

RECREATIONAL MOTOR VEHICLES (RMV'S)

Monitoring Conducted

RMV Management and Opportunities

The Department of Agriculture revised regulations and clarified policy related to motor vehicle use, including the use of off-highway vehicles. This final Travel Management Rule requires designation of those roads, trails and areas that are open to motor vehicle use.

Designations will be made by class of vehicle and, if appropriate, by time of year. The final Rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system, as well as use of motor vehicles on routes and in areas that is not consistent with the designations. The clear identification of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use on each National Forest will sustain natural resources values through more effective management of motor vehicle use, enhance opportunities for motorized recreation experiences on National Forest System lands, address needs for access to National Forest System lands and preserve areas of opportunity on each National Forest for non motorized travel and experiences. The Rule was effective December 9, 2005.

To facilitate implementation of the Travel Management Rule, the Superior National Forest (SNF) has been working in collaboration with Tribal governments and the 1854 Authority, the State of Minnesota, Cook, Lake and St. Louis Counties to identify current and potential opportunities for motorized recreation including providing Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) routes. In 2007, the Minnesota DNR issued decisions identifying OHV routes for State Forest lands in Cook and Lake Counties. A decision on state lands in St. Louis County is expected in 2008.

In 2007, the SNF developed two Scoping Letters (one for the Eastern Zone and one for the Western Zone of the national forest) that included information on the Project Area, a preliminary Purpose and Need, a Proposed Action, instructions for submitting comments, and maps displaying the proposed action for OHV travel and for unclassified roads. The Eastern Zone mailed the scoping letter on March 23, 2007 and the Western Zone mailed their scoping letter on June 11, 2007. Approximately 85 letters totaling over 950 comments on the Scoping Letters were received from the public.

Until the final Travel Management Rule route designations for the Superior are approved (scheduled for 2008), road travel designations have occurred through other project decisions (primarily through large vegetation treatment projects).

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, four project decisions were made that designated 5.3 miles open and 64 miles closed to RMV travel. Most roads closed were obliterated through decommissioning while others were closed through Forest Order and gated. Since 2004, 42 miles have been designated open and 145 miles designated closed through project decisions (See Table 1).

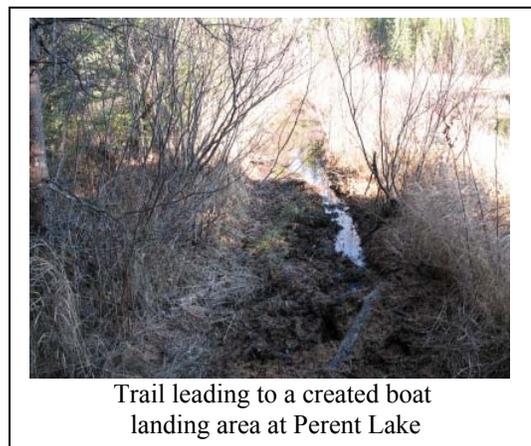
RMV Summary Points

- *During Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 four project decisions designated an additional 5.3 miles open to RMV travel and 64 miles closed to RMV travel.
- *Since 2004, 42 miles have been designated open and 145 miles designated closed through project decisions.
- *All road spurs or user created/maintained trails found inside the BWCAW originated from older established roads associated with older timber sales or other access purposes.
- *Planning for travel route designation under the Travel Management Rule was begun and will be completed in 2008.

Table 1. Proposed Road Designations and Motorized Use				
Decision	Change in Road Status (miles)			
New Roads Added; Designated to NFS System Roads. Closed to RMV's				
	<i>OML 1</i>	<i>OML 2</i>	<i>OML 3</i>	<i>Unclassified</i>
<i>'04* & 05 Decisions</i>	5.2	0.1		
Unclassified Road Designated to NFS System Roads. Open to RMV's				
<i>'04* & 05 Decisions</i>	14.5	18		
<i>2006 Decisions</i>	4.4			
<i>'07 Decisions</i>	3.4	1.9		
Unclassified Road Designated to NFS System Roads. Closed to RMV's				
<i>'04* & 05 Decisions</i>	11.8	0.5		
<i>'07 Decisions</i>	2.2			
Roads Decommissioned. Closed to RMV's				
<i>'04* & 05 Decisions</i>				59.4
<i>2006 Decisions</i>				4.3
<i>'07 Decisions</i>	5	6.6		50.2
<i>Sub Total Open To RMV's</i>	22.3	20		0
<i>Sub Total Closed To RMV's</i>	24.2	7.2		114
Total Open to RMV's	42 Miles			
Total Closed to RMV's	145 Miles			

RMV Effects

During the fall of 2007, RMV use within selected areas near the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) were monitored. These surveys were follow-up actions to more extensive RMV monitoring conducted in 2006. The SNF focused these inventories within or adjacent to unique or priority areas including the BWCAW and Landscape Assessment Project areas. Objectives were to: (1) identify and document illegal motorized intrusions into the BWCAW; (2) document compliance with the September 2006-07 ATV Roads and Trails Travel Map; and (3) identify recreation travel management opportunities within project areas.



