

NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA ITEM

Item No. _____

SUBJECT: Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest ATV Trail Alternatives Feasibility/ Suitability Assessment - Informational Item

FOR: FEB, 2008 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Paul DeLong, Forestry Division Administrator and Steve Petersen, NHAL Mgr

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide information on the findings from the Department's feasibility / suitability assessment for ATV trail alternatives on the Northern Highland - American Legion (NHAL) State Forest.

The Department has for the last several years been engaged with stakeholders and the general public in assessing opportunities and merits of establishing ATV opportunities on the NHAL State Forest. The current master plan for the NHAL was approved in 2005 with a directive to evaluate whether, and if so, where one or more ATV trails might be established on the NHAL. The 2005 master plan requires the Department to evaluate potential appropriate locations for ATV trails, considering their ecological, economic, and social impacts.

This issue has generated significant public interest and comments over the last two years.

RECOMMENDATION:

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- No Fiscal Estimate Required
- No Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required
- No Background Memo

- Yes Attached
- Yes Attached
- Yes Attached

APPROVED:

Bureau Director,

Date

Administrator,

Date

Secretary, Matt Frank

Date

cc: Laurie J. Ross - AD/5
Mike Luedeke - NOR

Tim Mulhern - FR 4

John Gozdziwski - NOR

DATE: February 13, 2008

TO: Natural Resources Board Members

FROM: Secretary Matt Frank

SUBJECT: Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest ATV Trail Alternatives Feasibility / Suitability Assessment and related information

The Department has for the last several years been engaged with stakeholders and the broader public in assessing both the opportunities for, and merits of, establishing ATV opportunities on the Northern Highland – American Legion (NHAL) State Forest. The current master plan for the NHAL was approved in 2005 with a directive to evaluate whether, and if so where, one or more ATV trails might be established on the NHAL, recognizing the high level of controversy about this issue. The 2005 NHAL master plan requires the Department to evaluate potential appropriate locations for ATV trails, considering their ecological, economic, and social impacts. Although ATV use is authorized in the master plan on designated trails, no trails were established at that time, recognizing that a significant amount of work was needed to assess where, if anyplace, ATV trails would be well suited for the property.

We are providing you information on the Department's feasibility / suitability assessment for the trail alternatives as well as information collected during the Stakeholder process and the public involvement that followed. Public comment will be taken at your March meeting, at which time we will also provide you additional data on the current status of ATV trails on state lands.

I. Property Description

The NHAL is located in central northern Wisconsin in Vilas, Oneida, and Iron counties. The NHAL State Forest is Wisconsin's largest state-owned property at 225,000 acres. The NHAL is used heavily for a wide range of recreation uses. The property hosts over two million visitors each year who come to enjoy the area's natural resources and scenic beauty. The NHAL is known for its high quality and quantity of lakes and rivers, with over 900 lakes and 300 miles of rivers and streams contained within the property boundary. In the summer, you can find visitors hiking, biking, boating and camping in the many well-developed recreational areas, as well as in more remote areas. The property's many recreation amenities and large land base make the NHAL one of the most sought after nature-based recreation destinations in the state. The NHAL does not currently have any designated trails for the use of ATVs, but it does host one of the highest concentrations of winter snowmobile trails in the state. Almost half of the land within the region is publicly owned in national, state, and county forests.

In addition to its recreational amenities, the NHAL also supports a diverse range of cover types and habitats. The property contains a high concentration of forested and unforested wetlands and water features, with lakes and streams covering 12% and wetlands an additional 17% of the property. These unique features provide habitat for a variety of fish, birds, insects, and plants including 14 threatened or endangered species and 79 rare species.

II. ATV Trail Alternative Summary

The NHAL State Forest ATV trail feasibility/suitability assessment and summary of public comments are attached for your review. Highlights of the trail alternatives include:

Oneida/Vilas Alternative

The trail is 49 miles in length (25 miles in Oneida County and 24 in Vilas County). It is a linear trail system with two sub-options to connect to local services. The trail starts south of Lake Tomahawk, and connects Lake Tomahawk to Sayner. The trail is generally located on existing state forest roads and/or snowmobile trails. Estimated development costs: \$5,410,000

Iron County Alternative 2 options in Iron County

Option A: The trail is 18 miles in length and connects to existing county, town and local municipality trails. About half the miles are on existing town roads, with 4 miles of state forest trails. Estimated development costs \$3,311,700.

Option B: The trail is 11.6 miles in length, 2.4 miles on existing town roads and 5.7 miles on existing snowmobile trail in state forest. Estimated development costs \$4,275,000.

III. Public Involvement

Public involvement in the trail alternatives process for the NHAL has been extensive over the past two years. It has involved 18 stakeholders' meetings, and numerous meetings with local and county governments, tribal representatives, cooperating agencies, interested organizations, and individuals. The Department engaged the public in the process of evaluating trail alternatives by sharing the results of the stakeholders' work and hosting three public information and input sessions. Over 2,500 comments were received on the trail alternatives. The Department has communicated and involved participants through progress reports, press releases, interviews, and a dedicated ATV trail alternative web site.

IV. Tribal Consultation

The Department worked with the tribes from the very start of the project to determine a consultation process. The consultation process was implemented with success including many meetings with tribal representatives, tribal public meetings and formal council presentations with the Voigt Task Force and Lac du Flambeau Tribe. The Voigt Task Force asked, the Lac du Flambeau Tribe to be the consultation mechanism which the tribe agreed to. The Lac du Flambeau does not expect to provide formal comments on this issue to the Department or NRB.

V. Feasibility/Suitability Conclusions

Based on the Department's initial trail feasibility/suitability assessment, it is clear that the trail alternatives considered the range of ecological, economic, and social considerations. Because of the NHAL's complex ecological conditions, a well developed existing recreational base, and the level of private in-holdings and public interest in the property, the identification of potential sustainable ATV trails on the property has been a challenge. A significant finding of the feasibility/suitability assessment is the fact that ATV use cannot be sustained on either trail alternative in present trail condition, except on some town roads. Substantial improvements, with significant costs, would be necessary to avoid, minimize, and mitigate environmental and social impacts stemming from summer ATV use. The two trail alternatives have opportunities and challenges associated with each. Below are the most significant findings from the Department's feasibility/suitability assessment.

Conclusions on the Oneida/Vilas Trail Alternative:

The Department recognizes that the trail identified in this alternative is located, to the extent possible, in upland areas to reduce the number of wetland and water crossings, which were identified as a primary concern and challenge for any trail in the NHAL. Given the fact that the property has a high number of dispersed lakes, wetlands, and streams, finding locations that do not cross wetlands or streams is

extremely challenging. A majority of the trail is located on existing forest roads open to licensed motor vehicles or existing snowmobile trails. The extent of the trail that passes through native community management areas is relatively small. The trail also does not directly cross any designated State Natural Areas, though it does border two of these areas.

Existing developed recreation areas are plentiful and widely distributed on the NHAL. Developed recreation areas were avoided to the best extent possible in this trail alternative, but in some instances could not be avoided. Locating the trail in proximity to existing recreation was weighed against other uses and impacts (water crossings, existing infrastructure, high conservation value forests, etc).

Compatibility with existing recreation use is a major element that needs consideration. The proposed trail location is in close proximity to a number of notable recreation developments where conflicts with other recreation users would be highly likely to occur. Potential areas of conflict include a paved bike trail near Sayner, three rustic campgrounds, and a complex of wild lakes known as the Bittersweet-Prong Recreation Area.

A notable attribute of the Oneida/Vilas trail alternative is the linear nature of the trail. The trail is a linear “dead-end” trail; it does not connect to any existing trails outside the property and there are limited options and no plans in the immediate future to connect the trail with other systems.

Although the proposed trail is linear in nature, it provides 49 miles of riding opportunities—long enough that the trail may be a destination point in itself. The trail is anchored at the north and south with two communities offering a range of services as well as access to a community in the middle. Additional desirable nature-based destination points are numerous along the trail. Estimated trail costs for this proposed trail are significantly more than the average cost to develop an ATV trail, reflecting recent increases in trail standards and the Department’s strong commitment to build trails to the highest standard.

Land ownership is a critical factor when determining trail use. The NHAL has 98,000 acres of private ownership within the state forest boundary. Although the entire trail segment is located on state-owned land, the trail is in close proximity to scattered private in-holdings and more developed residential communities (Lake Tomahawk, St. Germain and Sayner). In order to stay off private land the proposed trail has a large number of road crossings, including five on State Highway 47. For this reason, safety issues could be a concern on the trail during the summer season.

The principle environmental concern for the Oneida/Vilas trail alternative is the potential impacts to wetlands, lakes and streams that may occur as a result of trail construction and use. This alternative would require significant trail development including building up trail surfaces, and the construction of bridges and boardwalks for crossings. This alternative has 16 crossings covering 2.4 miles. Other ecological concerns include the proximity of the trail to areas of ecological sensitivity, including the fact that it borders two designated State Natural areas and includes six miles of trail through Native Community Management Areas.

Trail development costs include significant tread development, and bridge and boardwalk infrastructure. Although many portions of the trail have been previously modified by adding fill to accommodate minimal vehicle traffic, increased use would require significant trail improvements. Estimated cost of constructing this trail alternative is \$5.4 million for 49 miles of trail at an average cost of \$110,000 dollars per mile.

The economic impacts to local communities that may come about as a result of this proposed trail are difficult to determine and appear mixed. Some positive economic impacts to local businesses are expected, but these may come at the expense of displacing other users, which may negatively impact other businesses. The majority of local residents and businesses do not favor the trail. On the other hand, many private landowners, business, and local communities showed support for the trail via written comments and participation in public meetings.

Although the majority of those commenting opposed both trail segments, the Oneida/Vilas alternative is compounded by the strong opposition to ATV trails within Vilas County. Local opposition far outweighs local support, and support is generally from statewide ATV users.

Conclusions on the Iron County Alternative:

The Iron County alternative has many of the same opportunities and challenges as the Oneida/Vilas trail alternative, but is unique in other aspects. Foremost, both Iron County options connect to an existing trail network. The trail would create an additional loop connected to the east end of the existing Iron County network (over 200 miles), providing additional access points and riding opportunities on an already well used trail system. That said, the alternative does not connect two separate trail systems; it merely extends an existing system.

The trail is located on lands and roads owned and maintained by multiple units of government, including the county, towns, and state. There is generally support for ATV trails from Iron County and the towns in Iron County. It is important to note that this trail proposal relies on local towns to continue to support the designation of their roads as ATV routes. Loss of these designated routes would necessitate significant additional expense to build alternative trails across wetlands if the trail were to remain linked to the existing trail system in Iron County.

There is support from other large public land management organizations for the Department to provide ATV trails on state owned lands. This trail would demonstrate the Department's commitment to supporting and encouraging a regional trail network and the state's commitment to reducing the burden on other public landowners. However, some areas are more appropriate for trails than others, and public dollars may be more appropriate to support regional connectors rather than a loop trail extension such as the one proposed here.

Option A (18.5 miles) Approximately 85% of the trail would be located on existing infrastructure with raised roads owned and maintained by the towns. There are few private inholdings along the proposed trail, so impacts to local residents and communities are much lower than the Oneida/Vilas alternative.

There is support within the county from other large public land management organizations to provide ATV trails, and this trail would demonstrate the Department's commitment to supporting and encouraging a regional trail network. Further, in developing this trail the state would be an active partner in reducing the pressure of ATV use on other public landowners with existing trails.

The trail is located in the far northwest portion of the state forest, away from the most intensively used areas of the property. Existing recreation use in this area is generally low, with very few developments. The two most significant recreational uses likely to be impacted by this trail are an existing remote campground and river users on the Manitowish River. The trail would have to

cross the Manitowish River, a designated Scenic Management Area, in two places which will impact the experience of river users, though it should be noted that the river in this location runs very close and parallel to State Highway 51. The ATV trail would cross perpendicular to Highway 51 in two locations, both with some level of existing infrastructure.

The portions of the trail that are adjacent to State Natural Areas would be located on existing town roads.

Option B (11.3 miles) shares 5.2 miles of trail with Option A, but includes 2.4 miles of trail on town road and 3.7 miles on state forest trails currently designated for snowmobile use only. The designated snowmobile trail is located in the peatlands area, with a number of wetland and water crossings. This alternative does not affect existing recreation uses as does option A, and does not cross the same level of private in-holdings. However, it crosses a long stretch of ecologically sensitive wetlands, necessitating a significant amount of infrastructure to assure trail sustainability.

The average cost per mile of development is expected to be \$179,000 per mile because of the number of significant infrastructure developments that would need to be built, including two major bridge systems. Administration, maintenance, and monitoring would be challenging given it is located 23 miles from existing maintenance facilities. The majority of the public who were actively engaged in the process are also opposed to this trail.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NORTHERN HIGHLAND AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST

ATV TRAIL FEASIBILITY / SUITABILITY
ASSESSMENT

JAN 2008

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

NHAL Master Plan

In October of 2005 the master plan for the Northern Highland-American Legion (NHAL) State Forest was approved by the Natural Resources Board (NRB). At that time the possibility of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use in the forest remained an unresolved issue. While the master plan authorized use of ATV's on designated trails, no trails were designated for use. The master plan further directed the Department to work on identifying potential locations suitable for ATV use. This effort included the establishment of a citizen's stakeholder group to identify trail alternatives and make recommendations to the Department. Over the course of a year, the stakeholders group met to evaluate potential trail locations and any related environmental, social, economic, and safety issues. Their work was completed in June of 2007 when they delivered a report to the Department titled, *The Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest Sustainable ATV Trail Alternatives*.

Master Plan Policy: The Department supports statewide and regional ATV riding opportunities on appropriate trails, particularly trails that contribute to regional trail networks. Trails would have to be sited according to established ATV trail policies and standards. (See NHAL Master Plan, pp. 165-166).

Feasibility / Suitability Assessment Purpose

This assessment is intended to determine the preliminary feasibility/suitability of the two ATV trail alternatives identified through the efforts of the NHAL ATV stakeholders group. The trails, one in Oneida/Vilas Counties and the other in Iron County, have both issues in common and notable differences. In addition, this document includes a summary of public comments on the two trail alternatives.

Scope

This assessment examines the two trail alternatives using the Department's seven criteria for evaluating potential ATV trails. The assessment of the trail alternatives is based upon best available information and technical analysis. It is not intended to be a complete Environmental Analysis (EA). The assessment identifies potential broad impacts and implications for each trail alternative to determine if a detailed trail plan and associated EA is warranted. The intent of this assessment is to determine the impacts of the trail alternatives, including the public benefits and costs.

Study Considerations and Criteria

DNR staff determined the scope of this study and identified issues/parameters that would facilitate and guide the NRB in evaluating the relative feasibility of the ATV trail alternatives. This study examines the proposed alternatives, identifies existing conditions, and highlights the improvements or changes that would be necessary to provide sustainable ATV use on the proposed alternatives. The study also identifies what costs may be associated with these changes. This report does not make specific recommendations.

This study is intended to gauge the feasibility of pursuing a more detailed assessment and development of a trail plan for summer season ATV use on the two trail alternatives

proposed. If a decision is made to proceed with developing a specific trail plan, including some or all of the identified segments, potential project effects will be evaluated within the context of an EA and pursuant to the Master Plan amendment process, which is required prior to any significant change in trail use. Each of these administrative processes provides for public notice, public comment, and public appeal of project plans or decisions.

Other factors that logically influence suitability determinations include cost/benefit analyses, physical and technical feasibility, degree of environmental manipulation, and the relative need or demonstrated demand for ATV use. Legal, administrative, and logistical considerations also play a pivotal role. Together, these factors help define plausible options and alternatives. All of these factors will play a role in reaching a final decision.

FEASIBILITY / SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Department's guidance lists seven elements to evaluate when considering siting ATV trails on Department land:

1. The property designation or funding source
2. Potential effects on the resources
3. Social considerations
4. Economic considerations
5. Safety
6. Local support and cooperation
7. Management and administrative criteria

1. Property Designation or Funding Source

The two proposed trails are completely within the boundaries of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL). The NHAL State Forest is managed according to state statute 28.04 and the masterplan was approved by the Natural Resources Board in October 2005.

State Statute 28.04 generally states; State Forests are to be managed to provide the full range of ecological, economic, and social benefits for current and future generations. Presently there are no trails designated for summer or winter use of ATVs on the NHAL. Other properties designated as state forests (Brule River, Flambeau River, Governor Knowles, Black River, and Peshtigo River) have designated trails authorizing ATV use for specific seasons. In all cases, ATVs are only authorized on designated trails. No off trail use is permitted anywhere on state forests.

Compliance / Consistency with the NHAL Master Plan

The NHAL master plan states that ATV trails may be permitted on designated trails if a suitable location can be found. The plan directed the Department to establish a stakeholders' group to investigate trail alternatives. The master plan also stated that no trail would be designated for ATV use unless a suitable location could be found. Given the complexity of the ATV issue, the NRB requested that the NHAL ATV Trail Stakeholders' Report, as well as the Department's suitability assessment, be shared with the NRB. The NRB further stated that they would guide future decisions on ATV trails on this state forest.

Vilas/Oneida County Trail Alternative

The Vilas/Oneida trail alternative traverses several land management classifications, including three forest production areas, two native community management areas, one scenic management area, and one recreation management area. Each land management classification is further divided into a unique land management area, and in some cases is reduced further to a site. Each land management area describes the desired future condition and specific management provisions of the area. Below is a list of the land management classifications and area specific considerations for the Vilas/Oneida trail alternative.

Hemlock Hardwood Native Community Management Area (Master Plan Area 9)

A one-mile section of the Vilas/Oneida trail alternative is located in the Hemlock Hardwood Native Community Management Area – Sweeney Lake Site. A portion of the Sweeney Lake Site (60 acres) through which the trail passes is passively managed and classified as an Ecological Reference Site, a designation that provides a long-term benchmark for ecological conditions. The land management objectives for the area generally focus on maintaining and enhancing old-growth hemlock hardwood communities. Specific access provisions include maintaining existing levels of public use and access. The trail would be located on an un-paved woods road currently open to vehicle use.

Bittersweet Recreation Management Area (Master Plan Area 21)

The proposed trail is not located within the Bittersweet Recreation Management Area itself, but along the eastern boundary of the area. The Area is 2,553 acres in size and the eastern boundary is 3 miles long. The Bittersweet Area is a complex of small, scenic, undeveloped wild lakes. This area is classified as a Type 2 and Type 3 recreation use setting, both of which generally focus on remote, non-motorized recreation experiences. Type 2 recreation use setting is the more restrictive setting, and it surrounds the core of the lakes within the area. The trail borders the Type 2 setting within the area. The masterplan authorizes closure of an existing road and opening of a currently closed road to allow public use around the perimeter, including snowmobiles and licensed vehicles. The ATV trail would be located on the newly re-opened road.

Lake Laura Loamy Hills Native Community Management Area (Area 8)

The trail segment between Sayner and Star Lake lies predominately in the Lake Laura Loamy Hills Native Community Management Area (8,268 acres). The trail segment extends 5 miles through this Area. The trail within this Area is on existing forest roads that are open during the winter for snowmobile use and closed to vehicle use the rest of the year.

