

CHIPPEWA COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 700

ROADS AND ACCESS

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700 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY

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

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

Over the years, the road density and frequency of vehicle use in the County Forest has increased in response to an expanding number of motorized recreational vehicles and to provide access for our harvest program. Often times, different uses have occurred on the same trails with minimal conflicts. But the diverse demands for, and uses of, the County Forest have reached the point where integrated access management planning is needed.

User conflict between groups: e.g., snowmobiling versus cross-country skiing; hunting on foot versus use of vehicles for access to game populations.

Safety: e.g., pleasure riding of horses on the same trail with ATV vehicle traffic, or hiking.

Erosion: soils eroding due to use, or over-use, by vehicles without routine maintenance.

Damage to access: rutted or impassable roads requiring costly repair by the County or other specific user groups (e.g., snowmobile/ATV club).

Litter: depositing garbage and waste in the County Forest.

Over-utilization of a resource: e.g. reduced availability of trophy-sized deer, excessive harvest of ruffed grouse along trails, overharvest of bobcat.

Crowding: e.g. complaints from hunters about intensified competition for traditional hunting areas as a result of better access.

Fires: e.g. increased exposure of the resource to forest fire occurrence.

Endangered species management: e.g. high road densities conflict with timber wolf recovery, eagle and osprey nest disturbance.

Invasive species: e.g. introduction of invasive exotic species along travel routes.

Developmental trends: e.g. preservation of the County Forest solitude by limiting access versus development of high intensity use by additional roads and unlimited access.

Road placement: e.g. some roads should be closed for improper location and evaluated for replacement.

705 CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Provide direction to the Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee and resource managers in order to maintain a network of roads and trails in the County Forest. This will meet the needs for resource management and protection activities, as well as provide public access for recreation opportunities.
2. Identify the distribution, density, and types of roads and uses of roads and trails needed to establish a safe and efficient transportation and recreation system that complements the economic, environmental, and social interest in the County Forest.
3. Identify the existing and future County Forest roads eligible for transportation aids under s. 86.315(1), Wis. Stats.
4. Identify areas in the County Forest where the access is limited or restricted.
5. Identify the provisions and criteria that will be policy when addressing management issues in the County Forest.

710 ROADS

Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads within the County Forest. These roads may be constructed and maintained by Forest & Trails Division staff, County Highway Department, logging or other contractors. The specifications for road construction and maintenance will vary with the frequency, duration, and planned use of each road. Three (3) major types of roads occur in the County Forest: permanent primary roads; permanent secondary roads, and temporary roads.

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

The County Forest should have enough roads to provide sufficient access, without degrading water resources, to provide for quality recreational experiences. Program evaluation of road infrastructure will occur continuously.

710.1 PERMANENT PRIMARY COUNTY FOREST ROADS

These roads are the primary roads accessing the County Forest. They are designed, constructed, and maintained for year-round use. These roads serve as essential access corridors for multiple use management. Most of these roads are graveled and routinely graded. Vehicle use may be restricted at various times of the year to minimize physical damage to the road or for safety reasons.

Forest roads in this category qualify for the County Forest Road Aids program. Qualifying roads in this program must meet minimum design standards set by s. 86.315 (4) (a) and 86.315 (3) Wis. Stats., and administered by WI DOT. A yearly aid payment is used to maintain and improve these certified public roads. The following table lists the roads currently certified under s. 86.31(1), Wis. Stats. Also included are roads proposed for addition once improvements meet statute requirements.

CHIPPEWA COUNTY CURRENT WDOT CERTIFIED

TOWNSHIP	SECTION	LENGT H (MI)	ROAD NAME/COMMENTS
Birch Creek	Sec. 22, T32N-R7W	0.93	Birch Creek Flowage Trail
Birch Creek	Sec. 19 & 30, T32N-R7W Sec. 36, T32N R8W	3.00	Deer Fly Trail
Birch Creek	Sec. 31, T 32N-R7W Sec. 36, T32N-R8W	1.16	High Ridge Trail
Birch Creek	Sec 27 & 34, T32N-R7W	0.41	Horseshoe Flowage Trail
Birch Creek	Sec. 33, T32N-R7W	0.24	Spring Creek Flowage Trail
Birch Creek	Sec. 18, T32N-R7W	.67	Willow Creek #1 Flowage Trail
Birch Creek	Sec. 17. T32N-R7W	1.10	Willow Creek #2 & 3 Flowage Trail
Cleveland	Sec. 1 & 11, T31N-R8W	2.44	Deer Fly Trail
Cleveland	Sec. 11 & 14, T31N-R8W	1.22	Hay Meadow Flowage Trail
Cleveland	Sec 9, 10 & 11, T31N-R8W	2.31	Hickory Ridge Trail
Cleveland	Sec. 5, T31N-R7W	0.70	Norway Trail
Cleveland	Sec. 7, T31N-R7W Sec. 12, T32N-R8W	0.96	Old Farm Road
Cleveland	Sec. 4 & 9, T31N-R7W	2.63	O'Neil Creek Flowage Trail
Ruby	Sec. 31, T32N-R5W	0.35	Mallard Flowage Trail
	Total Road Miles	18.12	

