

unknown, but expected to be in the range seen elsewhere.¹⁶ Of course, visitors utilizing the bicycle trails are also likely to participate in other activities and, as such, benefit other types of establishments as well.

The cost to construct paved bike trails in the NHAL along road rights-of-way has averaged about \$100,000/mile. To date, much of the cost to build and maintain these trails has been borne by local communities (and grants they have successfully received) and private individuals, along with funds from the Stewardship program. It is anticipated that this cooperative approach in funding these trails will continue and that the department's financial investments in the proposed trails will be limited to monitoring and enforcement and modest maintenance costs.

The proposed establishment of new off-road and constructed mountain biking trails, particularly at the Muskie Mountain site and WinMan sites, are likely to be popular with residents and visitors and add to the overall quality of the mountain biking experiences in the area. The additional riding opportunities are likely to result in modest increases in visitation to the area, with a proportional increase in economic activity. The design and construction of the trails will be overseen by the department but will be implemented by partner groups.

The construction and operation of the proposed bicycle trails (bicycle touring, off-road, and mountain bike) will cause limited impacts to the environment including noise, dust, soil disturbance, vegetation removal, and habitat fragmentation. These trails will be designed to be sustainable over time and as such these impacts are anticipated to be minor and temporary in duration. Potential impacts from providing paved trails that aren't in road rights-of-way may include forest fragmentation, disturbance to wildlife and other interior-dependent species, and increased edge effects.

The proposed trail loop at Manitowish Waters will create another crossing over the Manitowish River near the existing vehicle bridge on USH 51. The bicycle bridge would be much smaller in scale than the road bridge and is likely to result in only minor impacts to the river corridor's scenic and ecological values.

A second potential loop trail north of Manitowish Waters may pass near or through the southern edge of the 2,300-acre Toy Lake Swamp State Natural Area. The trail would be surfaced with compacted rock screenings and located on abandoned logging roads or adjacent to existing logging roads. Toy Lake Swamp is a large wetland complex of hardwood swamp, white cedar swamp, and alder thicket surrounding a basin containing a shallow, drained lake with dense aquatic and wetland vegetation. A bicycle touring trail along the logging roads is not anticipated to impact the wetland values of the natural area. If there is interest in potentially moving forward with this loop, the State Natural Areas program, property forester, wetland experts, and others will be consulted in any design and evaluation phase.

Use and management of the proposed bicycle trails is also expected to have ongoing impacts associated with people passing through areas. This use may disturb and result in displacement of some wildlife. Periodic maintenance may also disturb wildlife. The trails may also serve as vectors for the spread of invasive species.

Given the limited amount of trails proposed and the nature of their construction and use, the environmental and economic impacts associated with constructing new hiking trails at the Sandy Beach site are likely to be minor.

Based on public input received as part of the initiation of the planning process as well as department staff experiences at the property, the department anticipates that social acceptance of the proposed new non-motorized trails will be generally positive. There is likely to be strong support for the establishment of new opportunities from those who participate in the different forms of bicycling. There is also likely to be support from many businesses in local communities related to the tourism industry.

¹⁶ See: (a) Southwick Associates. 2007. *State-Level Economic Contributions of Active Outdoor Recreation – Technical Report on Methods and Findings*. Prepared for the Outdoor Industry Foundation. (b) Bicycling Federation of Wisconsin and the WI Department of Transportation. 2005. *The Economic Impact of Bicycling in Wisconsin*.

Some concerns were raised about potential impacts from the proposed bicycle touring trail loop near Manitowish Waters. Concerns centered on degradation of the scenic and ecological values of the river corridor as well as safety concerns from crossing USH 51. The trail would be constructed following best management practices and would not be expected to result in environmental damage to the river or to substantively impact the ecological values of the river. The trail would cross the Manitowish River, east of the designated Manitowish River Scenic Area, with a bicycle bridge similar to the other bicycle bridges in the area. For paddlers on the river, this would create a second bridge about one-quarter mile from the USH 51 bridge. Options are available to minimize safety concerns about bicycles crossing USH 51, including possibly passing underneath the USH bridge that spans the Manitowish River.

3. Motorized access and recreation

The proposed amendment authorizes a range of opportunities for motorized recreation in the NHAL. The designation of up to 202 miles of ATV/UTV routes and trails on the NHAL that provide a set of connections to the regional network of routes and trails and provide loop trail opportunities are anticipated to be well used by visitors and residents. By helping expand and integrate the network, the routes and trails on the NHAL are likely to facilitate use on adjacent and nearby properties. As such, the ATV/UTV routes and trails on the NHAL are expected to result in greater participation in the region than just the use within the property. The amount of increase is unknown.

Dual-sport motorcycle riders already frequent the area on the many open roads on the NHAL, county forests, and the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The designation of trails for licensed, off-highway (dual-sport) motorcycles on the proposed ATV/UTV trails is anticipated to result in a modest increase in use on the property. The establishment of singletrack off-highway motorcycle trails that allow use by both dual-sport and limited use motorcycles is also anticipated to result in a modest increase in use of the property.

Licensed, 4-wheel drive vehicles are currently allowed on all open DNR roads and no change is proposed as part of this amendment. These roads are quite popular with participants that know about this opportunity; however, it is likely that others might also visit the property to drive their 4WD vehicles as they become aware of the opportunity. Even with this increased use, given the limited number of state residents that participate in this form of recreation, it is likely that there would only be a modest increase in visitation to the area resulting from 4WD vehicle driving. The amount of increase is unknown.

The overall increase in motorized recreation in the area would have both benefits and impacts. Benefits would include providing a variety of high-quality riding experiences in a desirable location. This is anticipated to result in increased economic spending in local communities, a sizeable portion of which may occur in the fall when riding conditions are often most enjoyable. Economic benefits are anticipated to accrue to hotels, restaurants and taverns, gas stations, shops and other establishments.