One mile of the trail is located adjacent to and directly crosses highway K. The area within 200 feet on each side of Highway K is classified as a Scenic Management Area – Rustic Road (Area 16). Master plan goals for this Scenic Management Area are to protect and enhance the scenic beauty of the rustic road corridor. Forest roads in this area are directed to be designed to have minimal visual impact. A trailhead and most of the trail in this area would be new construction. Due to topography and the intent of the masterplan designation, measures would need to be taken to minimize visibility of the trail from highway K.

The remaining 39 miles of trail are located in Forest Production Management Classifications (Master Plan Areas 4, 5, and 6). Generally, forest production areas allow the full range of recreational opportunities, including motorized recreation.

Iron County Trail Alternative

The Iron County trail alternative traverses three master plan land management classifications, including one forest production management area, two native community management areas, and one scenic management area.

Manitowish River Scenic Management Area (Master Plan Area 15)

The trail would cross the Manitowish River Scenic Management Area in two locations. The master plan objective for this area is to "... maintain and enhance the natural appearing, undeveloped, and highly scenic Manitowish River corridor..." and "provide opportunities for high quality, non-motorized recreation and education in a generally undeveloped river setting." The crossing would be on bridges (one existing), perpendicular to the river. The crossings are estimated at 205 feet and 70 feet. The longer bridge is parallel to the Highway 47 bridge, and the shorter bridge is located at the Highway 51 wayside and would be placed at the site of a former bridge.

Native Community Management Areas (Master Plan Area 9 and 10)

Option A: This option runs north of State Highway 51, and passes through two different Native Community Management Areas—Peatlands and Wetlands (Master Plan Area 10), and Hemlock Northern Hardwood (Master Plan Area 9). West of Circle Lily Lake, 2 miles of the trail would extend through the Dupage Lake and Toy Lake Swamp Sites, both of which are part of the Peatlands and Wetlands Native Community Management Area. Much of Area 10 is designated for passive management and the majority is designated as a State Natural Area (SNA). The trail would not enter the SNA, but would border it for 2 miles. The area is generally managed to maintain limited, low-impact public access. The majority of the trail is on roads owned and maintained by the township. The trail would also travel one mile on town roads through the North Bass Lake Hemlock Hardwoods Native Community Management Area (Area 9).

Option B: This option is located in Hemlock Hardwood Native Community (Master Plan Area 9) and Peatlands and Wetlands (Master Plan Area 10). The option borders the North Bass Lake State Natural Area before crossing Highway J and traveling Cedar Lake Road until it joins with option A just west of Cedar Lake. The area near Woodson Lake is designated a Type 1 recreational use setting and motorized use is prohibited within ¼ mile of the lakeshore. The trail as proposed is on the boundary of this ¼ mile zone.

The remaining 19 miles of trail are located within the Manitowish Peatlands Forest Production Management Area, which is 49% unforested wetlands, and the Winegar Moraines Forest Production Area. The amount of wetlands in this area will require sections of boardwalk to be constructed, increasing the construction and maintenance cost of the trail.

2. Potential Effects on Resources

The NH-AL is located within a globally significant ecological landscape with a high concentration of kettle lakes, including several rare lake types. Twenty seven percent of the

Northern Highland ecological landscape is wetland. There are few other places on earth that have the same concentration of lakes, wetlands, and accompanying ecological communities.

Invasive Species

Invasive species pose a threat to forest ecosystem health by outcompeting native species and inhibiting forest regeneration, decreasing the abundance and diversity of native species, and disrupting ecosystem function. Management systems to identify control and track invasive species on the NHAL continue to develop. Activities being tracked under these systems include current uses such as hiking and biking trails, camping, forest management activities, roads, and water access points. Many recreational uses, including ATVs, hold the potential to introduce and spread invasive species. Reducing the introduction and spread of invasives is an increasing challenge for most nature-based recreational use. ATVs, just as motorized water craft, are particularly challenging since they can travel great distances and may unintentionally carry plant material and seeds to un-infested locations. Mitigation techniques to reduce the introduction and spread of invasive species have been met with variable success. Some techniques that have been used include educating recreation users with trail signs, prevention methods like washing stations, trail construction techniques, continuous monitoring, and active control programs.

Wildlife Habitat

The NHAL provides habitat for the highest concentration of goshawks, eagles, and osprey in Wisconsin. Disturbances near nesting sites, particularly for osprey and goshawks, can cause adults to abandon nests or unsuccessfully rear young birds. Disturbance of nests by current uses on the state forest appears to be at acceptable levels for existing populations. NHAL staff provides protection measures on timber sale contracts by prohibiting harvest activity near nests or during critical breeding times. Current levels of motorized access are low enough to not disturb the nests. Development of the trail proposals would need to include plans to locate the trail away from nests and schedule trail opening and closing dates to avoid disturbance during nesting periods.

The corridors suggested for the ATV trails are used by a number of wildlife species for both travel and habitat needs. Habitat specialists, such as turtles, are known to rely on some of the proposed trail segments for nesting sites. The current level of motorized travel on most of the corridors is light and does not significantly disturb these activities. Allowing expanded ATV use may affect certain species, but it is not known if significant detrimental impacts will occur.

Ecological Communities

One of the many unique ecological features found along the fringe of both proposed trail segments are wetland communities known as peatlands. Peatland systems are formed by the gradual build-up of sphagnum moss and other bog vegetation over the course of several thousand years. The resulting 'bog mat' is soft and spongy partially decayed vegetation, and is extremely vulnerable to disturbance. Off-trail ATV use is prohibited on the full length of the trail alternatives. However, trails adjacent to peatlands may need to be fenced to restrict off-trail ATV operation, and would require diligent monitoring.

For new stream and wetland crossings, the preferred action is to construct bridges and boardwalks. Construction would require authorization by federal, state and local permits. The Department has not conducted the site specific “alternatives analysis” necessary for wetland permits, so the exact crossing requirements for trail alternatives are unknown. If reasonable alternatives exist to avoid constructing a new wetland crossing, then the wetland crossing may not be permitted. An example of an alternative would be the existence of an ATV route which provides access to the same general area.

To mitigate any potential water quality problems such as erosion, sedimentation, and to prevent rutting and degradation of the trail surface, the trail surface would need to be “hardened” with gravel or other surfacing materials. Diversion ditches, water bars, and other drainage structures would be installed to keep runoff and sediment from lakes, rivers, and wetlands.

In wetlands, the flow of subsurface water can be disrupted by rutting, which mixes the wetland soil, channelizes surface water flow, or damages vegetation. This can lead to some areas of wetlands becoming “swamped out” as water pools and other areas of wetlands dry out as their water source is cutoff. Plants which were at the limits of their soil moisture range may begin to die out in wetter areas, and plants may begin to move into drier areas, pushing out the wetland species. Off-trail ATV operation would need to be controlled in order to avoid negative impacts to wetlands.

Vilas/Oneida County Trail Potential Effects on Resources

Where the trail is proposed adjacent to the Rainbow Flowage, extra effort would be necessary to prohibit ATV access to lakebed that is exposed at low water levels. This would be done by trail design, fencing, education, and enforcement.

The trail is proposed to cross Birch Springs, a relatively remote and undeveloped area with a spring that forms the headwaters of a trout stream. The crossing would require an elevated 1500-foot boardwalk and fencing at the approaches to protect water resources.

There are several sections along this proposed trail that have steep slopes and would require construction of new trail or redesign of the existing trail to reduce the slope and mitigate possible erosion. These steep slopes may also provide the opportunity to experiment with other engineering solutions including surfacing, grading, and other innovative approaches to reduce erosion.

Plum Creek, a Class I trout stream, has been the focus of trout stream habitat improvement projects. Visitor use, both pedestrian and motorized, will need to be carefully managed to avoid degrading this high quality fishery.

Endangered/Threatened/Special Concern Species and Native Communities

The following is a list of rare species (endangered, threatened, or special concern) that occur one or more times within the 15 meter wide corridor surrounding the proposed Vilas-Oneida trail segment. This data was gathered from Wisconsin’s Natural Heritage Inventory database.

- Bald eagle

- Boreal chickadee
- Bullfrog
- Casemaker caddisfly
- Cerulean warbler
- Diving beetle
- Eastern floater (mussel)
- Elktoe (mussel)
- Hooker's orchid (wildflower)
- Lake emerald (dragonfly)
- Large round-leaved orchid (wildflower)
- Osprey
- Purple clematis (wildflower)
- Tiger beetle

In addition to the above rare plants and animals, Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory lists the following plant communities as occurring within the corridor of the proposed Vilas-Oneida trail segment:

- Northern Mesic Forest
- Northern Dry-Mesic Forest
- Northern Wet Forest
- Black Spruce Swamp
- Open Bog
- Poor Fen.

Placement of a trail within the Vilas/Oneida corridor would require additional site inspections to identify a trail location that avoids disturbance of protected species. If certain impacts are unavoidable, the Department will need to apply for any incidental take permits.

Iron County Trail Potential Effects on Resources

Along the railroad route of Option A, a boardwalk would need to be constructed over the wetland area, and structures would need to be developed to prevent off-trail use and damage to wetland resources.

Circle Lily Road and Sandy Beach Road would become designated ATV routes in Iron County. These roads are nearly level with the adjacent peatlands and wetlands. Sandy Beach Road is of special concern due to the degraded town road surface. The Department would encourage the townships to maintain these roads to ensure they are sustainable for both vehicles and ATVs.

The approaches and embankments to some of the existing snowmobile trail bridges on this proposed route are eroding. This trail proposal suggests re-locating the snowmobile bridge west of Lance's Repair to resolve some of the re-occurring problems related to this erosion. Additionally, many of the wetland fills on the proposed route would benefit from additional culverts to restore natural wetland function. Some existing culverts are plugged or incorrectly placed and should be included on a regular maintenance schedule.

Option B would require the construction of over 3,000 feet of boardwalk across two large wetland crossings. This portion of the route is currently a designated snowmobile trail, allowing use only in winter during frozen conditions. During winter, frozen ground conditions limit negative effects on the wetland. Boardwalk construction, education, and enforcement would reduce off-trail riding and mitigate damage to wetland resources along this route.

Endangered/Threatened/Special Concern Species and Native Communities

Following is a list of rare species (endangered, threatened, or special concern) that occur one or more times within the 15 meter wide corridor of the proposed Iron County trail segment. This data was gathered from the Natural Heritage Inventory database

- Arrowgrass (wildflower)
- Eastern purple bladderwort (wildflower)
- Greater redhorse (fish)
- Lake darner (dragonfly)
- Marsh willow-herb (wildflower)
- Osprey
- Perlodid stonefly
- Pugnose shiner (fish)
- Round pigtoe (mussel)

In addition to the above rare plants and animals, Wisconsin's Natural Heritage Inventory lists the following plant communities as occurring within the corridor of the proposed Iron County trail segment:

- Northern Mesic Forest
- Northern Sedge Meadow
- Hardwood Swamp
- Open Bog, Stream - fast, hard, warm

Placement of a trail within this corridor would require additional site inspections to identify a trail location that avoids disturbance of protected species. If certain impacts are unavoidable, the Department will need to apply for incidental take permits.

3. Safety

Most of the proposed trail segments would be shared with hikers, bikers, motorcycles, and other motor vehicles, including logging trucks and equipment. In order to provide the safest experience for all users, the trail would be constructed wide enough to allow vehicles to pass both directions. Sections of the trail may need to have reduced speed limits posted to ensure user safety. Staff would be required to patrol the trail for emergency service and enforcement. The trail would need to be regularly inspected in order to alert users of un-safe conditions, or to initiate prompt repair.

The trails pass through a number of forest production areas where logging is frequently taking place. ATV safety would be promoted much like snowmobile safety is promoted on the trail. Trail users would be alerted by warning signs of the logging activity and the hazards of falling trees and logging equipment operation. Loggers would similarly need to keep aware of the trail and trail users. Loggers would be required to deck their logs remotely from the

trail to reduce the hazard of equipment operation on the trail; to remove the attractive nuisance of climbing and riding on log piles adjacent to the trail; and to prevent collision with the log piles. Off-trail wood decking will require additional areas be cleared on timber sales to provide the room to operate the logging equipment and trucks.

Vilas/Oneida County Trail Potential Safety Issues

The Department of Transportation (DOT) expressed concern with the number of times the trail is proposed to cross Highway 47 south of Lake Tomahawk. Because of private ownership of the abandoned railroad grade, the snowmobile trail has been re-routed and there are a total of five state highway crossings proposed. During the snowmobile season there is less vehicle traffic on the highway than during the summer.

The proposed trail utilizes a snowmobile trail which passes through the Village of Lake Tomahawk, adjacent to residential backyards and businesses. Speed limits would need to be posted and strictly enforced. Dust treatment of the trail would improve visibility for the ATV riders as well as mitigate the neighbor concerns about dust.

Iron County Trail Potential Safety Issues

The proposed trail crosses Highway 51 at two locations, including near the intersection of Highways 47 and 51. The Department of Transportation has expressed concerns for safety at these crossings.

Development of the proposed ATV trail would improve safety for snowmobilers and other vehicles by moving snowmobiles off of Circle Lily Rd.

4. Social Considerations

ATV trail riding is an increasingly popular recreational activity in Wisconsin. More than 244,000 ATVs have been registered in Wisconsin for use on public land—four times the number registered in 1993. According to the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), 23.4% of Wisconsin residents operated an ATV sometime over the last two years. Other research suggests that slightly less than 6% of Wisconsin residents are active ATVerers. The SCORP also reports that the ATV market is projected to become saturated by 2010, and use is expected to level off at that time.

According to the 1999 Socioeconomics Forest Assessment, 66% of NHAL regional households (the six counties surrounding the NHAL) indicated their outdoor recreation was primarily passive, as compared to motorized (12%) and hunters (21%).

A survey by the Minocqua, Arbor Vitae, Woodruff Area Chamber of Commerce indicated that 56.6% of residents “completely” or “somewhat” disagree with the statement “I would like to see ATV trails made available in the area.” 29.2% agreed either completely or somewhat with this statement.

The majority of public comments received about the two trail proposals were opposed to the development of ATV trails on the NHAL. However, the collection of public comment was not set up to be a statistically valid survey. Rather, the public comment was intended to

collect qualitative comments and personal value preferences on the placement of ATV trails on this state forest.

Much of the trail in the two proposals is currently used by a variety of recreational visitors. Hunters use the trail both directly, by walking, and indirectly as truck access to more remote areas of the forest. SCORP suggests “highly competitive or antagonistic” conflict is expected between ATVers and hunters. Two state forests that currently operate ATV trails during the summer close their trails at the end of October or mid-November to accommodate hunters. SCORP also found “highly competitive or antagonistic” interaction between ATVs and horseback riders, mountain bikers, cross country skiers, linear trail bikers, hikers, wildlife watchers, and campers. The only group that did not have this level of conflict with ATVs was snowmobiling, which rated “moderately to mildly competitive.” SCORP suggests separating antagonistic activities and managing the interactions with law enforcement. The Department would need to further examine this conflict potential if the trail is built.

A frequent comment from ATVers statewide is that trails are in poor condition due to heavy use and they need more trails in order to disperse the level of use and minimize trail degradation. Not all riders want improved trails, and some prefer the challenge of riding off established trails. The Department is committed to building only sustainable trails that have minimal negative environmental impacts. These trails may therefore not meet the desires of some ATV riders who want off-road experiences.

During the development of the NHAL master plan, ATV trails were considered at several stages. A six mile loop was suggested in the preferred alternative, which triggered significant public commentary with nearly all of the comments opposed to the development of a loop trail. ATV advocates did not support a small loop trail, but instead sought opportunities for connector trails to other systems.

Vilas/Oneida County Trail Social Considerations

The trail as proposed passes near a number of homes in the Village of Lake Tomahawk. Residents are concerned that the trail will raise dust. The residents accept snowmobile use because it occurs in the winter when their windows are closed, so they don't hear the machines and dust is not an issue. The ATV trail would need to have dust control applied as needed, and speed limits enforced.

The Town of Plum Lake recently passed an ordinance to prohibit ATV use on their town roads and there has been significant opposition to ATVs in the community. The trail as proposed would enter the Village of Sayner but stay on state forest land. ATVs would not be permitted to travel the town road to access services. No trailhead has been proposed for the Sayner terminus, however if the trail is developed, consideration should be made to accommodate a place to park an ATV so trail users could access town services.

Public comments on the ATV trail proposals are summarized in a separate section of this report. It should be noted, however, that comments from the community of Star Lake were opposed to development of a trail in that area.

The northern portion of this proposed trail terminates in Vilas County. In February 2004, Vilas County placed the following countywide question to referendum: “Do you favor allowing the operation of All Terrain Vehicles on Vilas County Forest lands and County-owned land in Vilas County”. The vote was 5,457 opposed and 3,200 in favor (63% to 37%). This vote, while it was specific to county owned land, was viewed by many as a gauge of public opinion towards ATVs on state forest land as well. That vote margin was similar to the level of opposition seen in the public comment regarding the proposed trails on NHAL property.

The NHAL master plan designated the Bittersweet Recreation Area as a semi-remote area. Visitors will likely arrive with some expectation of quiet solitude. Though the area is adjacent to Highway 70, the public remained concerned about the sound created by ATV use, either on the designated trail or by illegal operation.

Iron County Social Considerations

Iron County is generally supportive of ATVs and actively promotes itself as a destination for trail riding and rallies. Hurley, 25 miles north of Mercer, promotes two large rallies each year, which attract hundreds of ATV riders. Iron County also links their ATV trails to trails in the State of Michigan.

In Vilas County, The Town of Manitowish Waters voted several years ago to close their town roads to ATVs. Option A for the Iron County enters the town of Manitowish Waters but does not use town roads.

Residents along Circle Lily Road were approached about the possibility of allowing ATVs to cross their property as an alternative to boardwalk construction on the west side of the road. They were opposed to ATV use on their private property.

5. Economic Considerations

Research by the Department and University of Wisconsin in 1996 indicated that motorized recreationists spend more than four times as much money as passive recreationists. However, due to their predominance in the NHAL region, 38% of regional recreation spending in the region is by passive users, as opposed to 33% by hunters, and 29% by motorized recreationists. These figures are based on current opportunities. Research was focused on the 6-county region around the NHAL and indicates motorized users annually spent just over \$1 million as compared to \$1.3 million for passive users and \$1.2 for hunters.

The Department of Tourism, in cooperation with the Wisconsin ATV Association, surveyed ATV participants on trails in 2003. According to their research, ATVers spend an average of \$523.33 per person per trip, with a trip averaging 3.2 nights. The research expanded this economic impact to every registered ATV in Wisconsin, and an estimated number of out-of-state ATVs, to arrive at an economic impact of nearly \$300 million annually

The Minocqua, Arbor Vitae, Woodruff Area Chamber of Commerce surveyed members about their attitudes towards development of ATV trails. 46.4% of chamber members agreed either “completely” or “somewhat” with the statement “I would like to see ATV trails made available in the area.”

Vilas/Oneida County Economics

The proposed trail passes through the Village of Lake Tomahawk and trail spurs are proposed to access St. Germain, Sayner, and a business near Star Lake. Several businesses in these communities recognized some economic potential from new ATV users, while others felt that an existing customer base would be displaced by ATV activity. The communities provide gas, lodging, food, bars, and other services.

Iron County Economics

There are several businesses in Mercer, and one adjacent to the proposed trail, that caters to ATV riders. These businesses include dealerships, gas and convenience stores, food, bars, and lodging, and are accessible using existing ATV routes.

