

MONROE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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700 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY

Resource management, protection activities, recreational uses, and other public uses on the Monroe County Forest require several different types of access. Since the Forest is large and diverse, a broad network of access opportunities has developed over the years. A combination of geography, soils, vegetation, surface waters, seasons of the year, presence/absence of roads or trails, ownership of adjoining lands, and public regulations interact to control access to any part of the Forest.

Many of the existing roads and trails were originally developed as logging roads, forest fire protection lanes, snowmobile trails or trails used to reach popular hunting and fishing areas. The locations and standards for these earlier roads were not routinely established by county personnel, nor were they maintained on a regular basis. Different uses have occurred on the same trails with minimal conflicts.

The Monroe County Forest has approximately 35 miles of permanent secondary forest roads. Many of these roads except for the roads constructed for snowmobile trails were open all year for vehicular access until about 2010. Forestry gates have been installed as problems occur or as time and resources are available. The following problems have occurred or continue to occur on the forest roads that are/were open for vehicular access:

1. Road Degradation. The main issues are erosion, rutting, mud holes, sand holes and widening of roads by driving around obstructions. When secondary roads are open to unrestricted vehicle access, the traffic disturbs the vegetation and soil to create a road bed that is never stable. This often leads to areas that are impassible by vehicles for management activities. Gating the roads increases the likelihood that the road will grow vegetation which will increase the stability of the road. This provides for easier access for forest management activities and decreased road maintenance and repairs.
2. Dumping and Littering. Problems have arisen with the unauthorized disposal of trash out of vehicle windows as the public is driving down the forest roads, as well as the

dumping of tires, household trash, demolition debris and appliances and televisions on county forest property. Gating the forest roads significantly reduces the amount of dumping and littering on less visible county forest roadways.

3. Increased Risk of Forest Fires. The public can easily access more remote areas causing increased risk for accidental and intentional fires. Limiting vehicular access decreases the potential for human-caused fires and road degradation. Improved road conditions allows easier access for fire control apparatus and personnel when wildland fires occur.
4. Spreading of Invasive Species. Invasive species are spread and introduced by vehicle traffic. Decreasing the amount of vehicle traffic decreases the rate of spread and introduction.
5. Damage and Theft of Public Property. Issues created by unrestricted vehicle traffic are unauthorized firewood cutting and destroying or damaging trees and regeneration.
6. Decreased Disturbance and Poaching. Continuous traffic on the roads disturbs wildlife, reduces the quality of hunting experiences and increases the likelihood of poaching. When vehicular travel is restricted; the traffic and disturbance issues decrease.
7. Illegal ATV/UTV Activity. ATVs and UTVs are prohibited on the county forest except for management activities and trail maintenance as approved by the County Forest Administrator. Gating of forest roads decreases the occurrence of this illegal activity.

705 CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Provide direction to the committee and resource managers in order to maintain a network of roads and trails on the County Forest. This will meet the needs for resource management and protection activities, as well as provide public access for

recreation opportunities.

2. Identify the distribution, density, and types of roads and uses of roads and trails needed to establish a safe and efficient transportation and recreation system that complements the economic, environmental, and social interest in the County Forest.
3. Identify the existing and future County Forest roads eligible for transportation aids under s.86.315(1), Wis. Stats.
4. Identify areas on the County Forest where the access is limited or restricted.
5. Identify the provisions and criteria that will be policy when addressing management issues on the County Forest.

710 ROADS

Monroe County Forest staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads within the County Forest. These roads may be constructed and maintained by private contractors, logging contractors, county personnel and resources such as Forestry Department, Highway Department and township staff and equipment. The specifications for road construction and maintenance will vary with the frequency, duration, and planned use of each road. Three major types of roads occur on the Forest: permanent primary roads; permanent secondary roads, and temporary roads.

New road establishment should consider information identifying areas with sensitive soils or severe slopes that have the potential for adverse water quality impacts from land management practices. County staff can work with local DNR forest hydrologists to develop site-specific measures where appropriate and to follow all required permitting processes when applicable.

The forest should have enough roads to provide sufficient access, without degrading water resources, while still maintaining recreational experience. Program evaluation of road infrastructure will be continuously occurring.

710.1 PERMANENT PRIMARY FOREST ROADS (COUNTY FOREST ROADS)

There are no permanent primary forest roads on the Monroe County Forest.

710.2 PERMANENT SECONDARY ROADS

These roads often serve a variety of uses including forest management, fire protection, and recreation. These roads are maintained as part of a permanent road system but are often narrower than permanent primary roads and are built and maintained to lower standards. Some of these roads are designed for use only when the ground is frozen or firm.