Increased motorized recreation on the NHAL is likely to result in various adverse impacts. Although the DNR roads that may be designated as ATV/UTV routes are already open to licensed, street-legal vehicles, the current use levels are low. Many of these open roads are overgrown, rocky, and rutted; they are impassable to most licensed vehicles and require vehicles to move at slow speeds. If these roads are opened to ATV/UTVs, they are likely to receive more use than occurs now. This may push back or pack down the vegetation within these roadways and enable easier travel, which may result in more use by both licensed vehicles and ATV/UTVs and dual-sport motorcycles.

As these roads are more frequently used, there will be increased sounds from motorized recreation vehicles in areas where these sounds were not previously heard much. For roads that have exposed soils or gravel beds, there may be higher levels of dust than occurs now. The impact of increased sounds and dust will be somewhat tempered in areas with denser forests.

Some residents and visitors, particularly those that do not participate in motorized activities, will be impacted by the sounds and dust generated by both the increase in the number of vehicles on the routes and trails as well as their speed. The sounds and dust may negatively impact their enjoyment of the NHAL and their recreational experiences. This may cause a reduction in visitation to the property by people pursuing non-motorized activities. Permanent and seasonal residents may conclude that allowing motorized recreation activities within the NHAL negatively affects their quality of life.

The increased use of DNR roads resulting from their designation as ATV/UTV and/or off-highway motorcycle routes and the use of newly developed motorized trails is also likely to have increased impacts on ecologically valuable sites and sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands). Increased levels of sound, dust, and erosion are likely to negatively impact some wildlife populations, and the ecological functioning of sensitive sites. This use may result in the temporary or permanent displacement of wildlife species. If ATV/UTV or off-highway motorcycle riders leave designated routes or trails (as sometimes occurs now with licensed vehicles on roads) they may damage habitats and drive wildlife away.

Increased use of the designated ATV/UTV and/or off-highway motorcycle routes and trails may result in an increase in the spread of invasive species. Invasive species pose a significant threat to natural resources and can be very costly to control. Increased use of the routes and trails may also result in some increased erosion where the roads are poorly maintained or steep.

Many of the roads potentially designated as ATV/UTV or off-highway motorcycle routes or trails in the future may currently be designated as snowmobile routes. There may be considerable opportunities for snowmobile, ATV/UTV and off-highway motorcycle clubs to share in the maintenance and upkeep of these routes. Indeed in other parts of the state these groups form alliances to improve their efficiency. However, some snowmobilers may not support the ATV/UTV or off-highway motorcycle use of these routes during the warm weather season.

Earlier this spring the department sought public input on potentially opening DNR roads to motorized recreation. A sizeable portion of people providing input (about two-thirds) opposed opening any DNR roads on the NHAL to warm-weather motorized recreation. The concerns cited by those opposed to motorized recreation vehicles on DNR roads included noise, dust, environmental damage, increased enforcement needs, damage to roads, increased spread of invasive species, displacement of wildlife, and displacement of people participating in non-motorized activities. Similar concerns were raised in the public comments received on the initial draft amendment. Indeed, a commonly articulated perspective is that people live and visit the Northwoods Region and the NHAL property because it is a large quiet space that supports many silent sport activities.

Although opposition to motorized uses on the NHAL has been clearly expressed, there is also strong support for providing motorized recreation. As was noted by some commenters, many types of licensed, street-legal vehicles are already using the approximately 505 miles of open DNR roads without apparent public objection. Some questioned why ATVs and UTVs are not allowed on the same roads that people can drive pick-up trucks and sport utility vehicles, when the level of impacts associated with each is likely comparable, if not less for ATVs and UTVs. Others noted that with motorboats and personal water craft (jet-skis) on many lakes, logging operations throughout the woods, local roads and state highways traversing the property, and various vehicles on the DNR roads currently open to licensed, street-legal vehicles, there are already many types of sounds being generated in the forest.

Several respondents stated that Vilas County and several towns have voted to prohibit ATV/UTVs on their lands and roads; others noted that there is a growing acceptance of ATV/UTVs on local roads and public lands in the region and that an increasing number of towns have passed resolutions authorizing their use.

In sum, providing limited motorized recreation opportunities on the NHAL through a series of designated routes and trails is likely to be considered a benefit and a positive development by some members of the public, while others will view this change as a substantial adverse impact.

4. Hunting

Hunting opportunities may be affected by the motorized and non-motorized trails and routes proposed. The establishment of motorized recreation trails and routes will affect hunting in two primary ways. First, it will allow hunters easier access into more remote areas of the property. This may distribute hunting pressure more broadly across the property and will help those hunters that have physical limitations get access to a more diverse set of places.

The establishment of motorized recreation trails and routes may adversely affect those hunters seeking walk-in access to areas, especially ruffed grouse and woodcock hunters. These hunters may be displaced by motorized recreation vehicles driving along forest roads that they are hunting or hunting near.

In April 2017 the department sought input from the public about their use of the property and what they thought about the potential to provide motorized recreational use on forest roads. About one-quarter of respondents who noted their participation in hunting (big game, small game, waterfowl, etc.) supported opening all forest roads to motorized recreation vehicles, about one-quarter supported opening some forest roads and about one-half supported having the roads remain closed.

If 202 miles of existing open department roads are designated as ATV/UTV routes and if an additional 36 miles of off-highway motorcycle trails are established entirely on closed department roads (this would constitute the maximum use of DNR roads for warm-weather motorized recreation use authorized under the proposed amendment) this use would encompass less than 17% of the existing department roads on the property.

The proposed new bicycle touring, off-road, and constructed mountain bike trails may disrupt some existing hunting opportunities.

5. Other activities

The construction of up to 30 new boat launches is expected to result in site-specific impacts associated with their construction. The increased use of lakes where boat access sites are developed is likely to result in increased threat from aquatic invasive species. The construction of boat launches (particularly those that provide access for motorboats) on lakes without existing public access may be opposed by some or many landowners, if any, on these lakes.

The conversion of the Carrol Lake campground to a day use area, the elimination of the Indian Mounds day use area, and the un-designation of day use areas that are no longer being maintained is unlikely to result in any notable impacts.