6. Cooperation

Through the stakeholders' process, ATV advocates pledged support and cooperation for the trail proposals. The three county governments have offered different levels of assistance with management of the proposed trails. There remains uncertainty of how much actual support would be provided by county agencies or from elected county officials. At this time it appears that the state forest would manage as well as maintain the trail.

The Wisconsin County Forest Association has stated they feel the Department has an obligation to provide trails on the NHAL, as well as other state owned lands, to acknowledge that motorized recreation is a viable outdoor recreational activity that is here to stay and to fulfill the State's mandate for providing ATV-connector routes. Trails on county forests have provided the majority of ATV trails in the northern half of the state. The association has also stated support for the department to be able to access ATV account funding for maintenance and development on state forests.

The ATV community is anxious to improve their image and has advocated for making the trails in this proposal a model for sustainable operation and development. Some clubs have offered support in the form of trail maintenance and organizing trail ambassadors to patrol the trail.

Vilas/Oneida County Local Support and Cooperation

Vilas County currently has .3 miles of funded ATV trail, which connects Land o' Lakes to an ATV trail in Michigan. The proposed trail does not connect to that section. Following the Vilas County referendum, the county board voted unanimously to prohibit ATV use on county land.

Oneida County has two funded ATV trail systems. Neither is near the proposed trail. The County Forest Administrator has shared an interest in developing an ATV system in the county forest's Cassian-Woodboro block, near the south end of the proposed trail. This area has potential to link to the proposed NHAL trail.

There has been at least one meeting to try to develop an ATV club in the Lake Tomahawk area. To date there has been no such club organized.

There is an established alliance of ATV clubs in Vilas County. Several members are interested in serving as volunteer trail patrol ambassadors and in performing the maintenance on the trail.

The railroad bed south of Lake Tomahawk and north of Lyannis Road is a designated bike trail operated under agreement with the Oneida County Biking and Walking Association. The proposed trail would cross that moderately developed trail twice. The proposed ATV trail would use forest roads separated from the bike trail but roughly parallel to it.

Iron County Local Support and Cooperation

Iron County has a combination of funded trail and town road route that ends near the intersection of Highways 47 and 51. They have had difficulty finding partners to maintain this trail; currently once-a-year trail grading by the county is the only maintenance occurring on the segment. Attempts to develop an ATV club in the Mercer area have not been successful. Maintenance of the proposed trail would have to be done by state forest staff if other alternatives could not be found.

Large sections of this proposed trail are on town roads, which would need to be formally designated as ATV routes by the town. A town could also vote to close its roads to use as ATV routes at some point in the future after the trail has been developed.

The state Department of Transportation has expressed an unwillingness to continue funding operation of the Highway 51 wayside at the Manitowish River crossing if ATVs will be using it as well. Early in the stakeholders' planning process, DOT expressed interest in transferring the wayside to Iron County or the Town of Mercer if the trail was built. The Iron County Board member on the stakeholders' group offered his support to accept the wayside if the trail is built.

7. Management and Administrative Criteria

The operation of ATV trails on other public lands has demonstrated the need for diligent monitoring and prompt, active management. This requires maintenance staff, law enforcement staff, and administration. This property has developed a significant recreational user base with an estimated 2.2 million people visiting the NHAL annually. The property currently provides nearly 20% of all campsites under Department management (including all state parks, forests and trails). The effective season for ATV trails runs from just before Memorial Day to about the end of October, the busiest seasons on the state forest. Additional personnel would be required by the property to operate and manage the proposed trails

Because the trail is almost exclusively on state forest property, it is in the best interest of the Department to staff the trail with their own law enforcement rangers. In order to monitor the trail for sustainability and provide adequate law enforcement, a minimum of two additional rangers would be needed at a salary and fringe cost of approximately \$50,000 per year per ranger. These new personnel needs cannot be reallocated from current operations. The estimated annual cost to support each ranger for vehicle miles, equipment, and supplies is \$20,000 per year.

Maintenance of non-winter ATV trails is funded by the Department at \$450/mile. Based on that rate the 63 miles included in the two NHAL trail proposals that are not on town road routes would require at minimum \$28,350 per year for grading, repairs, dust control, fencing, and other supplies to maintain the trail. Maintenance records at the Black River State Forest suggest actual costs to be closer to \$1,400 per mile per year. Applying that figure to the proposed trails yields an estimated annual maintenance cost of \$88,200.

The total estimated annual cost to operate the two proposed trails, including two rangers and their support, and \$450 per mile maintenance costs, would be \$168,350. Under current law, state forests are not eligible for funding from the state ATV account. Shortfalls in funding for ATV trail operations would be drawn from other state forest operation allotments.

Most of the proposed trails, where they are located on state owned land, are used by other vehicles including cars, trucks, logging trucks, and license plated motorcycles and this type of use would continue. The ATV program does not fund maintenance on trails that are open to other vehicles so funding maintenance on these trails would be inconsistent with existing policy. The trail proposals include roughly 11 miles that rely on town roads in Iron County. Without a club to cover the costs of maintenance on the town roads, local towns would bear the cost to maintain the roads from their existing road maintenance funding.

The total cost to develop the two trail proposals is estimated at \$12.1 million. This estimate covers trail development costs as proposed and does not include trailheads, toilets, washing stations, loading ramps, shelters, campgrounds, or challenge courses frequently requested by riders following development of a trail. To calculate the base trail development cost, the following figures were used:

- \$35,000 per mile to clear a 30 foot corridor, crown, ditch, and surface trail.
- \$700 per foot for short bridges capable of supporting a snowmobile groomer
- \$1,000 per foot for boardwalk, which would require pilings
- \$1,500 per foot for the long span bridges, which would require significant engineering and structure.
- These figures include costs for engineering, administration, and supervision, as well as actual construction costs.

Vilas/Oneida County Management and Administrative Criteria

Estimated cost for trail development by segment:

South End to Lake Tomahawk (4 miles)	\$1,580,000
Lake Tomahawk to Highway 70 (14 miles)	\$490,000
Highway 70 to Sayner (10 miles)	\$590,000
Sayner to Star Lake (15 miles)	\$2,000,000
Spur to St. Germain (6 miles)	\$700,000
Star Lake Parking Lot	<u>\$50,000</u>
	\$5,410,000

There are no existing trail systems under county or local municipal management to which this alternative connects. This linear trail would require trailheads at both ends.

Iron County Management and Administrative Criteria

This trail is located in the far northwest part of the state forest more than 20 miles from the Trout Lake Headquarters. Logistically it would be difficult to administer, patrol, and maintain.

Of the total of 24.9 miles of trail proposed, 14 would be eligible for summer use funding of \$6,300 per year. The remaining 10.9 miles would be located on town road routes and the maintenance would be the responsibility of the local town, including placing and maintaining signs on town road routes.

The heavy reliance on trail-route-trail-route connections poses a risk that the trail could be closed if a future town board chose to close the town road route segments to ATVs.

Estimated cost for trail tread development by segment:

Option A

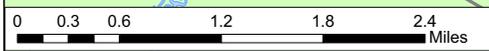
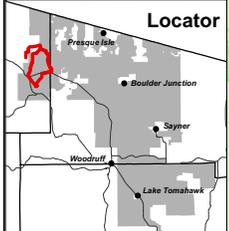
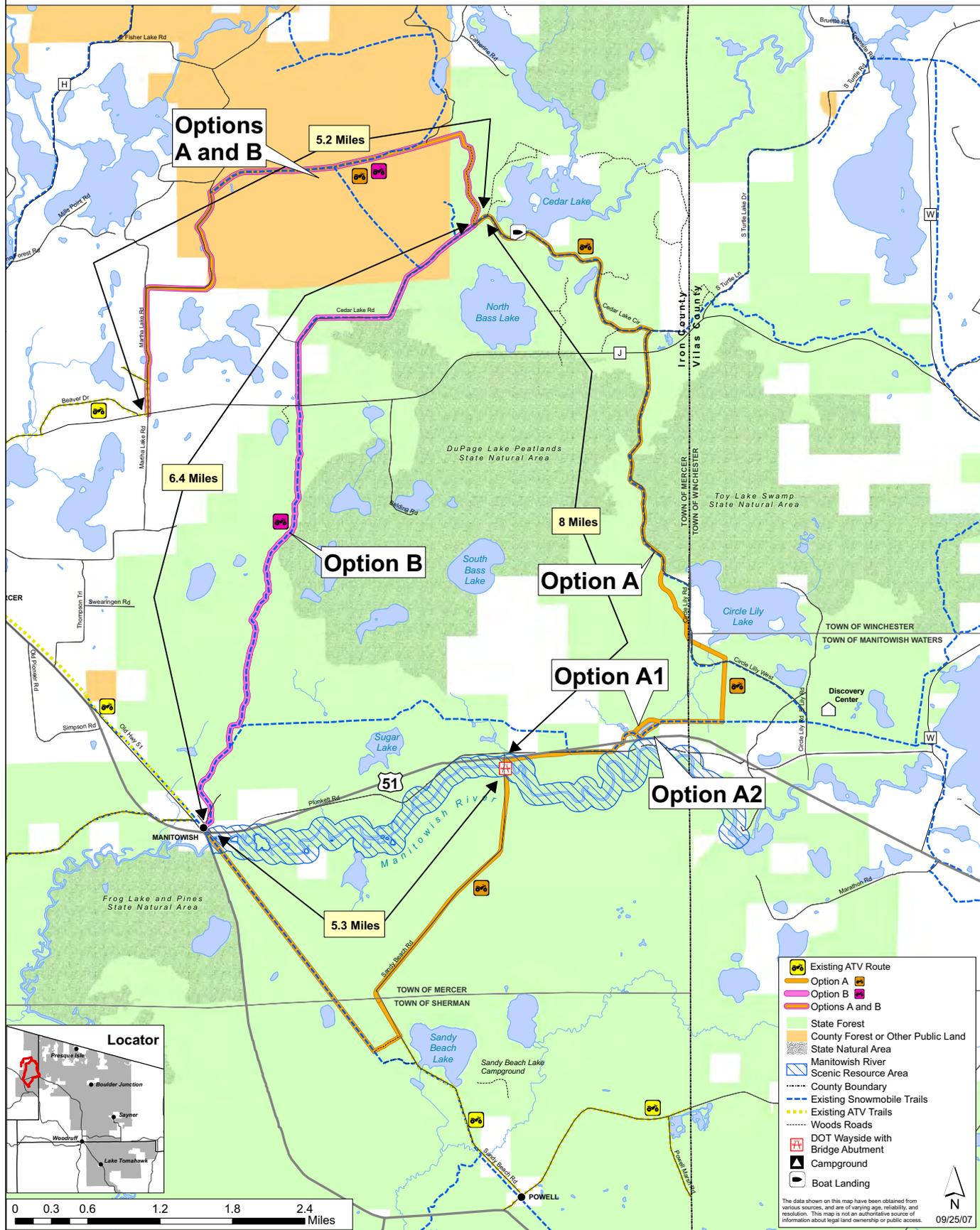
5.8 miles trail tread	\$ 203,000
Bridges and boardwalks	<u>\$3,108,700</u>
	\$3,311,700

Option B

4.7 miles trail tread	\$ 175,000
Boardwalks	<u>\$4,100,000</u>
	\$4,275,000

Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

Iron County ATV Trail Alternative Overview



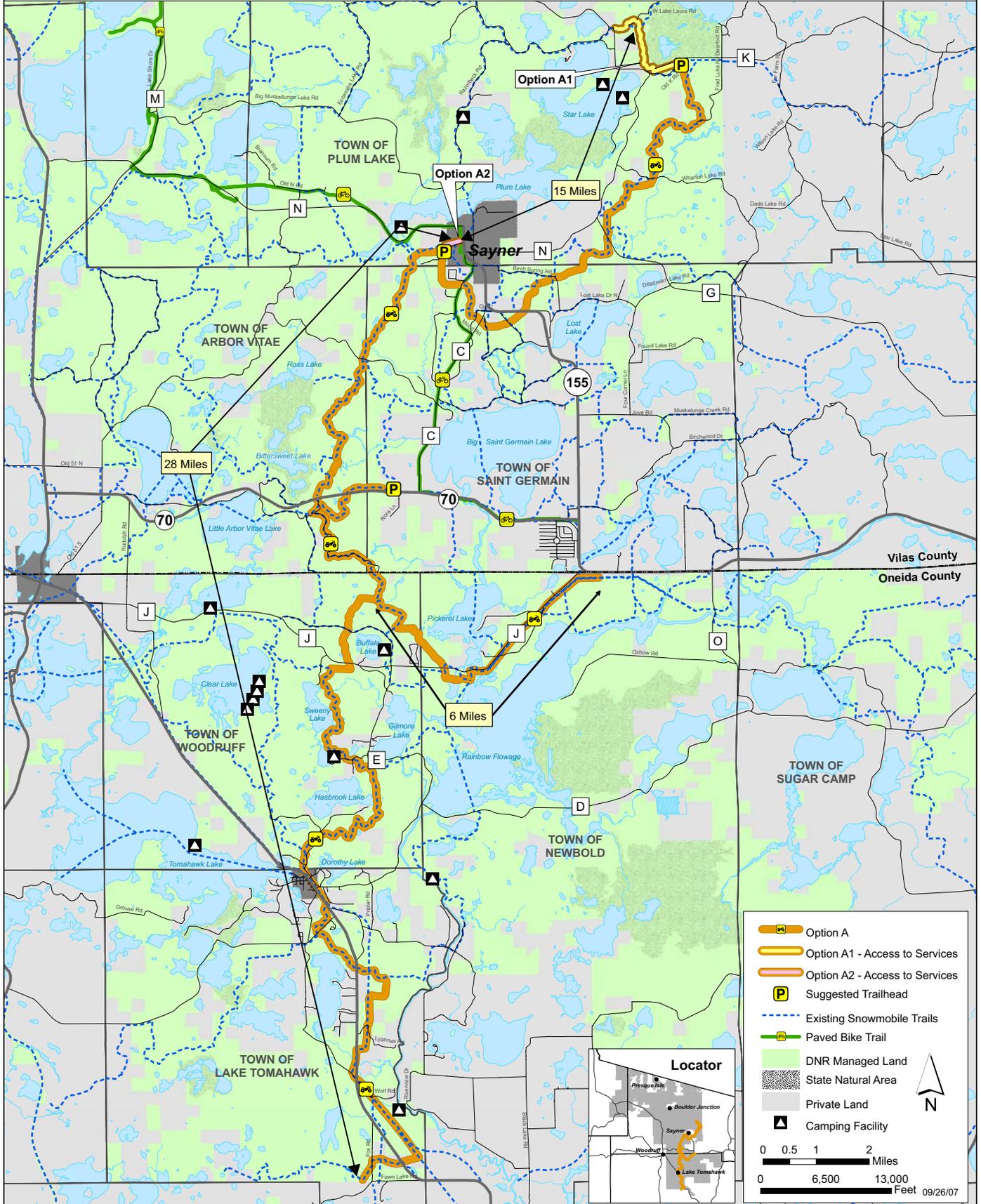
- Existing ATV Route
- Option A
- Option B
- Options A and B
- State Forest
- County Forest or Other Public Land
- State Natural Area
- Manitowish River
- Scenic Resource Area
- County Boundary
- Existing Snowmobile Trails
- Existing ATV Trails
- Woods Roads
- DOT Wayside with Bridge Abutment
- Campground
- Boat Landing

The data shown on this map have been obtained from various sources, and are of varying age, reliability, and resolution. This map is not an authoritative source of information about legal land ownership or public access.

09/25/07

Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

Vilas and Oneida Counties ATV Trail Alternative Overview



NORTHERN HIGHLAND AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST

ATV TRAIL ALTERNATIVES SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PARTICIPATION

JAN 2008

Introduction

The Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL) has a long tradition of public use, with current visitation estimated at more than two million visitors per year.

Throughout the forest's recent master planning process, one topic, the concept of designating an ATV trail within the NHAL State Forest, was a divided and emotional issue. Controversy began in the late 1990's, with discussion continuing through the development of the forest's master plan in 2005.

The current master plan was approved in October of 2005 with the ATV issue remaining unresolved. At that time, the Natural Resources Board (NRB) directed the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a citizen stakeholder advisory group to study the potential for sustainable ATV trails in the State Forest and return to them with a recommendation. A stakeholders group was established in 2006 and worked for more than a year, culminating in the release of their report, the Northern Highland-American Legion Stakeholders' Sustainable ATV Trail Alternatives Report.

This paper provides a summary of the public's participation and comments as they reacted to the NHAL Stakeholders' Sustainable ATV Trail Alternatives report in 2007.

Review of Public Involvement and Participation

The Department of Natural Resources worked for a balanced representation of public and private interests as they requested participation for the citizen stakeholder group. Of the organizations contacted, seventeen groups became involved and nominated representative members.

The stakeholder group scheduled 18 open meeting sessions and several field trips from April 2006 to July of 2007. During this time, an internet website documented their work, and also presented study papers, maps, meeting minutes, and related information for public viewing. To view this work, visit the website: http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/nhal/

In September of 2007, a report of the stakeholders' work was completed. Six hundred copies were published and distributed to individuals who expressed an interest in the ATV issue. Three public informational meetings were scheduled by the DNR from September 17-19 in Wausau, St. Germain, and Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin. Together, more than 700 citizens attended the meetings. Nine members of the media covered the event. DNR personnel, a UW Extension educator, and a member of the Natural Resources Board participated. Local year-round and seasonal residents, plus visitors from cities throughout Wisconsin attended. Public comments were collected and 1100 public input booklets were distributed.

A public comment period was held from September 15-November 1, 2007 to receive input on the ATV Stakeholders' Sustainable ATV Trail Alternatives report. In total, 2,893 comments were received. More than a thousand individuals completed public input forms online at an interactive web page. An equal number mailed public input booklets, letters, and notes. Some made contact by phone or personal visit, and 600 comments arrived by email. Input came from nearly 400 zip code locations throughout Wisconsin. Individual comments were also received from 22 other states and Ontario. One local petition with over 400 signatures, and two lake association resolutions were submitted.

A DNR technical team was engaged to evaluate the NHAL Stakeholders' Sustainable ATV Trail Alternatives Report and produce a feasibility /suitability study. The results of their work, the stakeholders'

report, and a summary of the public's comments will be presented to the Natural Resources Board for their evaluation in February, 2008.

The Issues

The public is strongly divided on whether or not to develop one or more ATV trails on the NHAL. A majority of the public comments received oppose the ATV trail alternatives, with some writers stating that “nothing positive” can be said for them. Many respondents felt that ATV use on the property would lead to natural resource damage, illegal use of ATVs on nearby private lands, and an inability and insufficient funds to enforce rules and monitor impacts. Some describe the issue as one of short-term enjoyment vs. long term preservation of something irreplaceable.

On the other hand, ATV enthusiasts expressed the hope that trail riding opportunities will be established in the state forest. These respondents feel that the state has an obligation to accommodate growing ATV demand. In addition, they feel that ATV trails on the property will expand local tourism to benefit the economy. They are anxious to expand ATV riding opportunities for citizens of Wisconsin, and believe adequate funding is available. They are optimistic about the potential to use already-disturbed corridors for trail development—primitive woods roads, abandoned railroad grades, and power line rights-of-way. These respondents felt that local clubs would be ready and willing to volunteer as trail ambassadors, safety educators, or for other tasks. Some acknowledge “negative growing pains” of an evolving sport, but feel problems can be overcome with adequate engineering, enforcement, and education.