These Permanent Primary County Forest Roads will be maintained and remain open to public use. Logging contractors or the Highway Department, at the request of the County Forest Administrator, may plow these roads during the winter months in order to facilitate harvesting timber sales. Otherwise, these roads will be not be plowed during the winter, though they will remain open to public use.

710.2 PERMANENT SECONDARY ROADS

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

Most roads in this category are located in areas in the County Forest where motor vehicle use is limited or restricted. In these instances, the roads will be blocked with a dirt berm or a gate and/or signed as restricted from unauthorized motor vehicle traffic. Foot traffic is allowed on all roads.

Except as provided under Section 710.2.1 where motorized traffic is restricted, vehicle access will only be authorized for planned management activities, fire protection, and in cases where motorized handicapped access has been approved.

710.2.1 Public Access to Select Permanent Secondary Roads in the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek Under Frozen Ground Conditions.

Motor vehicle use is allowable on approximately 5.0 miles of permanent secondary roads, as shown on the maps titled “Permanent Secondary Roads in the Town of Ruby County Forest Open To Motorized Vehicle Use During Frozen Ground Conditions” and “Permanent Secondary Roads in the Town of Birch Creek County Forest Open To Motorized Vehicle Use During Frozen Ground Conditions”, included in the Appendix, Chapter 1000, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

1. Access shall not be limited to specific user groups. Registered and licensed motor vehicle and off-highway vehicle use is allowed. Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Regulations apply.
2. Access shall be authorized under frozen ground conditions only, as determined by the County Forest Administrator or their designee, during the time period from approximately December – March 30. Sufficiently frozen ground

conditions are such that a ¾ ton pickup can drive on all of the subject roads at all times during the day, without breaking through the ground surface.

Frozen ground motor vehicle access to select permanent secondary roads is limited to County Forest land in the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek due to the following reasons:

1. Select County Forest lands in the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek are in a relatively flat landscape that is primarily internally drained or contains saturated soils/groundwater contact; whereas, other areas of the County Forest (including Special Units) have irregular topography consisting of steep slopes, closed depressions, and a relatively dense surface drainage network (i.e. streams). Therefore, select County Forest lands in the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek are significantly less susceptible to erosion and sediment loading to wetlands and surface water resources.
2. The County Forest land in the Town of Ruby has historically been less accessible by motor vehicles than other County Forest land because of a low density of permanent primary County Forest and Town roads.
3. Other areas of the County Forest (including Special Units) have a higher density of developed recreational trails. These trails increase accessibility and, as a result, there is more intensive recreational use.

Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management staff shall notify the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek Clerks of gate opening and closing, and post notification of gate opening and closing on the Chippewa County website. When practicable, notification of anticipated gate opening and closure shall also be communicated to the Town of Ruby and Town of Birch Creek Clerks and posted on the county website. The website shall include a map showing which roads are open to motor vehicle use.

Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management staff shall be responsible for maintenance required to facilitate access and/or minimize environmental damage, including, but not limited to:

1. Brushing and removal of wind throws and deadfalls.
2. Installation and maintenance of road infrastructure such as signage, culverts, at-grade crossings, ditches, and road surface.
3. Snow removal (i.e. plowing) may be required to achieve and maintain frozen ground. In situations where maintained snowmobile trails use open permanent secondary roads, snow removal shall maintain adequate snow coverage on the road.
4. Repair of rutting, erosion, and damage to vegetation.

Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management staff shall be responsible for monitoring the permanent secondary road surface, corridor, and adjacent lands, including coordination with law enforcement, to identify:

1. Environmental damage to soil, vegetation, water resources.
2. Unauthorized dumping/litter.
3. Increase in unlawful activities.
4. Public safety concerns.