E. Compatibility with Statutes, Codes and Department Policies

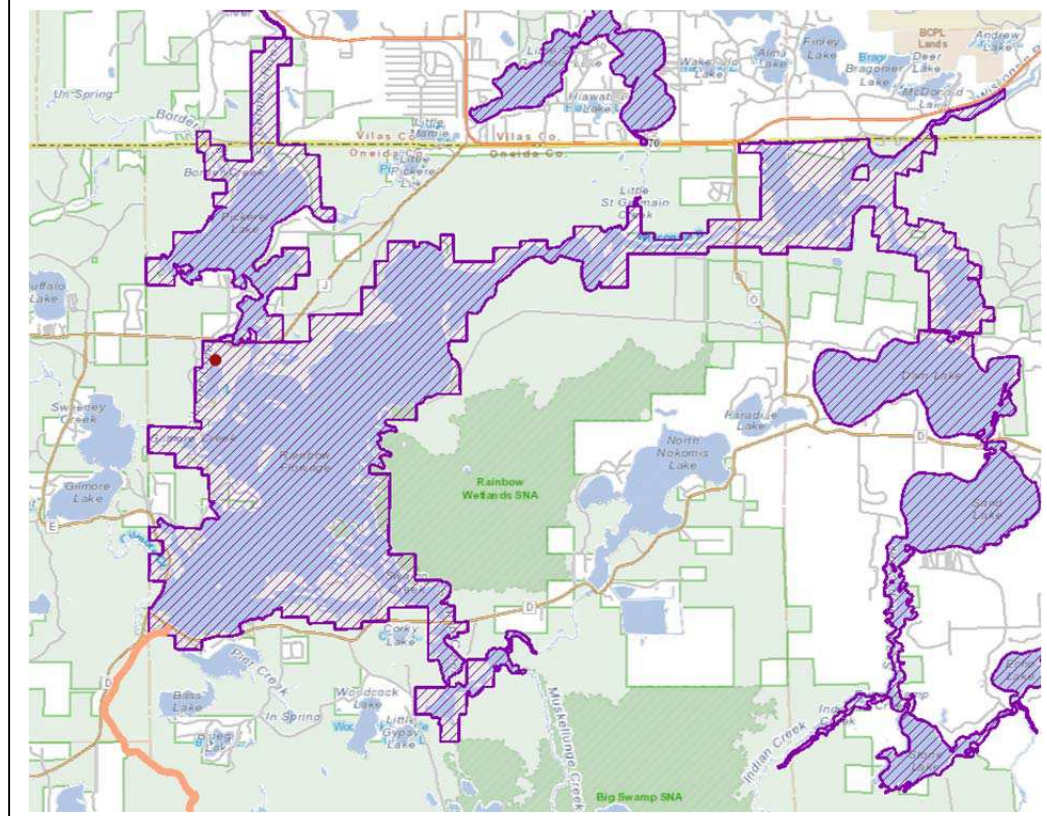
The proposed amendment to the 2005 master plan is compatible with Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code and other applicable department policies.

F. Federal interests and limitations

Portions of the NHAL were acquired with assistance from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) grant program, starting with the first LAWCON acquisition in 1969 (Map F). Currently, more than

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) granted a license (P-2113) to Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company (WVIC) to operate the Rainbow Flowage and the associated structures. The department acquired lands associated with the flowage from the WVIC in a series of transactions starting in 2004. These lands lie within FERC designated project boundary (see map). WVIC retains flowage rights and has responsibilities related to the dikes, dams, and other structures necessary to operate and maintain the flowage. Lands within a FERC project boundary are managed and used according to various management plans. WVIC also has responsibility to ensure that the uses of land within the Rainbow Flowage FERC project area are managed in accordance with the previously approved management plans and conveyance documents. The department is required to manage the property in a manner that will protect the scenic, recreational, and environmental values of the project. As with DNR master plans, the FERC approved management plans may be updated and revised as needed. Under the current license requirements, some management plans are updated every 5 years. The entire portfolio of WVIC lands will be reviewed for possible updating in the next five years as part of a major relicensing effort for all of the WVIC project lands in Wisconsin.

Rainbow Flowage and FERC project boundary.



G. Summary of alternatives considered

Department staff assessed several alternatives during the development of the proposed amendment. The more substantive alternatives evaluated are discussed here.

1. Alternatives related to camping

Convert fewer rustic campgrounds to modern campgrounds.

The department considered converting only one or two rustic campgrounds to modern, but decided to propose converting four because of their existing use patterns and the increasing demand for more developed camping opportunities. The evolution of camping demand has changed throughout the state (and nation) with a desire for more amenities such as flush toilets, showers, and electric hook-ups. At the NHAL, the difference in demand is most easily seen in the number of campers at rustic versus modern campgrounds. Although there are many factors that affect use at the different campgrounds on the property, in general the modern campgrounds are significantly more heavily used than the rustic ones. The modern campgrounds are full most weekends during the summer (often over 90% occupancy) and average about 65% capacity from June through August. The rustic campgrounds are rarely at 50% capacity even on summer weekends and average about 33% capacity from June through August. For these reasons, the department is not pursuing this alternative.

Maintain the existing number of authorized campsites.

The proposed amendment would reduce the number of authorized campsites at the 18 family campgrounds (rustic and modern) by 109 sites. The department concluded that the places where campsites could be expanded were not all desirable or warranted given the current demand. Rather, the department hopes to use its resources to provide upgraded and expanded facilities at the existing campgrounds. For these reasons, the department is not pursuing this alternative.

2. Alternatives related to non-motorized trail use

Add more trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, mountain biking and winter (fat tire) biking

The existing non-motorized trails are popular with residents and visitors and it is common for parking lots at trailheads to be full on weekends when the weather is pleasant. The department considered further increasing the number of miles of authorized hiking, cross-country skiing, off-road and mountain biking, and winter (fat tire) biking trails but elected against this given the number of opportunities that currently exist on the NHAL, the nearby County Forest properties, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Forest Legacy lands, and other properties in the immediate area. The department also concluded that the proposed expansions were within the capacity of existing staffing resources.