“The Northwoods”

People describe the area in and around the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest as synonymous with “the Northwoods”—a place rich in character and ambiance. In their comments they use terms like “differentness” and “wilderness” to try to capture the unique quality they experience in this location. The phrase “peace and quiet” is repeated time and again as people describe this Northwoods quality as the key attraction for residents and visitors alike.

Some declare the Northwoods' uniqueness is rare in comparison to more developed areas of Wisconsin, and is diminishing in quantity and quality. They see ATV trail alternatives as a threat to the Northwoods character they have come to know and love and fear that allowing ATVs in the forest would permanently alter the character of the region

Quality of life is expressed as part and parcel of Northwoods appeal and attraction. Some say the concept of establishing an ATV trail in the NHAL spoils the mental image they associate with the state forest, and say this affects their mental and emotional health. They have concerns that noise and air pollution will affect the health and wellness of local residents. Some residents warn of ATV impacts year-round or during seasons when natural resources are most vulnerable. Others describe ATV trails as an invasion of privacy or a threat to their property rights.

Some Northwoods residents say the setting (Oneida, Vilas, Iron counties) is no longer rural and remote due to user conflict and confrontation, safety issues, congestion, and existing disturbance from a concentration of activities and resource development. They describe existing impacts from motorized uses—jet skis, snowmobiles, and illegal use of ATVs on the NHAL and private property and add that ATV trails will compound over-use and development.

The Northwoods region is described as a unique and long-established culture. Local residents say they are the “primary stakeholders” who are affected by changes to the area. They see the ATV issue as a question of social acceptance that affects all spectrums of society. Both resident and non-resident ATV enthusiasts say they simply want to experience the Northwoods by participating in their chosen sport. They value what

the Northwoods has to offer, and say that most riders respect and value the natural resources of the region—they do not want to be judged by the actions of a minority of irresponsible riders.

Access and Demand

Without a doubt, demand for ATV use is growing. Many comments discuss significant increases in ATV sales, registrations, and trail use. ATV riders are concerned that opportunities for trail development will decrease as public lands become more crowded and other activities compete for the same forest locations.

Those who support ATV trail alternatives say the issue is one of public access to a publicly-owned resource. ATV enthusiasts assert that they are taxpayers who also pay ATV registration fees and gas taxes—money that, they believe, should support their presence on public lands. They feel that public lands should offer multiple-use opportunities, particularly a property as large as the NHAL. County forest managers encourage the state forests to share in accommodating this demand.

Some ATVers view the NHAL ATV trail alternatives as a positive means of enhancing user satisfaction, with potential to offer other opportunities such as trail interpretation, rider education, or research. ATV enthusiasts want the opportunity to experience the forest and view forest resources—wildlife, flora, scenic vistas—while pursuing their individual sport. ATVers want to connect existing or future trail corridors to link counties and services. They seek opportunities for individuals, families, and group trail rides. Local riders want more trail miles available close to home to reduce trailering their machines. Some desire more motorized opportunity for aging recreationists and riders with disabilities.

Other motor sport enthusiasts, e.g. dual-sport motorcyclists, also express an interest in using any new trail corridors that are developed. Four-wheel drive truck users want to maintain the access they have to some forest corridors for hunting and other pursuits.

Economic Impacts

Many respondents cited economic development and tourism as reasons to develop ATV trails within the NHAL. Trail supporters tell of a need to expand tourism sales to supplement recent poor snowmobile seasons. The public speculates that both positive and negative impacts to local businesses and property values might occur from the development of these trails. While some local business owners desire ATV customers, others say ATVs are a threat to their livelihood as they market to clientele who prefer the quiet attraction of the Northwoods.

Some people caution that desire for tourism at any cost should not be the deciding factor for establishing an ATV trail. They discuss short-term economic gain versus long-term impact to communities, natural resources, character, and culture of the Northwoods. Others tell of a Northwoods market already saturated with tourists.

The public also discussed relative costs of ATV trail development. Some argue that infrastructure, including boardwalk, bridge, and trail construction, sustainable trail bed, and ongoing management, maintenance, or remediation, is excessive. Others question whether the economic benefits of an ATV trail outweigh other costs—potential risk to natural resources, cultural change to local communities, safety issues—and whether the trade-off is worthwhile. Increased funding and staffing for county law enforcement and state forest operations is a suggested need.

Environmental Quality

The most common concerns among public comments were the environmental impacts of ATV trail development and use. Numerous responses included news clippings that refer to cases of environmental damage from ATV abuse.

The public's list of potential environmental concerns include: unacceptable sound levels, aesthetic disturbance, invasive species introduction, air pollution from dust and engine exhaust, soil erosion and trail rutting, sedimentation of lakes and streams, disturbance of wildlife and nesting birds, habitat degradation, damage to trees and plant communities, and disruption of ecologically sensitive natural communities.

Although the stakeholder group made a concerted effort to locate trail alternatives that avoid the most sensitive areas of the forest, many people expressed a fear that ATV trail development could cause damage to those sensitive ecosystems and resources that are in close proximity to the trail. Specific areas of concern include wetlands, wildlife habitat, eagle and osprey nest sites, unique and protected native communities and adjacent natural areas, rare and sensitive species, and high quality lakes and streams.

Law Enforcement and Emergency Services

There is public concern that staff time and dollars would not be adequate for enforcement and trail maintenance should ATV trails be developed. Public comments note a poor track record of illegal ATV use, and say some riders are prone to wandering off designated trails. The public is also concerned about safety and liability. They refer to statistics of ATV injuries and deaths widely reported in the news. There is particular concern about ATV crossings of bike trails and highways. Northwoods residents worry ATV accidents will overburden local emergency services and volunteers.

Those supporting ATVs say negative conduct on trails can be addressed using ATV trail ambassadors, State Forest Rangers, DNR wardens, educational signage, and trail design. ATV organizations state that they have a trained cadre of trail patrol officers and safety instructors to assist in this effort.

User Conflict

Some comments state there are limits to public land development and use—that the NHAL State Forest can't be all things to all people. They question whether ATV use, an intensive form of recreation, is appropriate and compatible with public lands. Some propose putting ATV trails on private lands rather than public. Others say enough ATV trail miles are available elsewhere in counties and public forests throughout Wisconsin.

A key concern of some people is that a variety of outdoor pursuits could be affected by the activity of a single interest group. Numerous comments state that ATV trails will displace or conflict with existing state forest activities such as birding, camping, canoeing, kayaking, hiking, hunting, trout fishing, berry picking, walking, biking on established trails, and enjoying nature's tranquility.

Similarly, some comments predict that the presence of ATVs will drive away people who seek solitude and/or silent sports. One person stated, "The temptation is to site trails where they will cause the least conflict and this often is the last remaining silent area of the forest."

The importance of local ATV legislation was also noted. Vilas County prohibits the use of ATVs on town roads and county forest lands. In addition, a number of resolutions put forth by lake associations oppose ATV trails. Although the Vilas Co. referendum applied to county forest land, many feel the overall sentiment of voters is to have an ATV-free county.

ATV groups state that they are working to educate people to "follow" the rules. They say ATVs are now designed to be safer and quieter, and most machines have cleaner operating 4-cycle engines. ATV enthusiasts state that multi-use trails are possible, and forest users can learn to tolerate each other's activities.

Stewardship

Some public comments describe ATVing as an issue of long term stewardship of natural resources versus short term benefits for a select group. More than one individual questions how an ATV trail system would enhance the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. They encourage preserving wild and pristine areas of the forest and no motorized development as an alternative.

Some comments question whether ATV trails are compatible with the Department of Natural Resource's mission, master plan management designations, or the State's tradition of commitment to protecting wild resources. Some believe that intensive recreation within the state forest is in opposition to the original designation of the NHAL to protect northern watersheds.

Other Issues

ATV trail supporters state that a sustainable trail bed is possible if engineered properly, and say there are examples of this construction.

A number of people recommend pursuing opportunities for mutual cooperation and partnerships among recreational user groups for cost sharing, and trail, road, or wayside maintenance. Groups that may support this include snowmobile clubs, ATV clubs, town and county governments, DNR, DOT, or other agencies.

Another suggestion is to develop an ATV trail in sections over time to spread out costs, improve construction techniques, and ease social acceptance. The public asserts that trail inspection, monitoring, and evaluation are key to trail management and acceptance. To this effect, it is important that the state forest have trail opening and closing authority, and increased funding and staffing for enforcement and management. Seasonal use periods would help fit ATV use with hunting seasons and avoid snowmobile use conflicts.

Some respondents recommend exploring other locations for trails or confining ATVs to private lands where admission fees pay the way. Some comments declare the trail is not sustainable because it encourages use of non-renewable resources, gas and oil, and contributes to greenhouse gases and global pollution.

Trail-Specific Public Comments: Oneida/Vilas & Iron County Trail Alternatives

Oneida/Vilas ATV Trail Alternative

Positives:

- Less distance to travel and trailer to trails for local ATV enthusiasts
- Access to nearby camping, lakes, and other recreational pursuits
- Access to local business communities and services, Lake Tomahawk, and St. Germain
- Provides opportunities for ATVers to experience scenic forest areas where none currently exist
- Could be a start for future trail expansion north to south
- Uses established vehicle travel corridors
- Good effort by stakeholders to design a trail that avoids sensitive resources and locations
- Adds more miles to State ATV trails system
- Less bridge and boardwalk construction needed; fewer wetlands than Iron County alternative

Negatives:

- Water quality and fishery considerations at the crossing of Plum Creek, a Class A trout stream
- Strong opposition of many Vilas County residents

- Safety concerns about the number of highway crossings
- No link to existing trail systems
- Within audible range of several state campgrounds, wild lakes, and subdivisions
- Travels through sensitive ecosystems, including the Central Highlands and Star Lake Crescent Macrosites
- Proximity to Tomahawk Lake Hemlocks SNA, Plum Lake Hemlocks SNA, Bittersweet Lakes SNA, Lake Laura Hardwoods SNA
- Potential for user conflicts with diverse existing recreational uses
- Potential conflict with St. Germain Bike trail and existing uses on the Highway 47 rail corridor

Iron County ATV Trail Alternative

Positives:

- Offers scenic views and opportunities for ATVerS to experience wild country
- Provides access to the Iron County trail system
- Provides access to Mercer, services, and facilities
- Location uses mostly existing corridors and snowmobile routes
- Expands riding choices in the Mercer /Manitowish Waters area
- Iron County already embraces ATVs
- Trail loops and connects to established ATV trails
- Disturbs less total forest area than the Vilas/Oneida trail alternative

Negatives:

- Crosses the Manitowish River, designated as a scenic corridor and “outstanding resource water”
- Numerous wetland crossings required
- Many bridges and boardwalks needed with expensive engineering
- Nearness to Discovery Center activities
- Risk of introducing invasive species to numerous wetland communities
- Potential user conflict with use of Highway 51 wayside
- Travels near various State Natural Areas (SNAs) including: Du Page Lake and Pines, Du Page Lake Peat lands, Toy Lake Cedar and Ash Swamp, North Bass Lake, and Hemlock and Bog SNA

The Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest Sustainable ATV Trail Stakeholder Group Trail Alternatives

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest Sustainable ATV Trail Stakeholder Group offers the following ATV trails for consideration by the Natural Resources Board and the citizens of Wisconsin. Over the past year, this citizen advisory group met to discuss relevant issues regarding all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trails on the state forest and explore potential locations for these trails. The products of their labor are contained in this document that they produced for the Northern Highland-American Legion (NH-AL) State Forest in Iron, Oneida, and Vilas Counties.

The Stakeholder Group envisions these ATV trail alternatives could be a model for other ATV trails in the state. Additionally, the process the Stakeholder Group undertook and their discussion of design, construction, and operation of these trails may be a blueprint for Wisconsin organizations and agencies who want to build new trails or re-design existing trails to be sustainable.

The Stakeholder Group also envisions the design of their process to be an avenue to improve public relations and show skeptics that there is a better way to approach difficult issues while sustaining economic, environmental, and social aspects within a community.

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Brief historical sketch.
Organizations and participants.
- Pg. 3** **Narrative of the Stakeholder Group's process**
An overview of the Stakeholder Groups' working and decision making processes
- Pg. 6** **Issues List**
Documentation of the many issues brought to the Stakeholder Groups attention and addressed during the course of the Stakeholder Groups' work
- Pg. 7** **Maps & Trail Notes – Iron County ATV Trail Alternative**
- Pg. 13** **Maps & Trail Notes – Vilas and Oneida Counties ATV Trail Alternative**
- Pg. 20** **Participants' Pros and Cons Statements**
Statements representing personal opinions of some of the stakeholder group members regarding specific aspects of the suggested trails.
- Pg. 43** **Photos**
Examples of sustainable ATV trail construction that the Stakeholders Group envisions would be useful for the development of suggested trails.

INTRODUCTION

While a majority of issues and conflicts were resolved during the master planning process, the use and designation of trails for the purpose of ATVs remained without consensus. The approved master plan for the Northern Highland-American Legion (NH-AL) State Forest called for a careful assessment of potential areas suitable to sustainably support ATV use.

“To aid in the trail siting process the Department will establish a stakeholder group to make recommendations to the Department on potential, suitable ATV trail sites and routes. The stakeholder group will be established within six months of the date of the approved plan. The Department will consider the stakeholder group’s recommendations when making a determination of the appropriate designation of an ATV trail or trails on the NH-AL. If no suitable sites are found to be feasible, no trail will be designated.”, NH-AL master plan, page 166.

Development of the Stakeholder Group and their work:

- October, 2005 – NH-AL State Forest Master Plan approved
- April, 2006 – Citizen stakeholder participants were appointed by Chief State Forester (Nominees submitted by a range of organizations representing public and private interests.)
- June, 2007 – ATV Stakeholder Group completed their work.
- July/August, 2007 – Stakeholders’ documents to be published and presented to the Department of Natural Resources and made available to the public

Participating Organizations	Representatives*
Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs	Bill Schumann
County Forests Association	John Bilogan
Environmentally Concerned Citizens of the Lakeland Area	Norm Poulton
Iron County Board	Tom Thompson
Iron County Chamber of Commerce	Phyllis O'Brien
Lac du Flambeau Tribe	Carl Edwards
Minocqua-Arbor Vitae-Woodruff Area Chamber of Commerce	Kari Canfield
Northwoods Citizens for Responsible Stewardship	Sue Drum
Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council	Dave Wenninger
Oneida County Board	Matt Matteson
Rhineland Area Chamber of Commerce	Joe Brauer
Vilas County Alliance of All -Terrain Vehicle Clubs	Mike Musiedlak
Vilas County Board	Ron DeBruyne
Wisconsin All -Terrain Vehicle Association	Randy Harden
Wisconsin Conservation Congress	Ken Anderson
Wisconsin State Trails Council	Dave Phillips
Wisconsin Towns Association	Arlyn Helm
Support and Development	
Wisconsin DNR – NH-AL State Forest Superintendent, retired	Dennis Leith
University of Wisconsin Extension – Meeting Facilitator	Bill Klase
Wisconsin DNR – NH-AL State Forest Superintendent	Steve Petersen
Wisconsin DNR – NH-AL Recreation Supervisor	Bob Schepper
Wisconsin DNR – Regional Program Manager	Tim Miller
Wisconsin DNR – Master Planning Program Assistant	Bob Dall

* Participants’ views may not be the official position of the organization they represent.

ATV Stakeholders Group Narrative

1. The Natural Resources Board charge for the Stakeholder Group and the Group's interpretation of that charge

This ATV Stakeholder Group was charged by the Natural Resources Board (NRB) with exploring trail opportunities on the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHALSF). The Group's interpretation of this directive was to explore for sustainable trail opportunities throughout the forest and that there could be potentially multiple trail locations. Additionally, the Group embraced the notion of finding trails that connect to existing ATV trail networks, but were open to potential trail locations where no connection existed. Where there was no trail network connection, an emphasis was placed on connections to communities and links to services. While a program to monitor and evaluate on-going trail use may be essential to successful trail management, the majority of stakeholders felt this went beyond the scope of their mission or charge, and the time available to research the issue.

The Group agreed upon a set of protocols for their functioning (i.e. a group charter that included meeting protocols, sideboards for discussion, etcetera) as a working group and the process for investigating trail opportunities.

2. Process for finding trail locations



The Group decided upon a process for identifying and evaluating trail locations. Group members would suggest specific locations for the entire group to consider. These suggestions would be projected onto a screen utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software that overlaid road and trail maps with natural features and management prescriptions defined during the previous master planning process for the NHALSF. All members would then have an opportunity to question the reasoning for the suggested locations and explore alternatives as they saw fit. As the suggestions were refined using information gleaned from the GIS layers and insights from NHALSF staff and local experts, the suggested

location would become an alternative worth further exploration. This additional exploration would include conversations with local elected officials and affected groups, and field visits to the sites for a detailed evaluation. Following these steps and overcoming any potential or existing roadblocks, the Group would declare the investigation complete and move on to other locations within the NHALSF.

3. Criteria utilized

To evaluate potential trail locations, the Group utilized established criteria from, "Guidance for All-Terrain Vehicle Use on Department Lands, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, January, 2005".

These criteria include:

1. Compatibility with existing uses of the state forest
2. Potential effects on the natural resources
3. Safety
4. Social Considerations
5. Economic Considerations
6. Cooperation with local groups and units of government
7. Management/administration of new trails

Emphasis was placed on locating "least intrusive" trail alternatives to utilize, wherever possible, existing roads, motorized trails, or areas already disturbed to minimize further forest fragmentation.

The group agreed to adopt a criterion that would strive to limit additional motorized use in the NHALSF by creating trails that combine, where possible, compatible motorized uses such as snowmobiling and ATVing and to close existing motorized segments that have viable alternatives in order to limit conflicts with residents and other users and to reduce fragmentation of the forest. The group acknowledged that, in some instances, access to other motorized users would need to be maintained for other purposes like tribal treaty rights or forest management.

Additional criteria the Group considered were whether the potential trails fit in to the existing master plan directives and whether the potential trails connected to an existing ATV trail network.

4. Open process and public communications

The Group decided to be as open as possible in their interactions with the public and the media during this process. The charter the Group agreed to follow allowed for limited time for the public to address the Group at the end of almost every meeting. Additionally, Group members were provided all of the letters that came to the DNR regarding the trails they were working on, and evaluated the issues raised in those letters as part of their process. Members of the group attended town board meetings and honored invitations to attend meetings with local organizations to discuss the trail locations being considered and to get feedback on these proposals. Local and statewide media were welcomed to attend Group meetings and the Group leader was always at their disposal for comments and to check facts. Finally, a web site was established to keep the public informed of the Groups progress and process. The site contained the most recent maps that were being worked on by the group, minutes from all the meetings, and organizational background for this process.

Among the public comments received by the stakeholders group, many expressed concern over the threat of off-trail use and potential for harm that is perceived. The Stakeholders Group recognizes that on various portions of any ATV trail there exists temptation for off-trail excursions that need to be prevented by way of trail planning, engineering, and development. The majority of the group felt this issue was not in their charge and leave it for future trail planners to recognize and mitigate.