Access to some or all of the permanent secondary roads shown on the maps, described here in Section 710.2.1, may be temporarily suspended, without advanced public notice, at the sole discretion of the County Forest Administrator, under the following circumstances:

1. Environmental damage to soil, vegetation, water resources or unauthorized dumping/ littering cannot be prevented with reasonable accommodations.
2. At the request of law enforcement personnel in response to immediate public safety concerns.

At their discretion, The Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee may take action to revoke access to some or all of the permanent secondary roads shown on the maps, described here in Section 710.2.1 and included in Chapter 1000, in the event of intolerable or unsustainable levels of:

1. Environmental damage to soil, vegetation and water resources.
2. Unauthorized dumping/litter.
3. Increase in unlawful activities.
4. Public safety concerns.

The costs associated with the motorized use, authorized under this Subsection, shall be the responsibility of the County. As part of the annual budget process, the County Forest Administrator will estimate and request required operational funding.

710.3 TEMPORARY ROADS

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

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

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

710.4 STATE, COUNTY, TOWN DRIVEWAY PERMITS

710.4.1 State Highways

Wisconsin DOT generally requires permits for permanent and temporary driveways on State highways. The County should track and retain permit records and work with local DOT officials for access.

710.4.2 County Highways

All new driveways entering onto a County Highway require an approved “Permit to Work in Highway Right-of-Way” from the County Highway Department. Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management and Highway Department staff will meet on site to consider safety, drainage and materials to be used for construction of the access and protection of the highway road surface. The Highway Department may request that materials be removed and the right-of way be returned to the original grade.

710.4.3 Town Roads

All new driveways entering onto a Town Road shall comply with local regulations and a driveway access permit will be obtained before construction.

710.5 UTILITIES

All utilities in the County Forest shall comply with Section 465 of this plan.

710.6 CULVERTS

In many cases, culverts are needed in all three (3) classifications of roads that are in the County Forest when dealing with drainages, wetlands and stream crossings. Some of these are temporarily placed culverts that are used during a specific project, then removed, while others are permanent structures.

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

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

715 RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS

In addition to providing trails for motorized vehicle use, the County Forest may also provide and designate areas where motorized equipment is not permitted, unless authorized by the Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee. The principal intent of these areas is to prevent environmental damage to sensitive areas, protect historical or archeological sites, protect endangered and threatened species, provide for human safety and provide areas for quiet, secluded recreation. Cross-country use of the County Forest by motorized use is prohibited. The Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee may designate restricted access areas in the County Forest.

720 WILD LAKES

The surface waters encompassed under the Wild Lakes designation include those restricted use areas that are not open to any gasoline-powered vehicles, watercraft, or snowmobiles except when snow covered. In general, all or most of the shorelines of these lakes and streams are owned by Chippewa County. The County may request that townships, under authority of s. 30.77 (3), Wis. Stats., establish regulations restricting motorized use on these surface waters. Canoes, kayaks, and boats propelled by wind, oars, or electric motors are permitted. Gasoline or diesel powered equipment is not permitted. The intent of these restrictions is to protect the aquatic resources of these lakes but still allow human access. There are currently no lakes in the County Forest designated as “Wild Lakes”.

725 ROAD CONSTRUCTION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY

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

730 SIGNS

Signs in the County Forest will be used discreetly to perform and function with minimal disruption to the multiple uses of the Forest. Private signs promoting personal, commercial or political objectives will not be permitted. Signs that memorialize a group or individual shall be discouraged and may only be permitted with the authorization of the Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee and in compliance with the aesthetic and design standards detailed in section 730.1. Signs erected by the County for management purposes or by non-profit recreational trail groups, with the approval of the Chippewa County Department of Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee, will be as follows:

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

730.1 SIGNING STANDARDS

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

1. All signs will be mounted on posts of treated wood, Carsonite or steel. No signs will be nailed to living trees.
2. Routed wood signs will be used wherever practical. Fiberboard or painted metal signs, when used, will be of neat appearance.
3. Signs placed on snowmobile/ATV trails must conform to State standards.
4. All authorized signs shall be protected by ordinance from being damaged, defaced, obstructed, removed, or possessed by unauthorized persons.

5. All unauthorized signs will be removed by the Forest & Trails staff. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during removal. Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under s. 943.13(3), Wis. Stats.