Propose more or fewer miles of bicycle trails

The department sought to identify opportunities to expand the existing trails in ways that would provide high-quality experiences and create a network that would link more communities (and as a result become even more of a draw for the area). The department concluded that the proposed authorization to construct up to 60 additional miles of bicycle touring trails on department-owned lands, including the opportunity to construct trails outside of road rights-of-way in more natural settings, would substantially benefit local communities and enhance visitor experiences, while limiting impacts to other visitors, logging operations, and natural resources.

The department received comments opposing one specific portion of the proposed additional bicycle trails. An approximately five-mile loop trail along the west side of Manitowish Waters is opposed by

people who stated a desire to protect the scenic value of the Manitowish River corridor and were concerned about a proposed bicycle trail crossing USH 51 twice.

The department recognizes these concerns but believes that crossing the river with a bicycle bridge will have minimal impacts on the river and its ecological and scenic attributes (the bike bridge would not be visible from USH 51 but would be less than 0.25 mile from the road bridge over the river). This trail would make key connections between an existing trail from Mercer that ends on the west side of Manitowish Waters and another trail that goes north from the community. This loop trail would also connect to another trail that leaves Manitowish Waters headed east towards Arbor Vitae that has been started but not yet completed. The department supports including this five-mile loop in the proposed amendment.

3. Alternatives related to motorized trail use

The department considered a range of alternatives for motorized recreational use of the NHAL, including:

Allowing ATV/UTVs on all open DNR roads year-round.

This alternative would provide a substantial increase in opportunities and would, in essence, convert all open roads into ATV/UTV routes. This is analogous to the situation in towns that have opened all their roads to ATV/UTV use. Along with this action, the department also considered identifying a network of “preferred tours” that would focus riders along specific DNR roads, while leaving them with flexibility as to how they accessed such a network.

Allowing ATV/UTVs on all open DNR roads year-round could affect enforcement in different ways. On one hand, it could simplify enforcement in that there would not be issues of riders being on the wrong open roads, since all would be open. On the other hand, it might increase enforcement issues because riders would be dispersed over a wider area and would have easier access to areas where they are not allowed.

This alternative could potentially result in more impacts than the proposed designated routes and trails including greater impacts to other visitors and residents, sensitive areas, heavily used recreation areas (including campgrounds), and wetlands. These impacts could result from both the increased use of the routes and from ATV/UTVs illegally leaving the designated routes and riding through and damaging sensitive areas and wetlands.

This option could distribute the impacts more evenly throughout the property. While this might result in a more diluted set of impacts, it could also leave few places without some level of impact.

For these reasons, the department is not pursuing this alternative.

Allowing ATV/UTVs on all open DNR roads during the fall hunting season.

This alternative would provide access during a period when there are fewer campers, boaters, bicyclists, and other non-hunting visitors to the property and thus impacts to non-motorized recreationists would be reduced. Although this use could enable easier access for hunters on ATV/UTVs into more remote areas of the property, it could also disrupt hunters that specifically seek these areas.

The department sought public input on this issue during the spring comment period and although there was some support for this option, most respondents did not support it. Indeed, of the respondents that noted they participate in big game hunting on the NHAL, slightly more than one-third supported allowing ATV/UTV use on all or some open DNR roads in the fall. For these reasons, the department is not pursuing this alternative.

Developing an ATV/UTV and dual-sport motorcycle route/trail loop solely on DNR land.

As mentioned previously in the document, the prevalence of wetlands, lakes, recreation areas, communities, and other factors make identifying opportunities for ATV/UTV and motorcycle riding difficult. These obstacles led the department to conclude that the most effective network of routes and trails would include a combination of DNR and local roads. This option requires some towns in the area to designate ATV/UTV routes on their roads.

Another option could be to develop an ATV/UTV riding area just on DNR land using a combination of open roads, seasonal roads, and newly constructed designated trails. There are a few places on the NHAL that might be able to accommodate this, but the riding experiences at these sites would be limited in length and would likely not be considered high-quality. Further, this could concentrate the impacts to a degree that is unacceptable to residents.

For these reasons, the department is not pursuing this alternative.

Making no changes to the existing master plan.

After reviewing the range of alternatives related to motorized recreational use, the department considered the option of not proposing any changes related to motorized access and recreation to the existing master plan. This option would continue to prohibit ATVs and UTVs on open DNR roads and continue to have the property be an obstacle in developing a regional network that connects routes and trails on surrounding public land and roads. Towns could designate ATV/UTV routes on their roads that cross the property, however these are considered less desirable by many riders than the open DNR forest roads.

Given the interest in developing ATV/UTV routes and trails in the Northwoods Region, the department is interested in playing a role in helping develop the overall network. The department does not believe continuing with the status quo and not allowing additional motorized recreational use on the NHAL is a practical or reasonable alternative.

H. Public review and input process

This section describes the ways that the department gathered public input, the comments and perspectives received, and how this input was used in the development and revision of this draft amendment to the master plan.

1. Methods of gathering public comments

The department recognizes that sound planning related to the use and stewardship of lands it manages on behalf of the public is a partnership effort with the people it serves and that the end product must be broadly supported as well as fit the capabilities of the property. The department encourages and provides opportunities for citizen involvement throughout the property planning process.

In concert with the development of the Recreation Opportunities Analysis project, the department hosted three public open house meetings April 25, 26, and 27 in Arbor Vitae, Park Falls, and Antigo, respectively. At these meetings, the public was provided information about the NHAL and the department's intent to revise the recreation portion of the 2005 master plan. Participants were asked a variety of questions about current and potential future recreation uses of the property and issues that they would like to see addressed in the amendment process. In addition, the department posted an online public input form with a series of questions related to current and future uses and general comment period from April 10 to May 6.

The department hosted an open house meeting on August 31, 2017 to describe the initial version of this proposed amendment and to gather public input. Seventy people attended the open house meeting and submitted 27 hardcopy input forms and a small number of written comments. A public comment period on the draft amendment ran from August 17 to September 17, 2017. During this time period, the department posted an online comment form that received 214 submittals. In addition, the department received 26 letters (some of which included an input form, too) and emails during this comment period.