5. Group process and decision-making

Throughout this process, new issues regarding potential trail locations were brought to the Group either by Group members or by the public. These issues would be explored and evaluated to the extent possible by the Group given the resources and time available to them. In many cases, this meant a field investigation, consultation with local and statewide experts on that particular issue, and/or discussion with the public or their elected representatives. Though this process was extensive and the exploration of issues and alternatives was quite thorough, the Group realized that they could not reach a consensus on the potential trail locations ultimately submitted to the NRB.

There were two general reasons why some members could not agree with ATV trails on the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest. These members believed that:

1. Even if ATVs stay on the trail, there would still be a negative impact on the surrounding Ecosystem. Other general conflicts are noted in the group's Pros and Cons statements.
2. ATVs will conflict with other users of the forest.

With an inability to reach a consensus in mind, the Group decided to generate a list of the pros and cons for each alternative and a list of the issues addressed throughout the process to demonstrate the thoroughness with which they undertook their charge. Any member could submit pros and/or cons for each alternative and these would be included without any editing or discussion among the members. The Group developed the list of issues they addressed from the pros and cons that were submitted and from a review of discussions the Group held during their meetings.

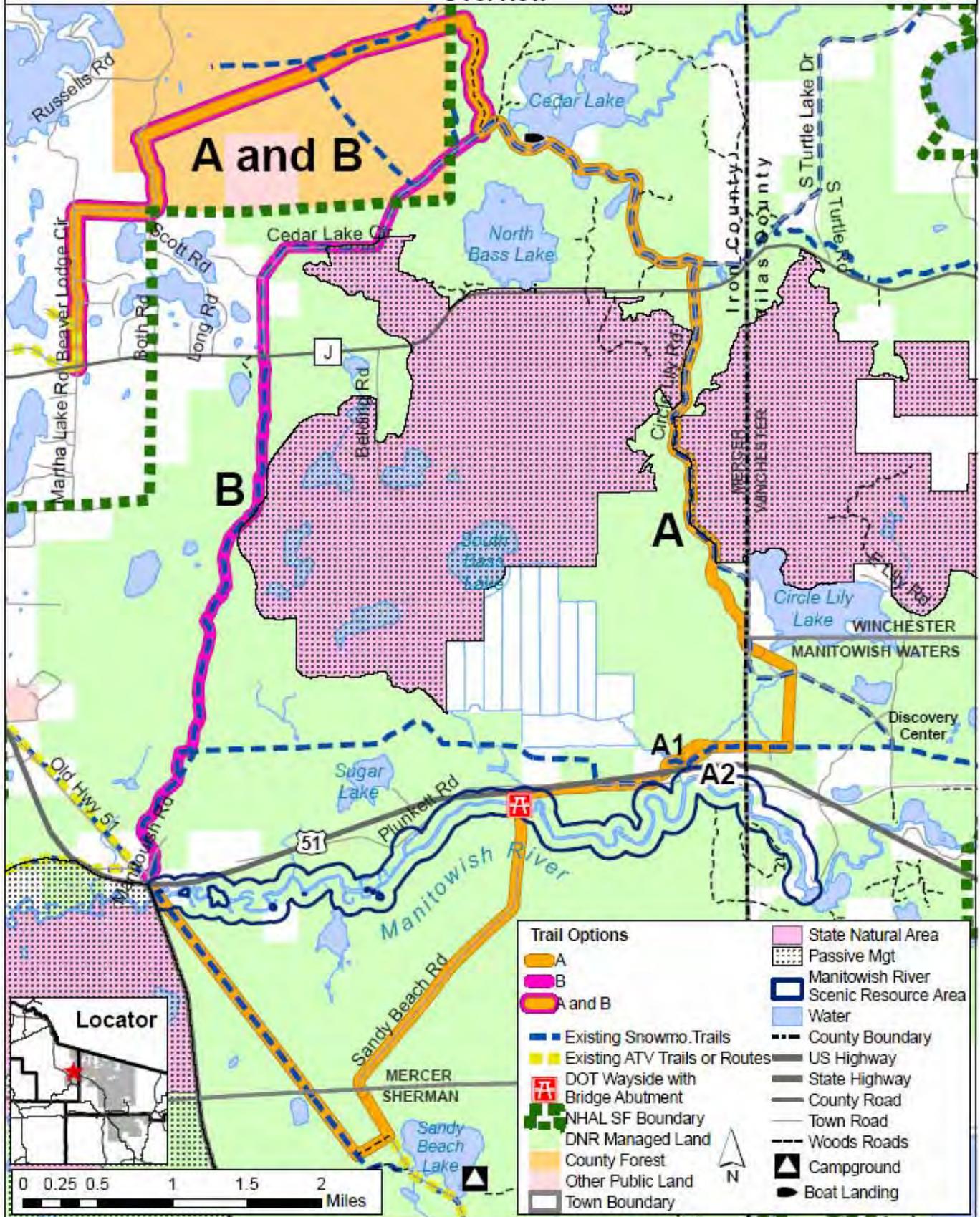
Following are maps and accompanying trail notes to provide a brief descriptive review of the trail alternatives and the reasoning behind locating them where the Group did.

List of Issues Addressed by the Stakeholders

- Use of already disturbed corridors - town roads, woods roads, abandoned railroad grades, snowmobile trails, power line right of ways
- Compliance with management plan prescriptions
- Impacts on existing uses – non-motorized use of Manitowish River, Discovery Center hiking trails, town roads, camp sites, snowmobile trails, biking and hiking trail on abandoned railroad grade near Lake Tomahawk, paved biking and hiking trails, motorized use of existing woods roads and snowmobile trails,
- Connections to existing trail networks
- Use of existing infrastructure - wayside facilities, parking, bridges and bridge foundations, roads, abandoned railroad grades, road and highway crossings,
- Areas where permits would be required – wetlands, bridge
- Coordination with local snowmobile groups
- Cooperation and coordination with local ATV organizations
- Consultation with state and local units of government – use of wayside, use of roads, travel within densely populated regions, connections to businesses, travel through town centers,
- Exploration of alternative directions and avenues for locating trails
- Economic impacts to local communities – positive and negative
- Enforcement of conduct on trail – trail ambassadors, State Forest Rangers, DNR wardens, educational signage
- Costs of trail development, maintenance, and remediation
- Impacts on ecology – wetland functioning, wildlife habitat, eagle and osprey nests, unique and protected native communities,
- Education opportunities – possibilities for education e.g. interpretive stops and trails such as at Sweeney Lake Hemlocks or wetland vistas, trail safety and rider training instructors
- Targeted trail users – families
- User experience or satisfaction, expanding recreation opportunities for motorized use
- Potential affects on neighboring private landowners
- Opportunities for ATV trail research or other studies of ATV impacts
- Air quality and sound levels
- Aesthetic considerations at trail crossings e.g. at Manitowish River wayside
- Opportunities for mutual benefits and partnerships among recreational user groups for cost sharing, and trail, road or wayside maintenance e.g. snowmobile, ATV clubs; town governments, D.O.T., DNR
- Assistance from user (ATV) groups with trail patrols, education and safety, maintenance and development, funding and grant writing
- Links to existing or future-proposed ATV trail systems
- Law enforcement needs – Add a recreational officer, increase county law enforcement, and increase funding fore enforcement and staff on state forest.
- Invasive species
- Seasonal use period – to fit with hunting seasons and to avoid winter snowmobile use conflicts
- Development costs
- Trail inspection, monitoring, and evaluation
- Sustainable trail bed construction techniques and engineering
- Local landowners – positive and/or negative affect, reroutes to avoid new housing areas and existing private ownerships
- Limitations to trail siting – developments having taken place since beginning of master planning or authorized under the old plan, e.g. bike trails in right-of-way, that limit siting an ATV trail
- “Growing pains” of an evolving sport
- Land use agreements – existing
- Access for disabled – amenities or infrastructure designed for older riders or those with disabilities
- Vilas Co. referendum – discussed its wording and intent at length
- Public comments – received many unsolicited emails, calls, letters and meeting visits. A process was used for the ATV Stakeholders group to share input that was relevant to their work.
- Tribal access and hunting seasons
- Affects of ATV trail on local towns and business
- Insurance and liability
- Maintenance
- Trail opening and closing authority
- General costs of bridge and trail construction

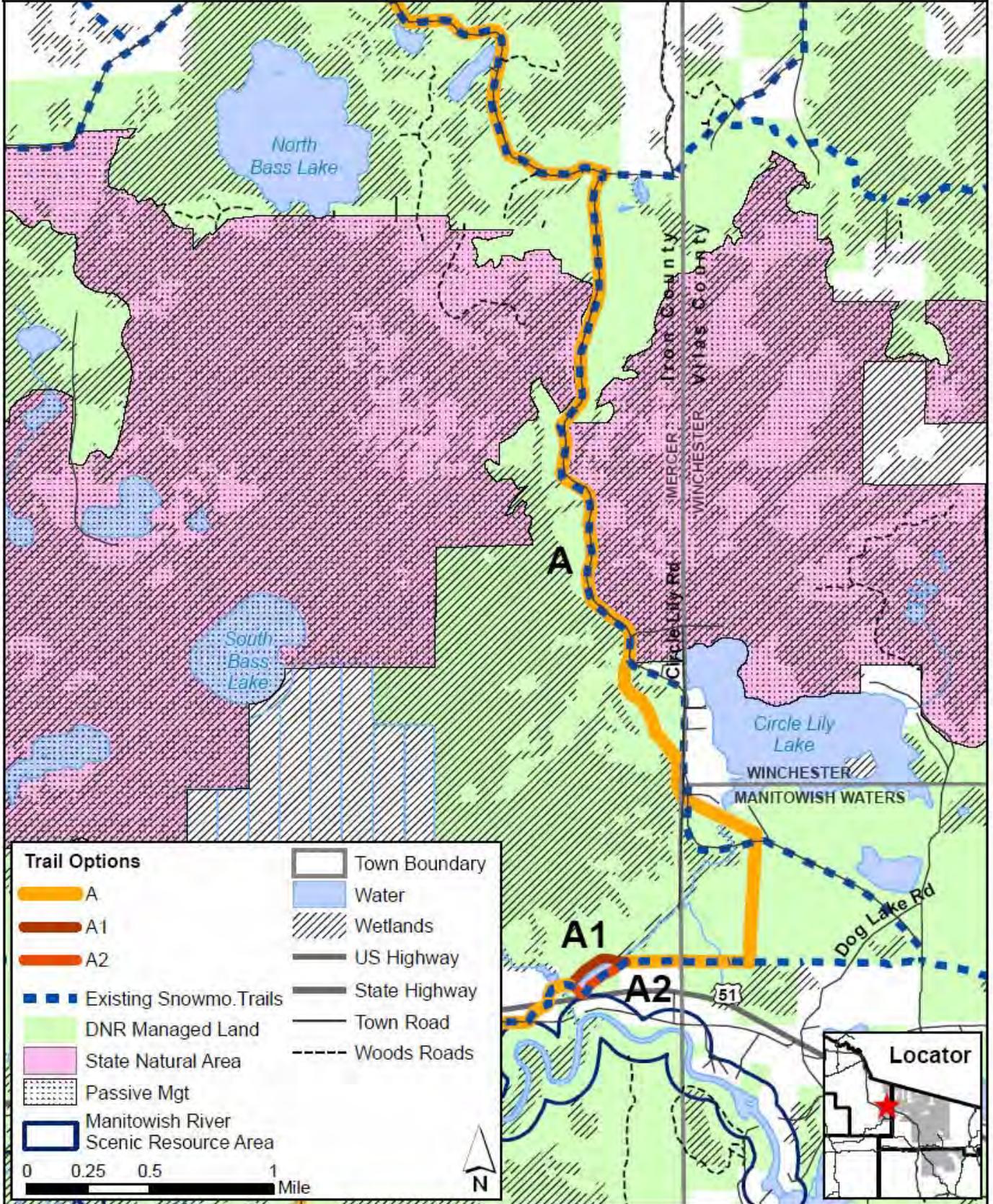
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Iron County Alternative With Options
 Overview

08/02/07



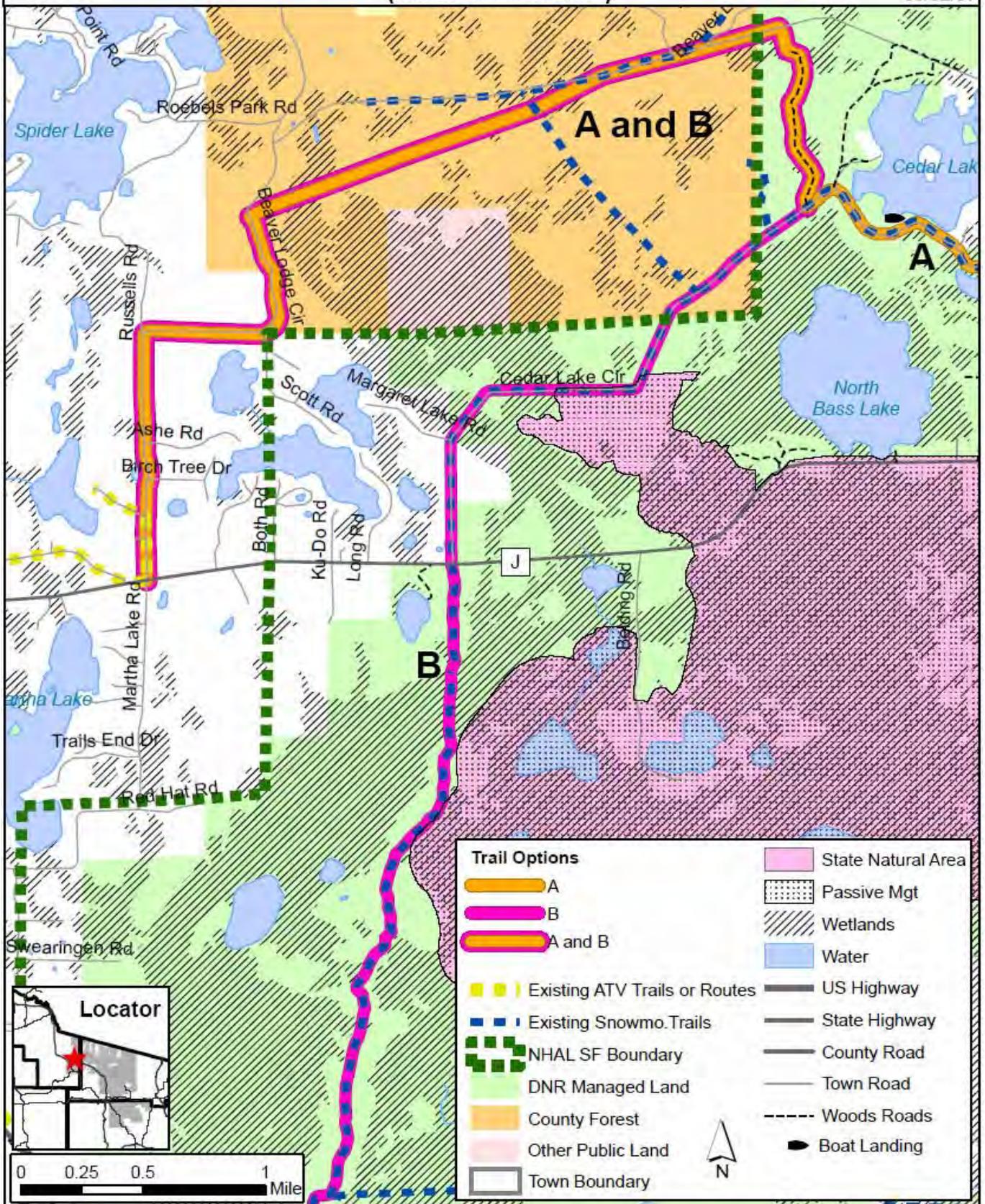
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Iron County Alternative With Options
 (Eastern Portion)

08/02/07



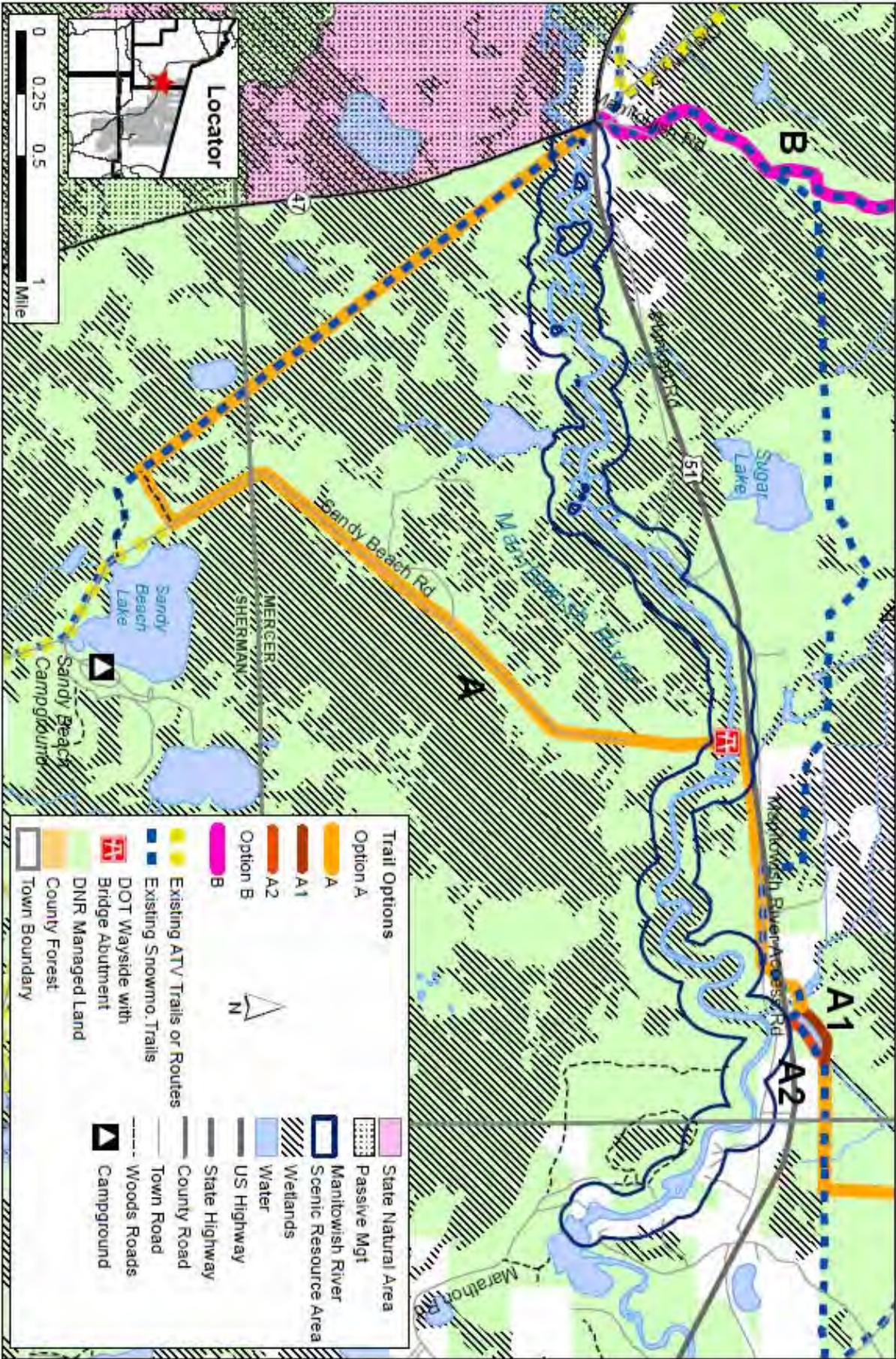
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Iron County Alternative With Options
 (Northern Portion)

08/02/07



Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
Iron County Alternative With Options
 (Southern Portion)

08/02/07



ATV Stakeholders' Review of Iron County Trail Alternative –

The following trail notes document key locations and issues of discussion, but are not intended as an exhaustive description of the entire trail corridor.