The County Forest blocks are relatively small and divided up by town roads. Foot access to most areas on the forest is relatively short and most roads in this category are located in areas on the forest where motor vehicle use is restricted. The roads will be blocked with a gate, bunker/berm or other effective barrier. The forestry gates are heavy steel gates with the following signs on the gate or posts: gate markers, “no ATVs” and “do not block gate”.

In instances where motorized traffic is restricted, vehicle access will only be authorized for planned management activities, fire protection, and in cases where motorized handicapped access has been approved. Foot traffic is allowed on all roads.

710.3 TEMPORARY ROADS

Some of the roads on the Forest fall into this classification (approximately 5 miles). These roads are designed and constructed for short-term use for a specific project; often for timber harvest access. These roads are used only for a short duration and when the activity is done, the temporary road is closed. These roads are naturally or artificially revegetated and closed by use of earthen berms/bunkers or other physical barriers. In some cases, roads are completely closed with slash and debris to prevent future use and to encourage natural regeneration of trees.

Temporary roads on existing and past sales will be considered for closure. Reasons will include protection of perpetually wet soils, human safety, and prevention of illegal dumping.

The need for new temporary roads will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Road locations will be included in designing timber harvests. Consideration will be given to the objectives within each County Forest unit, existing road density, potential use, and soil type.

710.4 STATE, COUNTY, TOWN DRIVEWAY PERMITS

710.4.1 State Highways

Wisconsin DOT generally requires permits for permanent and temporary driveways on state highways. The County should track and retain permit records and work with local DOT officials for access. To obtain a driveway permit on state highways, contact: WDOT, Southwest Region, 3550 Mormon Coulee Rd., La Crosse, WI 54601.

710.4.2 County Highways

The Monroe County Highway Department requires an access permit to construct temporary and permanent driveways that enter onto county highways. The Monroe County Highway Department “*Policy on Access Management*” is found at the following web address: <http://www.co.monroe.wi.us/departments/highway/>.

710.4.3 Town Roads

Most of the access roads are existing on the county forest, however, if a new access point is needed, the county will contact the township before construction begins.

710.5 UTILITIES

There are no utility crossing permits on the Monroe County Forest.

710.6 CULVERTS

In many cases culverts are needed in all three classifications of roads that are on the County Forest when dealing with drainages, wetlands and stream crossings. Some of these are temporarily placed culverts that are used during a specific project then removed, while

others are permanent structures.

In all instances, culverts should be placed according to required DNR permitting procedures and should follow BMP's for culverts that can be found in chapters 4 and 5 of *Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality*, PUB-FR-093-2010.

Routine maintenance of these structures should also be completed to make sure structures are adequately working. The county may want to consider documenting the location of culverts on the forest and provide a list of the culverts that should be routinely checked.

715 RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS

Most areas on the Monroe County Forest are restricted to foot traffic only, however, there aren't any officially designated restricted access areas at this time.

720 WILD LAKES

The Monroe County Forest does not have any designated "Wild Lakes".

725 ROAD CONSTRUCTION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY

The layout and construction of any new road or trail situated on the County Forest shall adhere to *Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality* (PUB-FR-093-2010). This access management plan addresses the need and diversity level of forest roads and trails within the County Forest. The BMP Manual provides guidelines for road construction. Soil disturbance activities in highly erodible soil areas may require mitigating measures in excess of those currently listed in the manual. Wider buffers, sediment control structures and water diversion techniques will be used as appropriate in these sensitive areas.

730 SIGNS

Signs on the County Forest will be used discreetly to perform and function with minimal

disruption to the multiple uses of the Forest. Private signs promoting personal, commercial or political objectives will not be permitted. Signs erected by the county for management purposes or by non-profit recreational trail groups will be as follows:

1. Informational Type Signs
 - A. Interpretive Signs - to educate the general public about forest management practices.
 - B. Public Land Signs - to identify the land as Monroe County Forest property.
 - C. Trail Markers - to provide direction and safety to trail users.
 - D. Scientific, Historical or Geological Markers - to identify points of interest.
 - E. Recreational Facility Markers - to identify park entrances, etc.
 - F. Directional Markers.
2. Regulatory Type Signs - to regulate the use of the Forest in specific areas.

730.1 SIGNING STANDARDS

To assure that signs will serve a purpose without damaging aesthetics, the following standards will be maintained:

1. Signs placed on snowmobile/ATV trails must conform to state standards and be approved by the committee.
2. All authorized signs shall be protected by ordinance from being damaged, defaced, obstructed, removed, or possessed by unauthorized persons.
3. All unauthorized signs will be removed by the Forestry staff. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during removal. Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under s. 943.13(3), Wis. Stats.

740 ROAD AND ACCESS PLAN

The number of roads on the Monroe County Forest will be limited to only the amount that are necessary to facilitate management and protection activities. Vehicular access on these

roads will be limited mainly to those involved in the management or protection of the resources.