2. Input received

The department is thankful for all the input received and the time and effort people took to reflect on the draft amendment to the master plan. The department considers all public input, but is particularly appreciative of people that submitted comments going beyond a simple statement of support for, or opposition to, a specific issue. Comments that explained the reasoning behind a stance or the nature of concerns were most useful.

It is clear from the number of comments received that the future use and management of the NHAL is meaningful to many Wisconsin residents. The department seeks public input to better understand the overall range of perspectives and the reasoning behind these viewpoints. Public input on the content of master plans (and amendments to these plans) is not a "vote" where the greatest number of respondents advocating a particular position necessarily drives what is or isn't ultimately included. Rather, the department's approach is to carefully read through all the comments and material presented to find common themes and issues and the underlying beliefs that drive different perspectives.

Initial public outreach

During the initial public comment period in April and May of 2017, the department received 497 responses to the public input form (combined hard copy and online submittals) as well a small number of letters, emails, and phone calls. The input received varied in terms of support for different types of camping experiences, bicycling opportunities and motorized recreation opportunities and was, unsurprisingly, linked to the outdoor activities the respondents identified as their favorites to pursue at the NHAL.

Respondents whose favorite recreation activity to pursue on the NHAL is a non-motorized trail-based activity (such as hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, or cross-country skiing) tended to strongly support more paved biking opportunities, both trails along road rights-of-way and meandering through the forest in a more natural setting. These respondents also strongly supported keeping DNR roads closed to motorized recreation activities, and expected their camping participation to remain largely unchanged if electric hook-ups were added at campgrounds.

Respondents whose favorite recreation activity to pursue on the NHAL is a motorized trail-based activity strongly supported opening DNR roads to motorized recreation vehicles, although a portion supported keeping all roads closed. These respondents were about evenly split or neutral on their level of support for expanding the network of paved bicycle trails and also expected their camping participation to remain unchanged if electric hook-ups were added at campgrounds.

Public input received in this first phase, along with information from property management staff, regional trends, existing recreational use of the property, data from the Recreation Opportunities Analysis and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, was used to develop the initial draft amendment.

Public input in response to the initial proposed amendment

The public input received from August 17 to September 17 on the initial draft of this proposed amendment was both in support and opposition to different aspects of the amendment. Public comments are summarized here:

CAMPING

There was a mix of reactions to the proposed conversion of four rustic campgrounds (Big Lake, Indian Mounds, Sandy Beach, and Upper Gresham) to more modern facilities. Some people fully supported this concept because it would provide them with more opportunities to pursue the camping experiences they seek, while others opposed the proposal because they prefer more simple accommodations and believe that the state forest's camping niche should be minimally-developed settings. Generally speaking, there was more support to convert the four campgrounds to more modern facilities than opposition.

Specific concern was expressed by 41 residents on Big Lake that the DNR campground on the west shore of the lake should not be upgraded to more modern facilities. Their opposition is based on the belief that upgrading the camping facilities would lead to increased motorboat traffic which will result in a busier, more active lake (especially on summer weekends). They are concerned that this additional boating use will detract from the peaceful setting they now enjoy, decrease their property values, adversely affect wild rice areas, and result in more aquatic invasive species in the lake.

There was support for designating the Starrett and Cunard rustic campgrounds as quiet zones (under NR 45, Wis. Adm. Code) from people who prefer camping experiences where they do not have to listen to generators or sounds from electronic devices (televisions, air conditioners, laptop computers playing movies, etc.) running on electricity from generators or batteries that have been charged by generators.

There was opposition from people, many of whom have camped at Starrett Lake for decades, to designate that campground as a quiet zone because they wished to continue using generators. Their justifications for retaining their ability to run generators included:

- Their use of quiet generators.
- Although they previously slept in tents on the ground but can't or no longer pursue this type of experience.

- Their observation that people running generators tend to occupy sites longer (a full week or more) than people in tents (just the weekend) and thus produce more revenue for the department.
- They like the campground at Starrett Lake because of its peacefulness and solitude and don't want to use a different campground.

Concern was raised that one of the proposed ATV/UTV routes runs close to the Cunard Lake campground and should be re-routed to an existing DNR forest road to the east. Some concern was also raised that Cunard Lake may not be a good location for a group campsite if the main campground there is a designated quiet zone.

NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

There was strong support for the proposed expansion of the hiking and bicycling trails (bicycle touring, off-road, and mountain biking trails) on the property. Advocates for these trails noted the health benefits they provide to participants and the economic benefits to the local communities. Several people commented on the economic impact that bicycle trails, in particular the paved trails, have brought to the area.

There was also support for adding more cross-country skiing, snowshoeing trails, and winter biking trails.

There was a recommendation to allow pedal-assist electric bicycles (as known as "motor bicycles" or "E bikes") on the bicycle trails. Motor bicycles are currently allowed on the state bicycle trails and the department has the authority to designate other trails¹⁷ for this use through the master planning process.

Map H portrays the general locations of potential future bicycle touring trails. There were suggestions on specific alignments for siting these trails; the department will use these suggestions in the future when developing the more detailed plans for actual construction of the trails.

There was a small amount of opposition to the establishment of more bicycle touring trails. Opponents generally felt there were enough trails already or that there shouldn't be any additional fragmentation of the forest habitats. There were a few specific comments opposed to the construction of a bicycle touring trail west of Manitowish Waters and over the Manitowish River.

MOTORIZED RECREATION ACCESS.

This topic received the most public comments with support both for and against allowing motorized recreational use of the forest, particularly ATV/UTV and off-highway motorcycle (OHM) use. Support for motorized recreational opportunities on the NHAL outweighed opposition in about a 3:1 ratio.

Advocates for allowing motorized recreational uses emphasized the opportunity that the NHAL provided to link broader regional networks and the high quality experiences that the property could provide. Advocates also noted the economic benefits that would accrue to the local communities from participants in ATV/UTV and OHM riding and four-wheel drive truck driving. Support for adding more miles of routes and trails for motorized recreation was received, including notable support for adding authorization to construct narrow trails for off-highway motorcycles.