Trail Notes Include:

- Considerations for choosing a particular trail, corridor, or crossing
- Locations that were avoided to eliminate areas of concern
- Justification for choosing or not choosing particular locations
- Suggested alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed

General statements

- Numerous efforts were made to select trail routes that were “least intrusive” to the environment and to maximize use of existing corridors and public lands.
- The Dept. of Natural Resources maintains trail closure authority and the property superintendent may use discretion for opening or closing trails related to trail conditions or impacts of use.

Iron County

Trail overview –

- Potential trail length is approximately 18 trail miles.
- Suggested trail-head locations: One possible location would be to expand an area near the Highway 51, Wisconsin Department of Transportation wayside. Proposed trail-heads would be on state land.
- Trail links include the Iron County ATV trail system, the Town of Mercer and available services.

South of Highway 51, Manitowish River Crossing

Considerations –

- The location is a couple of hundred feet from State Highway 51 with paved access to the river via an existing Wisconsin Department of Transportation Highway 51 wayside.
- This crossing is the location of a previous bridge. A concrete abutment is still in place and visible on south side.
- An existing town road runs south from the bridge abutment on state forest land.
- The crossing is perpendicular to river so that travel through scenic management area is the shortest distance.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed -

- The State of Michigan used a specially engineered bridge for a similar crossing of the Cedar River. A “clear-span” bridge construction may be useful for this location. (A photo example of this type of construction is shown below.)

South of Manitowish River

Considerations –

- The trail travels some distance along a town road (Sandy Beach Road) and follows an existing logging road to an abandoned railroad grade /snowmobile corridor.
- The trail follows rail corridor northwest to snowmobile trestle, crossing near intersection of highways 47 and 51.
- The trail corridor links to Iron County ATV trail system at this location.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

- Bridge, boardwalk or roadbed construction would be needed to cross one low portion of the old rail bed.

Corridor north of Highway 51 and “Chuck’s Bar” property

Considerations -

- The proposed corridor follows existing snowmobile corridor /primitive road on state forest land.
- This business is for sale but the landowner is supportive of crossing their property to access a trail corridor.
- This alternative would link north to Highway J east of Mercer and would link to Iron County forest land and the Iron County ATV System at its southern end.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

This trail alternative would provide an ATV trail corridor that shortens the overall distance of the ATV trail loop yet connects to Iron County without crossing the Manitowish River. A large wet area exists here so it could be costly to engineer. This would require additional research.

North of Highway 51 and wayside

Considerations –

- Traveling east of the wayside a new trail corridor would need to be created up to an existing road, crossing to the north side of Highway 51 and continuing to the east.
- The trail would utilize existing snowmobile trail corridor, highway crossings, and bridge.
- A short bridge over a steep embankment would need to be constructed to route trail around one private land parcel to continue along a utility corridor.
- Boardwalk would be needed to cross a short wet portion of the utility corridor.
- Existing woods /logging roads and a short segment of new trail construction leads trail north through state forest land to a crossing of Circle Lily Road and links to another utility corridor. One short bridge would be needed to cross a narrow drainage along this route.
- The trail corridor was chosen to avoid traveling east toward Discovery Center activities area.
- The trail corridor could allow for existing snowmobile trail to be removed from Circle Lily Road and placed on state land.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

An alternate route around the north and east side of Circle Lily Lake was explored but not chosen so to avoid a State Natural Area.

Circle Lily Road segment

Considerations -

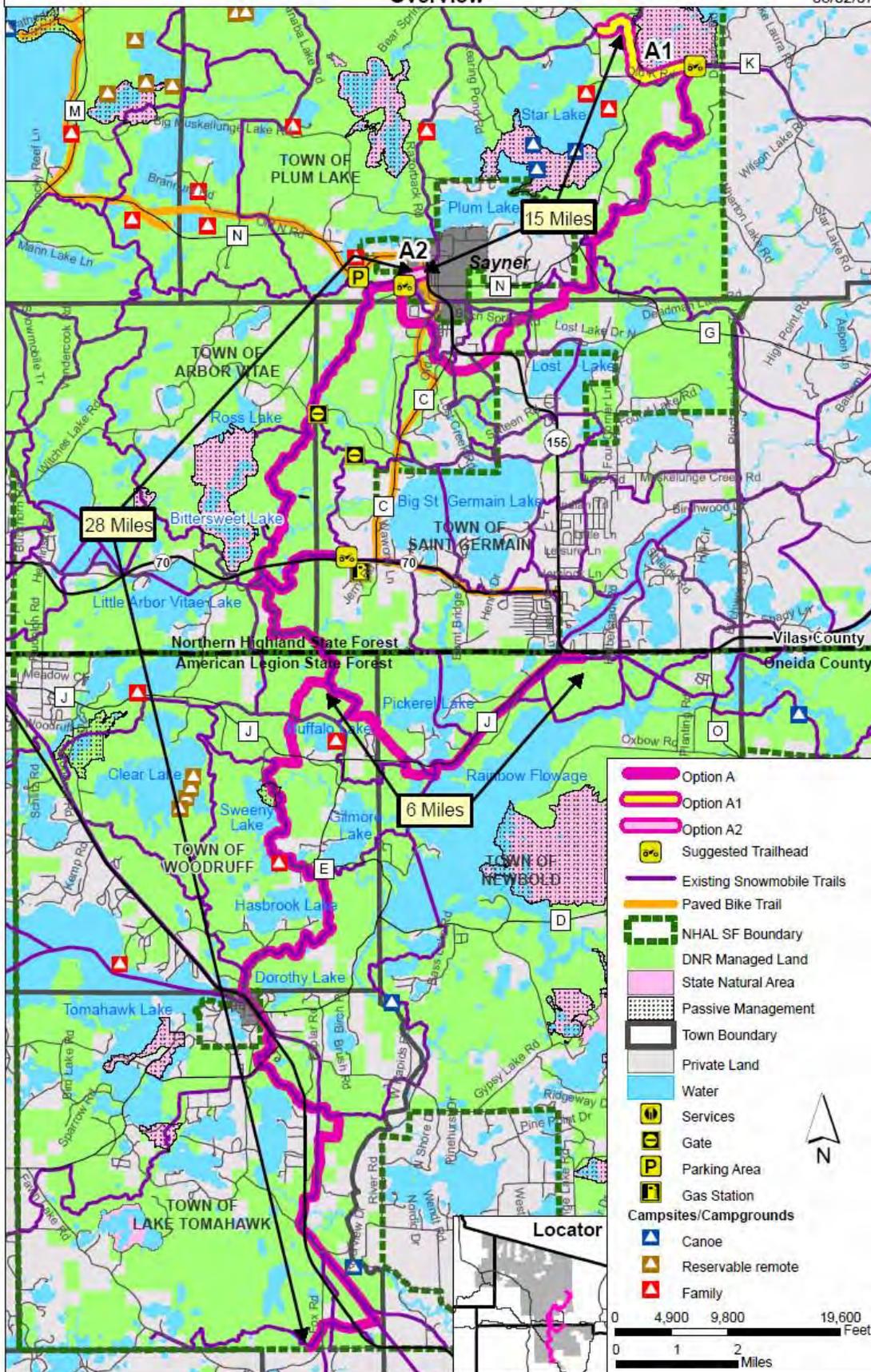
- Private ownerships, paved road and wetland are encountered where the trail again meets Circle Lily Road as it travels to the west.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed -

- Boardwalk or bridge could be constructed on the wetland side of the road (est. 800') to avoid paved road, skirt private ownerships and to connect to upland state forest land.
- From this point the trail heads north through state forest land and along Circle Lily Road, then crosses County Highway J and heads northwest to connect with Iron County Forest.
- The trail would travel through the Iron County Forest traveling west then south and connect to the existing Iron County ATV trail system at Beaver Lodge Circle providing an access route to the town of Mercer.

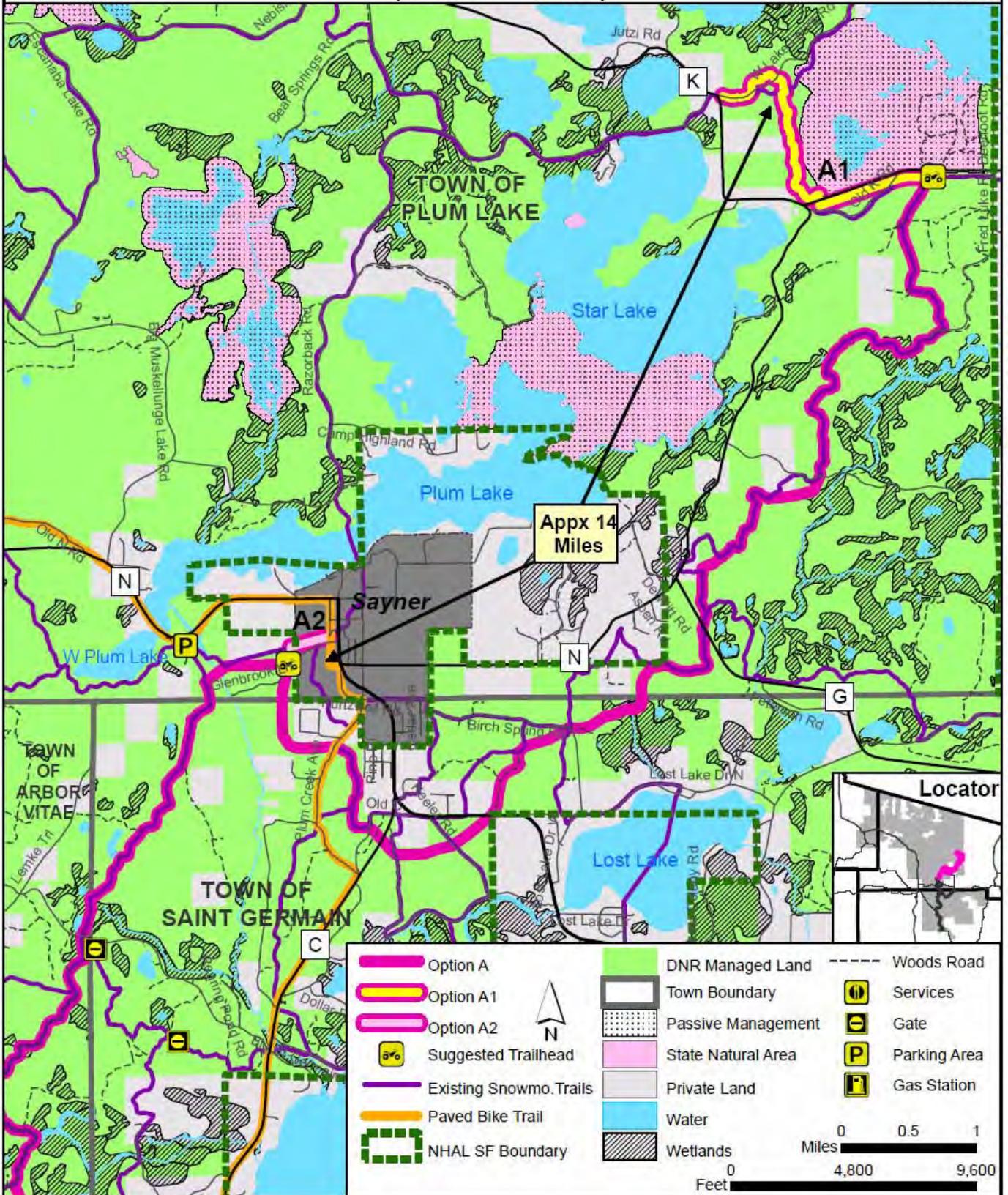
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Vilas and Oneida County Alternative With Options
 Overview

08/02/07



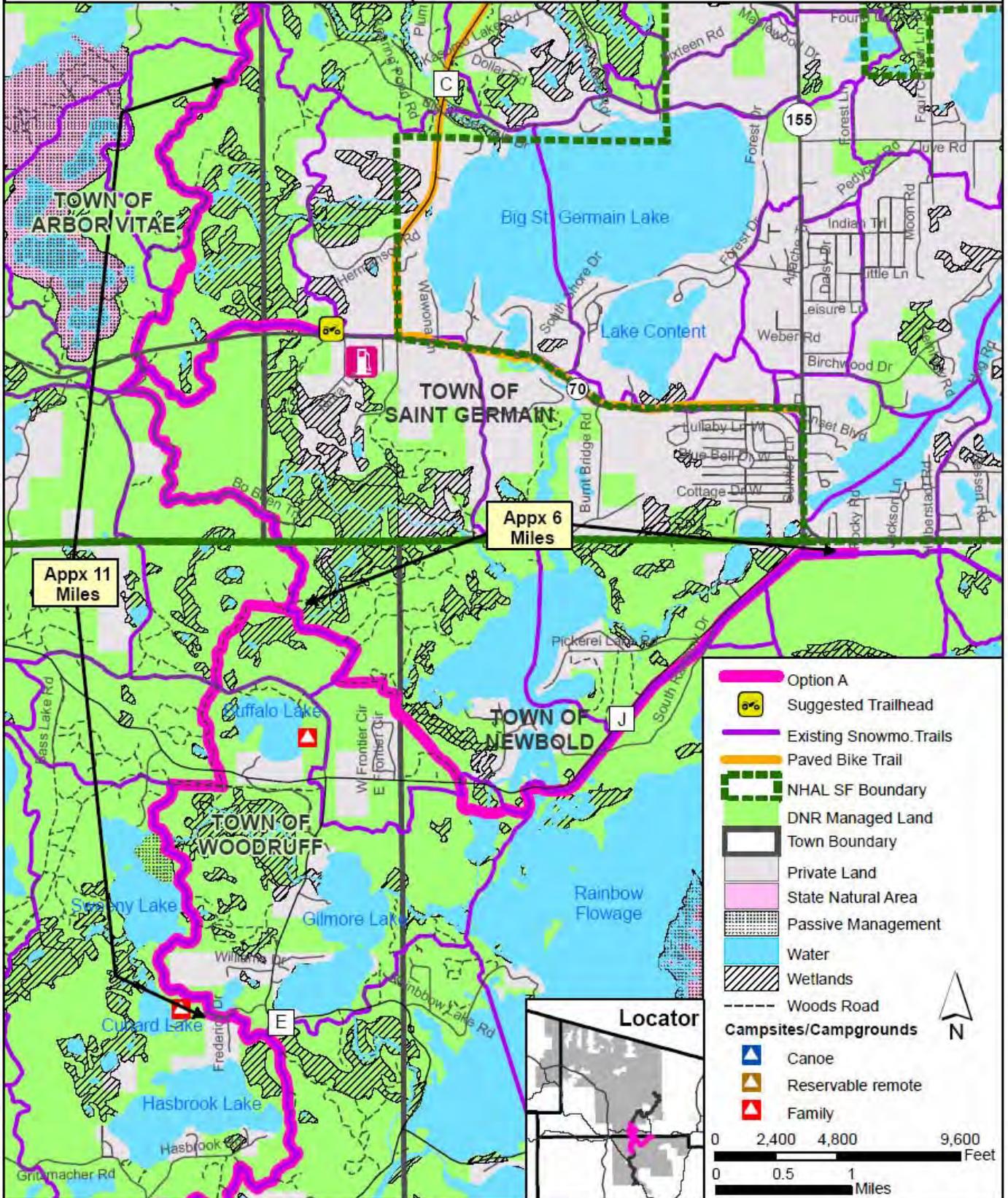
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
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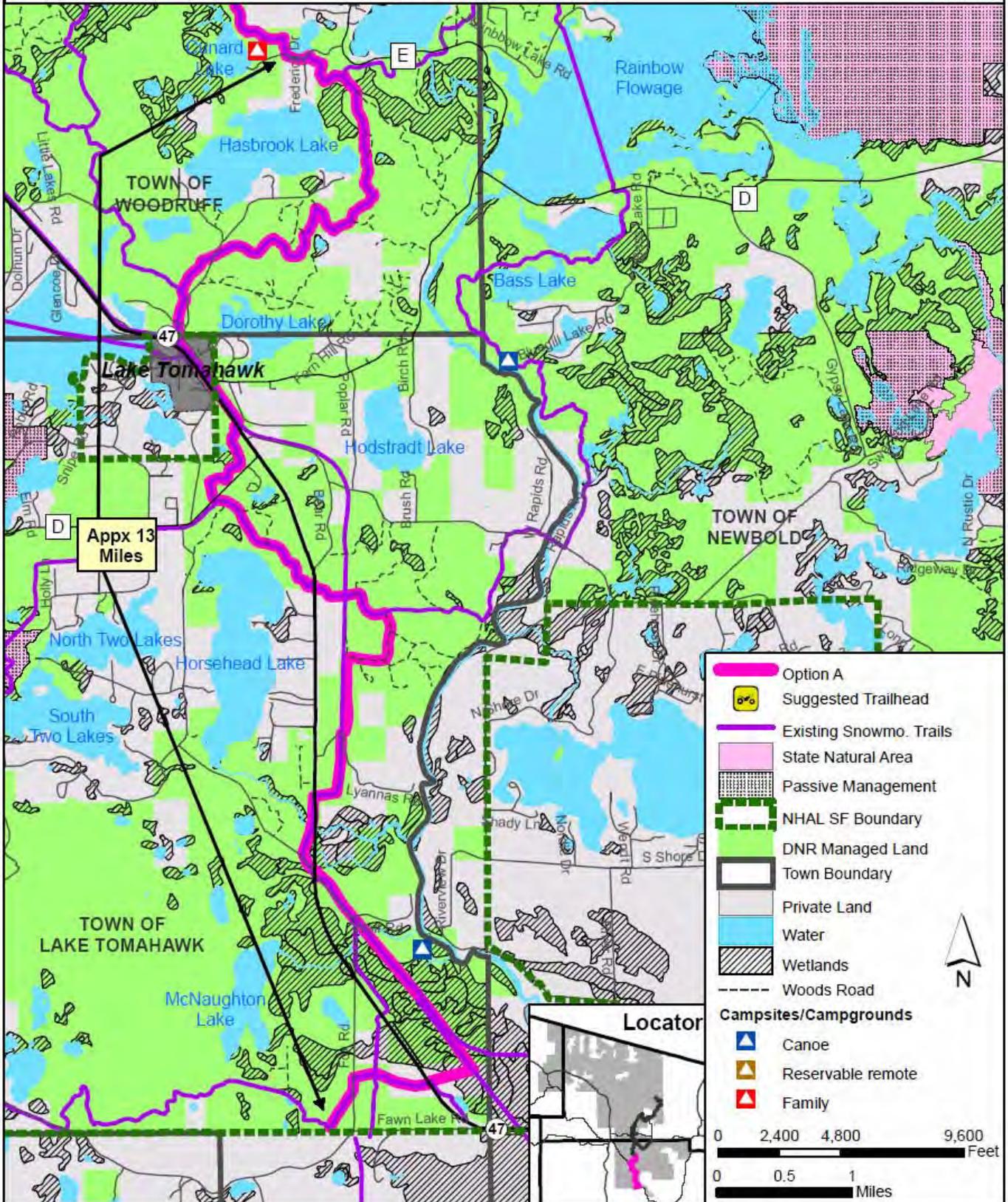
Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Vilas and Oneida County Alternative With Options
 (Central Portion)

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Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest
 ATV Stakeholders Map
 Vilas and Oneida County Alternative With Options
 (Southern Portion)

08/02/07



ATV Stakeholders' Review of Vilas and Oneida Counties ATV Trail Alternative –

The following trail notes document key locations and issues of discussion, but are not intended as an exhaustive description of the entire trail corridor.