Opponents of allowing motorized recreation access on the property stated concerns about the following topics:

¹⁷ The bicycle touring trails in the NHAL are not designated state trails in NR 51.73.

- Increased noise, dust, and general commotion associated with ATV/UTV, motorcycle, and four-wheel drive vehicle use of the property. Several people noted that a primary reason they visit the property is for its quiet settings and that incorporating motorized recreation would detract from that experience.
- Impacts to the forest roads and the potential for erosion and the need for ongoing maintenance and repair of the roads. Similarly, concerns were raised about riders who leave designated routes and trails and damage sensitive areas.
- Impacts to vegetation and wildlife, including displacement of wildlife near the designated routes and trails and spreading invasive plants.
- Impacts to visitors to the NHAL that do not engage in motorized recreation, including hunters.

Specific concerns about the proposed ATV/UTV route north of the Rainbow Flowage was raised by the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company which, as a function of their operating license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) retains management interests in lands along and near the flowage. The WVIC strongly opposes opening lands subject to their FERC license to use by ATVs.

Concerns were also raised about osprey nests that occur on utility poles supporting the transmission line that runs adjacent to CTH J and STH 70 north of the Rainbow Flowage. An ATV/UTV route was proposed in the initial draft amendment on the snowmobile trail that runs in this alignment. Osprey Species Guidance (PUB ER-680) includes avoidance measures to minimize impacts to nesting osprey.

BOAT LAUNCHES

Few people specifically commented on the proposed additional boat access sites (cement plank, gravel entry, and canoe slide). There were a small number of comments expressing concern that the locations of the additional boat launches to be constructed in the future were not identified. There was support for keeping some lakes undeveloped and with limited access.

3. How the initial draft amendment was and was not revised based on input received.

The department's goal in releasing a draft of the amendment is to collect comments and suggestions to improve the document. As mentioned earlier, the department is thankful for the time and effort that people invested to convey their perspectives. The amendment has been revised based on many of the comments received; these changes are summarized below. In some cases, however, people advocated for a change to the amendment that the department does not believe is needed or appropriate at this time or advocated that the department not implement changes that are proposed. The reasoning behind why the department did not make the requested changes or decided to move forward with proposed changes is also noted below.

CAMPING

Concerns about camping at NHAL were raised at three locations. The proposed amendment was not modified for the following reasons.

Starrett Lake

Although there was opposition to designating this rustic campground as a quiet zone by some people, there was also strong support to create experiences for campers at the NHAL where minimal sounds are heard. The two campgrounds proposed to be designated as quiet zones (Starrett and Cunard) have 77 of the 835 campsites within the rustic and modern campgrounds in the NHAL. Thus, campers who wish to use generators have numerous other opportunities. As was noted earlier, the department recognizes that some campers have visited the same campgrounds for many years in the NHAL and that the establishment of quiet campgrounds may require these campers to alter their patterns. However, the department believes this adjustment is justified in order to achieve the desired range of experiences for the full spectrum of visitors to the NHAL.

Big Lake

The department's experience with camping and boating at the NHAL is that the majority of campers now do not trailer motorboats. In the past, many campers visiting the NHAL were very interested in fishing. Today, campers at both rustic and modern campgrounds increasingly tend to bring bicycles, kayaks, and canoes. Although no firm data are available and it clearly varies by campground, the department estimates that about one-quarter to one-third of camping groups at rustic and modern campgrounds in the NHAL bring motorboats.

The situation at the 70-site Big Lake campground is similar to the patterns seen elsewhere in the NHAL. Big Lake is known for its fishery and still draws many anglers (some of which stay at the campground). However, more and more campers at Big Lake are involved in other activities. The boat launch site next to the campground at Big Lake is a cement plank type and receives limited use because it is located in a shallow area of the lake. Most people launching motorboats at Big Lake use a second boat access site on the south side (off of CTH K). The department's observations are that the CTH K launch site is used both by campers at the Big Lake campground and boaters that are staying elsewhere (at other NHAL campgrounds or cabins, resorts, and hotels in the area).

The department expects that the conversion of the Big Lake campground to more modern facilities may result in an increase in the occupancy rate at the campground, including on summer weekends. If the occupancy rate during the peak camping season (the seven weekends between July 1 and August 15) increases from its current level (slightly less than 50%) to 90%, an average of 28 additional campsites would be used on each Friday and Saturday night. If one-third of these additional camping groups launched a boat at Big Lake, then about 9 additional boats would be expected each weekend day during the summer. The number of additional boats that may be launched in Big Lake in the future from other visitors to the property, or the property owners around the lake, is unknown.

The department does not believe that this potential additional motorboat use will result in substantial changes to the character of the lake. As it does on many other lakes in the NHAL, the department will continue efforts to minimize the spread of aquatic invasive species at Big Lake through signage, education and monitoring.

Cunard Lake

The Cunard Lake campground, which is proposed to be designated a quiet zone limiting the generation of amplified sounds, is near one of the proposed ATV/UTV routes. The department is evaluating alternative locations for the proposed ATV/UTV route that could move the route farther away from the campground. Some of these options may require additional management work to bring the existing roads into a suitable condition.

Group campsites can generate more sounds than a typical collection of campers. Cunard Lake (like Sweeney) is entirely owned by the department and as such is a logical candidate for a group campsite that would not disturb private landowners. The department will continue evaluating potential locations for a group site at Cunard Lake in an effort to find a place that will have minimal impacts to campers at the existing campground. One option may be to have a more modest-sized group campsite, maybe with a capacity of 20 or 25 people, rather than the more typical 50-person capacity. If an acceptable location at Cunard Lake cannot be found, then no group campsite will be constructed.

HUNTING

Based on comments received, additional language was added to the document to describe how hunting use of the property may be affected by the amendment. No changes are proposed to the hunting opportunities available at the NHAL.

NON- MOTORIZED TRAILS

The department has had generally positive experiences with motor bicycles on the rail-trails where they are currently allowed elsewhere in the state. Many of the bicycle touring trails in the NHAL are operated under agreements with local communities. As such, the department will need to work with these communities to assess their interest in allowing motor bicycles on the existing and future touring trails. The proposed amendment was revised to authorize motor bicycles on the bicycle touring trails that the department controls, if mutual agreement is reached with local governments.

MOTORIZED TRAILS

Based on the comments received, the initial draft amendment was revised as follows:

1. The proposed ATV/UTV route along the northern part of the Rainbow Flowage is now depicted as a general concept rather than on a specific alignment on DNR roads. The department is committed to providing a connection from the Town of Sugar Camp westward across the NHAL and will work with FERC, WVIC, and others to identify appropriate locations for ATV/UTV routes or trails in this area.
2. A small number of ATV/UTV routes were incorrectly identified as existing on land near the Rainbow Flowage that is within the FERC project boundary. These were corrected.
3. Added 36 miles of proposed off-highway motorcycle trails to be sited based on criteria to maximize experience for riders and minimize impacts to other visitors and the environment.
4. Added language to further describe potential outcomes of providing opportunities for motorized recreation access.

BOAT LAUNCHES

Based on the comments received, additional language was included describing in more detail the information that the department will use in identifying appropriate locations for new boat access sites.

MAPS

Map A: Regional locator

Map B: DNR and other lands (online only)

Map C: Existing recreation infrastructure (online only)

Map D: Road infrastructure (online only)

Map E: Existing land cover (online only)

Map F: Federal interest (online only)

Map G: Existing and proposed ATV/UTV routes

Map H: Existing and potential bicycle touring trails

Map I: Campgrounds and day use areas

Map J: Example of a “preferred tour” for dual-sport motorcycle riders

APPENDIX 1

Summary of existing and proposed recreation facilities.

Campgrounds

Modern	Existing in 2017 (# campsites)	Remaining authorized sites from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (# campsites)	Total future sites (# campsites existing or authorized)	Notes
Big Lake	70	0	0	70	Convert from rustic to modern
Carrol Lake	0	60	0	60	
Clear Lake	101	50	-50	101	Expansion no longer needed
Crystal Lake	101	-1	1	101	
Firefly Lake	72	48	0	120	
Indian Mounds	39	0	0	39	Convert from rustic to modern
Muskie Lake	81	0	0	81	
Sandy Beach Lake	33	0	10	43	Convert from rustic to modern
Upper Gresham Lake	25	22	0	47	Convert from rustic to modern
TOTAL	497	157	-39	615	

Rustic	Existing in 2017 (# campsites)	Remaining authorized sites from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (# campsites)	Total future sites (# campsites existing or authorized)	Notes
Buffalo Lake	52	8	-8	52	Expansion no longer needed
Carrol Lake	19	-19	0	0	Convert to day use area
Cunard Lake	33	17	-17	33	Expansion no longer needed
East Star Lake	30	30	-30	30	Expansion no longer needed
North Trout Lake	48	0	0	48	
Plum Lake	18	0	0	18	
Razorback Lake	54	11	-11	54	Expansion no longer needed
South Trout Lake	23	1	-1	23	
Starrett Lake	43	3	-3	43	
West Star Lake	18	0	0	18	
TOTAL	338	51	-70	319	

Group	Existing in 2017 (# campsites)	Remaining authorized sites from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (# campsites)	Total future sites (# campsites existing or authorized)	Notes
Big Muskellunge Lake	1	0	0	1	
Buffalo Lake - North Shore	0	1	-1	0	Site no longer as desirable
Jag Lake	1	0	0	1	
Rainbow Flowage	0	1	0	1	Authorized in 2013 amendment
Sweeny Lake	0	0	1	1	
Cunard Lake	0	0	1	1	
TOTAL	2	2	1	5	

Primitive	Existing in 2017 (# campsites)	Remaining authorized sites from 2005 MP and 2013 amendment	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (# campsites)	Total future sites (# campsites existing or authorized)	Notes
Canoe camping	102	13	28	143	Rename as "non-reservable, water-access" campsites
Reservable-remote camping	17	4	10	31	Rename as "reservable, water-access" campsites
Rustic backpack camping	0	10	-10	0	Expansion no longer needed
Backpack camping	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Deer Hunter camping	NA	NA	NA	NA	
TOTAL	119	27	28	174	

Other	Existing in 2017 (# campsites)	Remaining authorized sites from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (# campsites)	Total future sites (# campsites existing or authorized)	Notes
Equestrian campground	0	1	-1	0	

Trails

NON-MOTORIZED TRAILS

Hiking Trails

	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Bittersweet	0	8.4	0	8.4	Primitive
Clear Lake	0	5	0	5	Lightly developed
Escanaba	11	0	0	11	Primitive to lightly developed
Jute Lake Flats	0	20	0	20	Lightly developed
Lumberjack	12.5	0	0	12.5	Lightly developed
Madeline	9.5	0	0	9.5	Lightly developed
McNaughton	10	0	0	10	Lightly developed
Powell	8.5	0	0	8.5	Lightly developed
Raven	11	0	0	11	Primitive to lightly developed
Razorback Ridges	23	0	0	23	Primitive to lightly developed
Sandy Beach picnic area	0	0	5	5	Lightly developed
Shannon	7	0	0	7	Lightly developed
TOTAL	92.5	33.4	5	131	

Nature Trails

	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Crystal Lake Nature Trail	0.5	0	0	0.5	Lightly to moderately developed
Fallison Nature Trail	4	0	0	4	Lightly developed
North Trout Nature Trail	1	0	0	1	Primitive
Raven Nature Trail	1.5	0	0	1.5	Primitive
Star Lake Nature Trail	2.5	0	0	2.5	Primitive
TOTAL	9.5	0	0	9.5	