Trail notes include:

- Considerations for choosing a particular trail, corridor, or crossing
- Locations that were avoided to eliminate areas of concern
- Justification for choosing or not choosing particular locations
- Suggested alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed

General statements

- Numerous efforts were made to select trail routes that were “least intrusive” to the environment and to maximize use of existing corridors and public lands.
- The Dept. of Natural Resources maintains trail closure authority and the property superintendent may use discretion for opening or closing trails related to trail conditions or impacts of use.

Trail overview –

- Proposed trail length is approximately 44 trail miles through state forest and county forest.
- Suggested trail-head location include: Lake Tomahawk, Sayner, Star Lake, St. Germain. Proposed trail-heads would be on state land.
- The trail links to a possible future Oneida County ATV trail.
- It links communities of Lake Tomahawk, St. Germain, Sayner and Star Lake and associated services.
- The majority of the trail follows existing corridors on state owned land, woods roads, some town roads, snowmobile trail, abandoned rail bed and utility corridor.
- If approved, different trail alternatives could be developed in phases.
- Potential exists for interpretive, informational, educational areas on specific locations of the proposed trail along with rest areas.

South of the community of Lake Tomahawk

Lyannas Road to County Highway D, east of Highway 47.

Considerations -

- The rail corridor is signed and used for biking and walking.
- An existing land agreement is held by Oneida County Biking and Walking Trails Council.
- Numerous private drives and road crossings exist.

Alternatives and/or issues addressed –

- The Stakeholders Group alternately sited a corridor on existing logging roads on state land.
- The group explored use of existing road beds and snowmobile trail routes to avoid conflict with existing uses and ownerships.
- The Town of Lake Tomahawk is supportive of using town roads for ATV routes if needed.

Suggestion –

- The Stakeholder group proposes a title search to sort out trail corridor ownerships south of Lake Tomahawk.

North of Lake Tomahawk

Considerations –

- This corridor was chosen because it is currently open as a travel corridor for trucks, licensed vehicles.
- The corridor is somewhat remote from concentrated existing recreation and private ownerships.
- A route was chosen to avoid congestion at the Rainbow Flowage to the east
- The trail would remain open to existing vehicle uses to maintain access for hunting season, tribal access and other users.
- The trail was routed away from eagle and osprey nesting sites.
- The trail would follow portion of paved state forest road to skirt Cunard campground location, then follow woods road near Sureshot lake.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

- Reduced speed limits should be set for ATVs where the trail would skirt campgrounds

Suggestion –

- Consider negotiating designated use of a different motorized nature such as ATV-only for some corridors.

Near Bittersweet Recreation Area

Considerations –

- The trail follows an established snowmobile trail corridor
- Snowmobile corridor will be rerouted farther to the east, outside of the recreation area and associated State Natural Area, as specified by the master plan.
- A trail spur is proposed to travel to the east and link to convenience store services along Highway 70

Near Plum Creek

Considerations –

- Install a “clear-span” bridge to cross Plum Creek. This would improve the existing snowmobile bridge crossing.
- Eliminate trail alternatives to the east to reduce crossings of Highway C and the paved bike trail and social/user conflicts of siting an ATV trail near the newly established bike trail
- Keep the trail farther west of Highway C to avoid steep topography and potential environmental affects.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

- The group considered avoidance of crossing Plum Creek, but encountered safety and user conflicts and topography issues farther east.

Access to Sayner

Considerations –

- Providing access to Sayner and associated business services was researched.
- Stakeholders explored the least potential conflict with highway traffic and areas of housing development.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

- Keep an option open for access to Sayner as drawn on map.
- The trail could be developed in phases over time if approved.

Suggestion –

- Bridges or elevated boardwalk can be engineered for difficult crossings but are costly.
- Consider negotiating land-owner agreements if possible to avoid /reduce wetland or water crossings.

Access to Star Lake

Considerations –

- Trail alternatives follow existing snowmobile trail corridors that are currently gated to other than management access in warm seasons
- The corridor avoids private land parcels by remaining on state forest land.
- The group considered the public perception of ending a trail near an establishment that serves alcohol.
- The local towns, e.g. Plum Lake would have a say in use of town roads and access to services.

Alternatives and/or issues addressed –

- Develop a trail-head at old Highway K.
- Keep two options open for trail end points on Highway K and old Highway K.
- One option is to end at old Highway K.
- Another option is to end trail just outside of Star Lake on Highway K. This option is dependent on the interest of the local community.

Access to St. Germain

Considerations –

- Extend a spur trail from near Buffalo Lake heading east to north side of Rainbow Flowage. A new bridge would have to be built.
- The corridor would follow existing snowmobile trail along Highway J extending access to St. Germain and available services.

Alternatives and/or issues that need to be addressed –

- The ATV trail could provide an opportunity to improve the snowmobile trail, by providing a safer water crossing with a bridge along Highway J. The present crossing uses the top of the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company water control structure as a snowmobile trail.

IRON CO. ATV TRAIL ALTERNATIVE PROS & CONS STAKEHOLDER INPUT COMBINED

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 1. Existing Property (Authorized uses.)			Stakeholders completed Criteria 1. during their meeting on 2-27-07.	Comment from...
PROS	CONS	NOTES		
Much already designated ATV trails or routes, or other trails (snowmobile), or power lines.	Some of these may go through or near sensitive areas (such as Manitowish Scenic Waterway or campgrounds and hiking trails).			Group
Uses existing pre-disturbed river crossing.				Group
Existing parking and restroom facilities.				Group
Opportunities to tie into existing trail system.				Group
All on state or county land.				Group
MP includes existing uses.	But no ATV uses are included.			Group
	Where new trails go in, need to justify the use and follow the correct processes to protect cultural/archaeological resources.			Group
Doesn't intersect with existing hiking/biking trails.				Group
Sandy Beach rd is a designated ATV route, so it would provide a link to Sandy Beach road in town of Sherman.	Option A would create more of a disturbance to Sandy Beach campground because it would provide more access to Sandy Beach Rd. in town of Sherman.	Can't operate ATVs in the campground.		Group
Sherman ATVers would have access because all of their roads are ATV routes.				Group
				Group
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 2. Natural Resources (Physical /ecological sustainability)				
PROS	CONS	NOTES		
Uses existing roads, trails, corridors including old railroad grade.	Bridges and/or boardwalk construction needed over water and wet areas.	Concrete and steel bridges already exist crossing the Manitowish River.		Anderson
Less forest fragmentation.	Will require "lifting" previous disturbed locations is wetland areas.			Anderson
	Will require use of both renewable (wood) and non-renewable resources (sand, gravel,			Anderson

	etc.)		
	Wayside bridge – detracts from aesthetic qualities of Scenic Corridor (300 ft.) either side and natural appearance.		Drum
	Manitowish R. – manage for non-motorized recreation and primitive canoe campsites – pp. 110 The Plan.		Drum
	Lower Manitowish from bridge on Hiway 51 to bridge on Hiway 47 – designated Exceptional R. by DNR scientists-		Drum
	Lower Manitowish – Northern Rivers Initiative gives 98.67% rank in Upper Chippewa Basin which means very high quality water and intact, healthy ecosystems along banks -		Drum
	DNR permit needed for bridge construction		Drum
	Open river bank and shallow water at wayside provide ATV access to river -		Drum
	Attempts to rehab sturgeon fishery in this area		Drum
	Sandy Beach Road – bordered by high quality natural community – habitat for rare and diverse species of plants and animals – purifies surface and ground water		Drum
	Provides access to Sandy Beach Lake shore and creek – undeveloped lake shore		Drum
	Bridge over Manitowish R. on Hiway 47 – too close to Manitowish Wilderness Area and Manitowish River wildlife corridor – conflicts with scenic beauty, corridor flyway and unique aquatic habitat.		Drum
	River corridor will be disturbed even when ATVs stay on trail because in nature everything is connected and interconnected		Drum
Minimal need to make new trails as we are utilizing many existing corridors		Some planning for redesign or upgrades will be necessary to make trail more sustainable	Harden

Dept.. and local ATV clubs have in-depth knowledge of property with talent and skills necessary to make decisions that protect and conserve the natural resources			Harden
Reduction of number of motorized miles by combining snowmobile and ATV trails	Possible illegal crossing of Manitowish River	A properly designed and constructed bridge could ameliorate illegal off trail use and aesthetic considerations.	Phillips
An opportunity to study the effects of ATV use in sensitive areas	Increased air and sound pollution		Phillips
	Increased division of roadless areas that impact health of animal and bird populations		Phillips
	Spread of invasive species.		Phillips
Building a properly constructed trail that does not degrade the environment is possible.	Building a properly constructed trail that does not degrade the environment is very expensive.		Phillips
	Disturbance to wildlife, environmental degradation, disturbing wetlands, spreading invasive species.		Poulton
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
3. Social			
(Consider impacts to other users, evaluate public opinion.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Use of existing town roads.	Use of existing town roads.	Needs approval of local town governments who may object, and adjacent landowners.	Anderson
Entire trail/route to be on public property.			Anderson
Avoids Discovery Center, Sandy Beach Lake and campground.	Crosses Manitowish River and will require a bridge.	Wooden, arched bridge would not be as visually intrusive as the existing flat, concrete and steel bridges crossing Manitowish River on Highways 47 and 51. Would like to see several artist renditions of possible wooded, arched bridge crossing the river.	Anderson
Could reduce snowmobile traffic on existing Town Road snowmobile route.	Adds summer motorized use. Adds to noise level in river corridor when crossing or	What is the history of use of the existing wayside? Any documented numbers of	Anderson

	stopping on the proposed bridge for the view and to take pictures.	users, types of users?	
Existing bathroom, picnic, parking, facilities exist; existing use.	Could increase use and possible conflicts with different outdoor recreation users.		Anderson
Highway 51 traffic noise levels already exist.		What is the existing decibel level of traffic on Hwy 51? At different locations along the river? At the wayside waters edge? At the Hwy 51 and 47 crossing? How far on the south side of the Manitowish River crossing is the decibel level of Hwy 51 less than 70? Less than 50?	Anderson
	May need new canoe landing location.	Maybe not. If so, how far either upstream or downstream from existing water entry point?	Anderson
	18 Winchester home sites along Circle Lily plus Manitowish residents – in ear shot of ATVs		Drum
	Provides open road to East Circle Lily which borders Discovery Center trails – also open snowmobile trail to Dietz gas station		Drum
	Manitowish River crossing – conflict with Manitowish interpretive canoe trail with numbered posts and guide book		Drum
	Wayside – popular canoe and kayak landing, picnic grounds and outhouse – displacement of traditional, long time users		Drum
	Presence of ATVs at bridge spoils wilderness experience and nature study		Drum
	Conflict with Sandy Beach Rustic Family Campground – special niche offering by NHAL for campers who prefer small, spacious, quiet experience – strong demand for this type of camp		Drum
	Alternate route available		Drum
	Improving Sandy Beach Road to convert to a sustainable ATV trail will increase street		Drum

	traffic with added ATV traffic		
Additional recreation opportunity available in the area			Canfield
	Multiple users in forest may make other activities (hiking, biking, etc) less appealing to some		Canfield
	Will receive complaints from public about allowing ATVs in the area		Canfield
Will receive compliments from public about allowing ATVs in the area			Canfield
Much thought and planning with in-depth discussions have gone into the siting and overall planning for these trails	A certain elitist group mentality exists that refuses to accept that motorized recreation can be responsibly managed. Unfortunately no plan or alternatives will ever be accepted by a few groups that are biased against any motorized activities, claiming this state forest as their own.	Best case scenario is that extreme positions on both sides of this issue can be replaced by more reasonable oversight and attitudes that fall in a middle position.	Harden
	Conflicts with other users: Motorized vs. non-motorized, ATV vs. snowmobile, off road trucks, motorcycles, etc.	The state should consider developing or assisting private entities to develop several play areas around the state where motor recreationists can pursue the more adventurous activities of their sport. Areas could be chosen that would not result in general environmental degradation or social conflicts.	Phillips
	Conflicts involving air and sound pollution with residents living adjacent to the trail.		Phillips
		After reviewing potential trail alternatives proposed by the stakeholders group, and after speaking with numerous people, I cannot find any of the suggested trails acceptable.	Poulton
	Disturbance to people seeking quiet and solitude.		Poulton
	Bad track record of some ATV operators.		Poulton
	Feelings made known by people of Vilas Co.		Poulton
		Judging from the many letters received, I	Poulton

		feel there is no place for ATVs in Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest.	
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
4. Economic			
(Consider impacts to local economy.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Adds to cash flow in area businesses catering to motorized vacation users once trail/route is completed and made open for use.	May decrease cash flow to silent sports businesses, such as canoe/kayak rentals and guided river trips.	ATV's are licensed by the state while canoes/kayaks, if non-motorized, are not licensed.	Anderson
Could reduce WisDot maintenance budget for wayside.	May add to Iron County budget for wayside maintenance.		Anderson
	May negatively affect current wayside maintenance contract holder.		Anderson
State ATV fund used by local group(s) for trail construction and maintenance adds cash flow to area business.	Will require trail construction and maintenance expenditures from state ATV fund.		Anderson
	May require adding special extraction equipment to area EMT's, First Responders, and local fire departments.		Anderson
	Manitowish R. – loss of canoe and kayak users		Drum
	Manitowish R. – loss of high quality nature study area used by Discovery Center and Nicolet College Outdoor Series		Drum
	Conflict with major, new tourism programs attracting many people to Northwoods; Travel Green Wisconsin and ecotourism,; Great Wisconsin Birding and Nature Trail		Drum
Bring more people into area to support local businesses, including lodging			Canfield
Bring additional dollars to the area			Canfield
Since snowfall is not as substantial and tourism cannot count on snowmobile this is an alternative			Canfield
Maximize advertising dollar because we			Canfield

could partner with other areas to promote			
	Without the trails we are “different” and that makes us stand out from the rest		Canfield
Per the Wisconsin Dept. of Tourism ATV profile, ATV families are avid planners and prefer vacations with a diverse desire for many types of outdoor recreation. The local area would benefit by attracting new consumers to the area businesses. For those businesses that choose to cater to these same families, they will be rewarded with new economic spending that trickles down to the entire area.	Some segments of local mindsets will continue to discriminate against the motorized outdoor recreationalists.	Those businesses that chose not to market to the ATV community will still be positively affected by the economic trickle down affect whereat dollars change hands at least 4 times in an area.	Harden
New economies and opportunities will be discovered by an area that has in the past been close minded to this class of outdoor recreationalists.			Harden
Possible positive economic effect due to shortened snowmobile season	Summer trails may drive away business from non-motorized recreation.		Phillips
Business with gasoline products, vehicle rental, would improve.	We need to consider health implications of increased air pollution and passive recreation as opposed to benefits of clean air and active lifestyles.		Phillips
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 5. Master Plan (Compatible with property designation and use.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Minimum intrusion into Manitowish River scenic area; crosses river at a right angle.	Crosses Manitowish River scenic corridor.	Scenic corridor intrusion already exists at Highways 51 and 47 crossing, and snowmobile bridge.	Anderson
Links to Iron County ATV trail system.			Anderson
Avoids travel inside scenic corridor and heads away from the corridor at river crossing.			Anderson
Adds to outdoor recreation opportunities on	Adds to outdoor recreation opportunities on		Anderson

the NHAL State Forest.	the NHAL State Forest.		
	Maintain river corridor in natural appearing condition		Drum
	Provide opportunities for high quality, non-motorized recreation and education		Drum
	Maintain undeveloped shoreline		Drum
	Enhance aesthetic qualities		Drum
	Conflict with Manitowish Interpretive canoe trail set up by DNR		Drum
Much care and discussion has gone into being considerate of master plan uses when siting the ATV trails.	Some sharing and some change of attitude will be necessary. Change and acceptance of something different can be difficult for some personalities with extreme biases.		Harden
While the mixture of uses will be a different mix for the property, these combinations of uses exist and allow each other to recreate in other parts of the state and across the country even though some folks have us believe otherwise through biased reporting.			Harden
ATV trails will provide access by persons with disabilities to areas of the forest that are not currently available.	ATV trails will constitute a new use that impacts all other uses.		Phillips
	Strict rules will need to be promulgated in order to protect the forest from renegade riders.	The state should consider developing or assisting private entities to develop several play areas around the state where motor recreationists can pursue the more adventurous activities of their sport. Areas could be chosen that would not result in general environmental degradation or social conflicts.	Phillips
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 6. Cooperation (Local support, cooperation, MOU.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Will need local clubs/organizations support and assistance.	May need revision of current MOU with WisDot on wayside maintenance.	Current MOU may be transferred intact. If developmental disabled organization	Anderson

		has current wayside maintenance contract, urge they continue to be the maintenance provider.	
	Who would sponsor trail? (state-DNR, local ATV club)		Drum
	Who would hold liability insurance?		Drum
	Who would maintain trail – local ATV club? Need monthly reports on trail condition		Drum
	Need long term commitment – contract?		Drum
Partner with other counties to promote ATVs trail in the area			Canfield
Easier to work together with other counties to promote area since we will all have similar activities to offer. Maximize advertising dollar.			Canfield
Chambers could partner with ATV clubs and Forest to promote trails, rules, regulations, safety and educational aspect.			Canfield
	Trail use with multiple users		Canfield
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 7. Management /Administration (Assess costs, evaluate staff, resources and funding available for management, maintenance, monitoring and enforcement.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Local clubs could assist in trail supervision.	Additional DNR staff time, budgets will be required.	Possible “donation” of an ATV to warden force from area ATV dealerships, with support from local clubs fundraising efforts.	Anderson
	How many trail ambassadors in local clubs?		Drum
	Who will fill out monthly inspection forms?		Drum
	\$450/mile from DNR for maintenance is not enough for the shorter, 16 mile, Enterprise Trail		Drum
	Who will provide law enforcement – DNR wardens, local police” Are present funds		Drum

	adequate for proper enforcement?		
		Who patrols Cty. Trails? How often?	Drum
		Does repair cost exceed available funds?	Drum
Local clubs that in support of the trail are available to assist in maintenance			Canfield
The Wisconsin ATV Registration Program is financially strong with great potential to be even more so by the approval and with support from the user group that taxes itself to fund the program. This is an important fact because once the ATV trails are implemented there will need to be coordination with necessary appropriations to keep the entire scope of the system sustainable with improvements and adjustments along the way.		Sometimes it is difficult to predict exact timing of available ATV funds with grant cycles and legislative authority that is sometimes necessary to secure line items and specific needs. This situation sometimes creates a period in time where spending and grant authority doesn't match immediate needs so some projects get put into phases.	Harden
	Cost of building and maintaining a sustainable ATV trail with bridges and is very expensive		Phillips
	Management, administration and policing conflicts may arise between different jurisdictions since all of trail will not be on state land. State, county and town policies may differ.		Phillips
	Policies for remediation of off trail damage may cause conflicts between private landowners and government agencies.		Phillips
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 8. Safety (Consider safety for trail users.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Additional ATV safety courses may be organized by local clubs.	Will require additional law enforcement presence on the system.		Anderson
	Hazards will need to be identified in trail planning stage and a mitigation plan formulated.		Anderson