Snowshoe Trails

	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Bittersweet	0	8.4	0	8.4	Primitive
Clear Lake	0	5	0	5	Lightly developed
Crystal Lake Nature Trail	0.5	0	0	0.5	Lightly to moderately developed
Fallison Nature Trail	4	0	0	4	Lightly developed
Jute Lake Flats hiking trail	0	20	0	20	Lightly developed
Lumberjack	12.5	0	0	12.5	Lightly developed
North Trout Nature Trail	1	0	0	1	Primitive

Powell	8.5	0	0	8.5	Lightly developed
Razorback Ridges	23	0	0	23	Primitive to lightly developed
Shannon	7	0	0	7	Lightly developed
Star Lake Nature Trail	2.5	0	0	2.5	Primitive
TOTAL	59	33.4	0	92	

Bicycle Touring Trails

	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Arbor Vitae to CTH M & N parking lot	0	0	4.0	4	Moderately to fully developed
Boulder Junction to Dairyman's Road	2.5	0	0	2.5	Fully developed
Clear Lake trail	5	0	0	5	Fully developed
Crystal Lake to Boulder Junction	11	0	0	11	Fully developed
Crystal Lake to Sayner	6.5	0	0	6.5	Fully developed
Crystal Shower to Eastbound "East Beltline"	0	0	0.3	0.25	Fully developed
Crystal-Muskie bike trail	1.5	0	0	1.5	Fully developed
CTH M & N to North Creek Road	0	0	6	6	Moderately to fully developed
Dairyman's Road to Presque Isle-Land O Lakes connector	0	0	2	2	Fully developed
Woodruff to St Germain	0	0	12.0	12	Fully developed
Lake Tomahawk to Tomahawk Road	0	0	2.0	2	Fully developed
Manitowish Waters loop	0	0	8	8	Moderately to fully developed
Manitowish Waters to Boulder Junction	15	0	0	15	Fully developed
Manitowish Waters to Presque Isle*	0	0	0.5	0.5	Fully developed
Mercer to Manitowish River Access Road	6.5	0	0	6.5	Fully developed
Newbold to Lake Tomahawk	0	0	5	5	Moderately to fully developed
North Lakeland School to Crab Lake Road	0	0	2.0	2	Fully developed
North Trout Lake to CTH H	0	0	4.0	4	Fully developed
Presque Isle to Land O Lakes*	0	0	3.5	3.5	Fully developed
Sayner to St. Germain	5	0	0	5	Fully developed
Upper Gresham Lake campground to Nichols Lake	0	0	4.0	4	Fully developed
Upper Gresham to Manitowish Waters	0	0	7.0	7	Fully developed
TOTAL	53	0	60	113	

Off-road and Constructed Mt. Biking Trails	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Lumberjack	12.5	0	0	12.5	Lightly developed
Madeline	9.5	0	0	9.5	Lightly developed
McNaughton	10	0	0	10	Lightly developed
Muskie Mountain	0	0	15	15	Primitive to lightly developed; Skills area
Raven	11	0	0	11	Primitive to lightly developed
Razorback Ridges **	23	0	0	23	Primitive to lightly developed
Shannon	7	0	0	7	Lightly developed
Vandercook	0	25	0	25	Lightly developed
WinMan area	0	0	15	15	Primitive to lightly developed
Other off-road bicycling trails	0	0	20	20	Primitive to lightly developed
TOTAL	73	25	50	148	

Winter/ fat tire Biking Trails	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Lumberjack	5	0	0	5	Lightly developed
Shannon	7	0	0	7	Lightly developed
Other off-road bicycling trails	0	0	20	20	Primitive to lightly developed
TOTAL	12	0	20	32	

Cross-country Ski Trails (groomed)	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Escanaba	11	0	0	11	Primitive to lightly developed
Madeline	9.5	0	0	9.5	Lightly developed
McNaughton	10	0	0	10	Lightly developed
Raven	12.5	0	0	12.5	Primitive to lightly developed
Razorback Ridges	23	0	0	23	Primitive to lightly developed
TOTAL	66	0	0	66	

MOTORIZED TRAILS

	Existing in 2017 (miles)	Remaining authorized miles of trails from 2005 MP	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment (miles)	Total future authorized (miles)	NR 44 Classification
Roads for licensed, street-legal vehicles (including dual-sport motorcycles)	505	0	0	505	Primitive to fully developed
Snowmobile trails	400	0	0	400	Primitive to lightly developed
ATV/UTV routes/trails	0	0	202	202	Primitive to fully developed
TOTAL	905	0	202	1107	

* This is a longer potential trail with only a small portion on state forest land.

** Operated by a private organization.

*** On the same trails as ATV/UTV (dual-sport motorcycles already have access to open and most seasonal roads).

Day Use Areas

	Status in 2005 (master plan)	Changes authorized in 2005 MP	Status in 2017	Changes proposed in 2017 MP amendment	Total future sites	Notes
Carrol Lake	Rustic campground	Convert campground to DUA	Rustic campground	Convert campground to DUA	0	
Crystal Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	
Clear Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	
Big Arbor Vitae Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	Land Use Agreement with local township
Indian Mounds (Lake Tomahawk)	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Remove	0	Un-designate the picnic area. Keep the toilet for the boat landing. Remove the grills, pump, tables. Protect the mounds.
Little Star Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	Land Use Agreement with local township
Nichols Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	Land Use Agreement with local township
Cathedral Point (Trout Lake)	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	
Sandy Beach Lake	Existing	Maintain	Existing	Maintain	1	
White Sand Lake	Existing	Maintain	Not a DUA	Remove	0	
Sparkling Lake	Existing	Maintain	Not a DUA	Remove	0	
Wisconsin River	Existing	Maintain	Not a DUA	Remove	0	
TOTAL DAY USE AREAS	11	1			7	

Boat Launches

	Status in 2005 (master plan)	Changes authorized in 2005	Status in 2017	Changes proposed (2017 MP amendment)	Total future sites
Cement plank	73	1	73	10	83
Gravel	22	0	22	10	32
Canoe slide	9	0	9	10	19
Carry-in	11	0	11	Maintain	11
Unimproved	21	0	21	Maintain	21
TOTAL BOAT LANDINGS	136	1	136	30	166