	Sharing town roads with other street licensed motor vehicles		Drum
Local Chambers can assist in promoting trail safety			Canfield
Ability and desire exists by local ATV leadership and qualified land managers to put systems in place to predict and manage safety issues. Proper signing, informational and educational programs, along with credentialed law enforcement personnel will be a team effort to assume safety for all trail users.		The majority of area clubs already have a base number of DNR instructors and Ride Smart Trail Patrol Ambassadors to draw from. WATVA and NOHVIS will recruit and coordinate with local leadership to further increase the numbers of Ambassadors to match the area demand and need once approval is obtained with permission to proceed.	Harden
	Safety issues of riding on roads with other vehicles, especially at night.		Phillips
	By law children cannot operate a motor vehicle on a street or road.		Phillips
	Liability issues for State if accidents occur on state sanctioned routes.	Does the recreation liability act cover this?	Phillips

Key Questions

- **WHY WAS THIS TRAIL ALTERNATIVE CHOSEN AS OPPOSED TO SOME OTHER LOCATION?**
 - This links to Iron Cty. Trails – Drum.
 - No new roads have to be cleared – use town roads and snowmobile routes – Drum
- **WHY WERE SOME AREAS OF THE FOREST CONSIDERED BUT NOT CHOSEN AS ALTERNATIVES?**
 - Following snowmobile trail under powerline parallel to Hiway 51 instead of crossing Hiway 51 and using wayside river crossing – this alternative mostly swamp with standing water – Drum

VILAS AND ONEIDA CO. ATV TRAIL ALTERNATIVE PROS & CONS STAKEHOLDER INPUT COMBINED

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 2. Existing Property (Authorized uses.)		Stakeholders completed Criteria 1. during their meeting on 2-27-07.	Comment from...
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Most sections already open to motorized traffic; less forest fragmentation.	Question of some wetlands and prior use established by bicycle use on rr grade south of Lk Tomahawk	Re-route on west side of hwy 47 to avoid prior bike use and rr grade across private lands.	Anderson
Appears to be favorable to Lk Tomahawk Board for establishing a trail head parking area.	Osprey nest along Hwy 47		Anderson
Trail head (parking area) west of Sayner along side Hwy N exists by Plum Creek.	Would have to cross Hwy N and paved bike path to gain atv trail access.	May need to consider expansion and/or relocation to other side of Hwy N and east of paved bike trail.	Anderson
A lot of lthe ATV trail utilizes existing snowmobile trails.	Proposed trail will be very close to the Lake Tomahawk RR grade used by hikers and bikers.		Wenninger
	Will using snowmobile trails create issues during the other three seasons such as noise and interaction with other groups?		Wenninger
	Forest road from Lake Tom to Hiway 70 will be graded and surfaced according to DNR ATV trail design standards producing a road 12 feet wide with 2 feet of cleared vegetation on either side (2-way ATV traffic) Street licensed motor vehicles will mingle with ATVs. When road is improved from present poorly maintained road there is the potential for a large increase in motorized traffic.		Drum
	Hasbrook Lake – private property owners may object		Drum
	Cunard Lake – electric motor only – quiet area		Drum
	Sureshot Lake – carry in boat landing – primitive use, quiet area		Drum

	Buffalo Lake – private owners along Cty. Hwy. J may object		Drum
	Bittersweet/Prong Lake complex – State Natural Area, no motor, quiet, remote camping. Old growth hemlock and white and red pine. Planned expansion of the SNA – p. 223- Master Plan		Drum
	New bicycle picnic park behind Mobile Station		Drum
	ATV trail crosses new St. Germain bike trail 3 times		Drum
	Conversion of seasonal snowmobile trail to year around, high impact,		Drum
	ATV trail goes through Lake Laura Loamy Hills Native Community which according to Master Plan, p.53, is managed for Old-Growth Restoration and Old Forest Extended Rotation Zone. ATV trail borders, north of Hiway K, Lake Laura Hardwoods – Lake Salsich, soon to be a State Natural Area. Management of this entire area – p.55 Master Plan, public access only for education and ecological interpretation. Use area for research into old-growth management. ATV trail not sustainable according to DNR Criteria.		Drum
	ATV trail north and south of Hiway K passes through the Star Lake Crescent Macrosite with two Primary Sites , a. Lake Laura-Salsich Lake and b. Wharton Lake Bog Complex - both primary sites are rated with equivalent protection to an SNA - Biotic Inventory and Analysis of the NHAL State Forest – October 1999 (BIA) BIA definition: Macrosite – best example of rare and representative natural features and		Drum

	<p>native plants and animals, some of which are rare and endangered. DNR scientists have given these areas “high protective designation” for preservation and restoration opportunities at a local and statewide level. ATV trails are not sustainable. Primary site – comparable to an SNA with rare and characteristic species.</p>		
	<p>ATV trail goes through the Central Highland Macrosite – from Lake Tom to County N in Plum Lake. Within this Macrosite are 3 Primary Sites all ranked as equivalent to SNA protection.: a. Bittersweet Lakes complex b. Mud Creek Springs c. Sweeny Lake Area p. 34 & 35 BIA</p> <p>This Macrosite has especially high ecological value containing many rare plants and animals and providing necessary habitat for endangered resources and rare aquatic features. The importance of maintaining the integrity of these natural communities or ecosystems is based on careful scientific analysis.</p>		Drum
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 2. Natural Resources (Physical /ecological sustainability)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Route provides a varied topography and vegetation types.		Trail design will be critical in identifying areas that may tempt off-trail use and establishing barriers to prevent off-trail use.	Anderson
Route has few if any areas of clay soils			Anderson
Known threatened and endangered species locations identified for eagle and osprey nesting sites.	Could disturb some species of ground nesting birds in spring nesting season.	Depending on distance criteria for eagle and osprey, may need to be re-located and/or closed during critical nesting	Anderson

		periods.	
No known grey wolf territories at this time.		Certain sections of the trail may require a slower travel speed.	Anderson
		Some trail building will be necessary.	Wenninger
		Many of the pros and cons not mentioned [for alternative B] have already been addressed in alternative A. Things mentioned [in this assignment] are of special concern to Oneida Council Biking and Walking Trails Council.	Wenninger
	The land between Clear Lake and Gilmore Lake and the shores of Cunard, Sureshot and Sweeny Lakes are all within the Central Highland Macrosite.		Drum
	Sweeny Lake – scientific selection of site for development of old-growth hemlock hardwood and northern hardwood community. Historically this site is a lease disturbed community – p.56 Plan		Drum
	Sweeny Lake – DNR ecologists warn that ATV noise and activity will disturb rare warblers and ground nesting birds – slow speeds do not mitigate this problem		Drum
	Sweeny Creek crossing – potential wetland and lake damage		Drum
	Bittersweet/Prong Lake complex – trail too close, 400 feet (.07 mile) to SNA – 5 wild lakes reserved for biologic research; provides habitat for many native plants and animals – ecosystems sensitive to motor disturbance		Drum
	Mud Creek Springs – managed for old growth red and white pine; develop research to document regeneration and development of old growth – sensitive area		Drum
	West Plum Lake – Blue Heron, Loons and		Drum

	other water fowl nest on this undeveloped shore; very scenic lake with unique aquatic and terrestrial habitat; ATVs have access to West Plum Lake at boat landing – potential threat to ecosystem		
	Many snowmobile trails south of West Plum Lake provide openings for rogue ATV riders.		Drum
	Trail crosses several wetland complexes – Plum Creek flowing into Big St. Germain Lake, an extensive wetland along Hwy. N that crosses large Birch Springs area and runs beside Stella Creek wetlands that drain into many area lakes – major watershed and habitat damage – “trails should be located away from waterways” DNR Criteria		Drum
	Trail passes through heart of 2 proposed SNA areas, Plum Lake Hemlocks and Laura Lake Hardwoods – damage to wild resources and high quality natural community – with ATV road constructed these areas can no longer become SNAs		Drum
	NHAL is currently threatened by both aquatic and terrestrial invasive plants; many invasive plants along Lake Tom to Sayner route; ATVs impact reduces the health of the forest and its water bodies lowering resistance to spread of invasives. ATV tires carry invasive seeds.		Drum
	Disturbance to wildlife, environmental degradation, disturbing wetlands, spreading invasive species.		Poulton
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 3. Social (Consider impacts to other users, evaluate public opinion.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	

Adds a motorized outdoor recreational activity to state lands.	Adds a motorized outdoor recreational activity to state lands.	Existing motorized outdoor recreational activity includes such things as various watercraft; pontoon boats, personal watercraft, water skiing, bass-type fishing boats, driving for pleasure by street-legal vehicles, snowmobiles, ATV use on lakes by winter ice anglers.	Anderson
Avoids Buffalo Lake campground road.	Will conflict with paved bicycle paths in certain areas where they cross each other.	Common courtesy needs to prevail by both user groups.	Anderson
Provides another method to enter the forest setting by persons with disabilities.			Anderson
Could add to the knowledge of forest users through information stops at certain areas of the forest.			Anderson
Additional recreation opportunity available in the area	Multiple users in forest may make other activities less appealing to some (ex. biking, hiking, etc.)		Canfield
Some existing facilities may be utilized.	Re. Sayner / Plum Lake area: Will residents and wildlife be adversely impacted by an ATV trail?		Wenninger
	Will the aesthetic qualities of visiting the forest be spoiled?		Wenninger
	Forest road from Lake Tom to Hwy. 70 – ATV traffic will mingle with increased number of cars, trucks, motorcycles – displaces hikers, disturbs campers, fishermen, canoe and kayak people on Cunard, Sureshot and Sweeny Lakes and hunters with seasonal deer stands. Presently this area gives a remote experience since street licensed traffic is light and must drive very slowly due to numerous potholes, deep ruts and other obstructions.		Drum
	Bittersweet/Prong – ATVs displace hikers on forest road and people hoping to enjoy remote camping, solitude, scenic beauty and wildlife viewing – trail too close (.07 mile)		Drum

	Plum Lake boat landing and parking – too small to accommodate more parking – very congested now with bike trail – will displace and conflict with new bike trail users – sabotage to new Boulder to St. Germain bike trail		Drum
	NHAL already has excellent access to lakes, rivers and forest areas. Road densities within the forest boundary are “High” compared to other public lands in Wisconsin and will increase with additional development. – (BIA) ATVs unnecessary for additional access – increased impact on area not sustainable		Drum
	At annual Town meeting, St. Germain residents gave advisory vote, 14 to 6, against ATVs on town roads		Drum
	Many Star Lake residents against ATV intrusion into town of Star Lake		Drum
		After reviewing potential trail alternatives proposed by the stakeholders group, and after speaking with numerous people, I cannot find any of the suggested trails acceptable.	Poulton
	Disturbance to people seeking quiet and solitude.		Poulton
	Bad track record of some ATV operators.		Poulton
	Feelings made known by people of Vilas Co.		Poulton
		Judging from the many letters received, I feel there is no place for ATVs in Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest.	Poulton
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
4. Economic			
(Consider impacts to local economy.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
May increase cash flow to certain businesses	Could decrease use of certain areas of the	Experience of other areas suggests overall	Anderson

in a variety of ways, from sale of machines, machine repair, gas, and other supplies when trail is open for use.	NHAL by other user groups.	economic impact may be positive.	
Will add dollars to private businesses for trail construction and maintenance.			Anderson
State ATV funds will be utilized locally; could require less dollars from the state snowmobile fund for certain segments of the route.			Anderson
Bring more people into area to support local businesses, including lodging and additional dollars. An alternative when there is no snow. Many businesses in the area have expressed interest in having ATV trails in the area. Maximize advertising dollar because we could partner with other areas to promote.	Some businesses have expressed concern about having ATV trails in the area. Without the trails we are “different” and that makes us stand out from the rest		Canfield
There is a cash-flow potential to some business.	An ATV trail system could hurt Oneida County’s effort to portray itself as a health-conscious area.		Wenninger
	The value of ecosystem services to the people of the Northwoods – clean water, clean air, fertile soil and climate control – far exceeds any money ATV riders might bring to the community. ATV recreation has a well documented history of damage to our life – sustaining ecosystems even when they stay on designated trails. This does not sustain our priceless heritage of public lands for future generations.		Drum
	We can preserve our public land legacy (NHAL) that attracts millions of tourists yearly making Vilas County the second highest recipient of tourist dollars in the northern counties, and still provide ATV riders the opportunity to park in Land O’ Lakes and ride 100’s of miles of U.P. trails.		Drum

	The “Active Outdoor Recreation Economy Report – 2007” documents the enormous economic power of simple, healthy, outdoor activities like hiking, biking, camping, the paddle sports and wildlife viewing. 85% of public land users are non-motorized according to DNR SCORP Report. ATVs are incompatible with every other land based activity except snowmobiles. ATVs will dilute income from non-motorized users		Drum
	Loss of opportunity to build economy by attracting non-motorized tourists with new programs like Travel Green. Sec. of Tourism Kelli Trumble said there was an emerging trend of “green minded” Travelers seeking “fun with a conscience”. A critical component of this Emerging trend is Wisconsin’s tradition of conservation and enlightened Stewardship of its natural resources. ATVs are a “turn-off” for people who like nature.		Drum
	Loss of important scientific study areas, old growth forests, river corridors, undeveloped lakes and major wildlife sanctuaries.		Drum
	Loss of sales to silent sport dealers – bikes, canoes, kayaks and sports apparel		Drum
	SCORP Report – out-of state tourists demand non-motorized public land except for on- road sightseeing.		Drum
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
5. Master Plan			
(Compatible with property designation and use.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Could link up with Oneida County ATV system.			Anderson

Avoids wilderness designated areas, avoids state designated scientific areas, avoids entering non-motorized areas.			Anderson
Utilizes areas designated as forest production.			Anderson
Has limited areas requiring forest fragmentation.			Anderson
	This will not enhance any aesthetic qualities in the forest nor will it further non-motorized recreation and education opportunities.		Wenninger
	Stresses sustainable trails that do not harm the environment or put sensitive ecosystems at risk – ATVs are high impact on the environment		Drum
	Watershed health and water quality should be the basic measure of success for all public land managers – ATVs threaten watershed health		Drum
	Master Plan seeks to link to existing trails – only Iron Cty. Route offers link at expense of damage to sensitive areas		Drum
	ATV trails must be sustainable ; defined by <u>Mike Dombeck, former Chief of U.S. Forest Service; “Manage to meet human needs without compromising land health and the composition, structure and process of ecological systems”</u> Even when ATVs remain on designated trails they fray the ecosystems.		Drum
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
6. Cooperation			
(Local support, cooperation, MOU.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Will need cooperation of local volunteer ATV clubs.	Small area east of Sayner may need private landowner agreement	Judging from the comments from local DNR personnel distributed at our last meeting, there seems to be a mindset	Anderson

		against ATV's.	
May need cooperation of local units of government.		Most current municipal fire and rescue departments have the necessary equipment for off-road extraction of injured persons due to the recreational snowmobile activity.	Anderson
Partner with other counties to promote ATVs trail in the area. Easier to work together with other counties to promote area since we will all have similar activities to offer. Maximize advertising dollar. Chambers could partner with ATV clubs and Forest to promote trails, rules, regulations, safety and educational aspect.	Trail used with multiple users		Canfield
Local support seems to favor an ATV trail system.		Town supervisors seem to support an ATV trail system, but what about the general public?	Wenninger
	Volunteers do not have the incentive or obligation to maintain, monitor or police ATV trails		Drum
	Volunteers carry no legal power		Drum
	Volunteers do not usually follow strict time tables or a formal structure		Drum
	Trail maintenance is expensive – Les Felbab said they had difficulty getting enough grant money, \$450/mile, to maintain 16 miles of Enterprise Trail – Who will pay for 52 miles? (minus 8 miles from McNaughton)		Drum
	Who exactly would monitor and maintain trail, especially the forest road shared with street licensed vehicles?		Drum
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS 7. Management /Administration (Assess costs, evaluate staff, resources and funding available for management, maintenance, monitoring and enforcement.)			

PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Local clubs could assist in monitoring trail activity.	May require additional enforcement patrols.		Anderson
State ATV fund available for use.			Anderson
Local clubs that in support of the trail are available to assist in maintenance	Trail used with multiple users		Canfield
		Will there be adequate funds to repair damages?	Wenninger
	We have not defined who would sponsor this trail.		Drum
	We have not defined trail developers and trail operator responsibilities even on a general scale.		Drum
	The ATV segregated fund is rich but this trail will be very expensive to build. Is there enough money to maintain current trail network and still build more?		Drum
	The DNR and local police lack funds to properly enforce legal trail riding.		Drum
	Trail Ambassadors have not been effective in stopping off road riding and have no legal powers.		Drum
	The registration ID number on ATVs is not easily read so it is difficult to impossible to ID individual riders to hold responsible for damage on-trail and off.		Drum
	Why place a form of recreation in our, as yet, healthy state forest that requires so much regulation and policing. Who ever heard of the “canoe” police?		Drum
CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS			
8. Safety			
(Consider safety for trail users.)			
PROS	CONS	NOTES	
Certain areas may need reduced speeds.		Trail design and construction should	Anderson

		include safety considerations.	
Local Chambers can assist in promoting trail safety			Canfield
	Various user groups sharing a common trailhead could be a safety concern.		Wenninger
	ATVs and bikers will mingle between Mood Road and Sayner and again at the Bicycle Park behind the Mobile gas station. This is unsafe especially for the many children on bikes.		Drum

Key Questions

- **WHY WAS THIS TRAIL ALTERNATIVE CHOSEN AS OPPOSED TO SOME OTHER LOCATION?**
A Stakeholder lives in Sayner and wanted an ATV trail near his home. Entire trail from Lake Tom to Star Lake laid out by this Stakeholder. - Drum
- **WHY WERE SOME AREAS OF THE FOREST CONSIDERED BUT NOT CHOSEN AS ALTERNATIVES?**
Alternative trails had long areas of standing water present that required expensive bridges. - Drum



Oneida County Forestry Dept.



Oneida County Forestry Dept.

Ohlhafen Creek Bridge, Oneida County



Oneida County Forestry Dept.

25.5.2005



Oneida County Forestry Dept.

SEP 7 2004

Triple-gate construction for controlled access.

Geo-tex fabric application, trail underlayment.
Enterprise Trail, Oneida Co.



Oneida County Forestry Dept.



Oneida County Forestry Dept.

7.11.2006

Wooden bridge, Pine Creek, Oneida Co.

Clear-span bridge, on snowmobile trail near
Highway O, Oneida County.



Elevated boardwalk.