Trail leading to a created boat landing area at Perent Lake

Changes in Inventoried Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Designated and permitted recreational motorized use resulting from transportation decisions (change in road and/or trail mileage and location) has a direct effect on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) setting on the SNF. The ROS is a formal agency process designed to delineate, define, and integrate outdoor recreation opportunities. ROS designations describe the kind of recreation experience one may have in a given part of the National Forest. There are four opportunities described in Appendix B of the Revised Forest Plan and they include Primitive, Semi-primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM), Semi-primitive Motorized (SPM) and Roaded Natural. Change in ROS opportunities, particularly SPNM, is of interest to Forest Service managers and the public and is the focus of this section of the Monitoring Report. On the SNF, a SPNM ROS is defined as an area that is at least 1,500 acres and at least ½ mile away from roads and motorized trails.

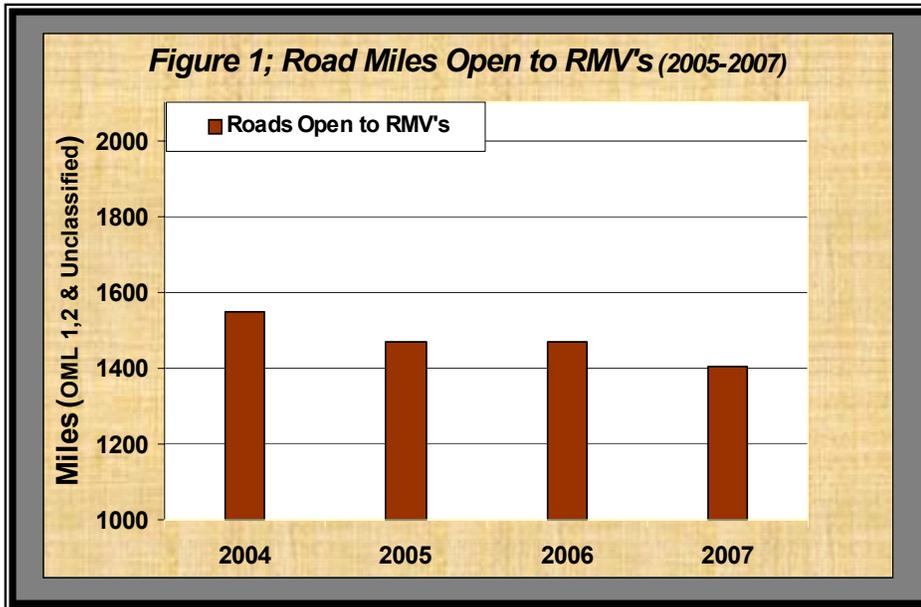
Road management decision effects on SPNM ROS within or immediately adjacent to project areas were documented within nine projects on the SNF. Five of the nine project areas encompassed or included Inventoried SPNM within their boundaries. Table 2 displays the project areas analyzed.

Evaluation and Conclusions

RMV Management and Opportunities

When the Forest Plan was approved in 2004, approximately 1,550 miles of roads were generally open to RMV travel. This includes 1,488 miles displayed in Appendix F of the Final Environmental Impact Statement to the Forest Plan and 61 miles of recently discovered unclassified roads resulting from enhanced inventories conducted the past two years. This open mileage assumes that all summer OML 1 roads, all OML 2 roads, and most unclassified roads are open to RMV's and all winter OML 1 roads, and OML 3, 4, and 5 roads are closed to RMV's (see G-RMV-1 and G-RMV-4, Forest Plan p. 2-44).

Project decisions approved during 2005, 2006, and 2007 have closed or propose to close approximately 145 miles of roads to RMV travel, reducing mileage open to RMV's from approximately 1,550 miles to 1,405 miles. These road closures would be done through road re-designation or road decommissioning. The Forest-wide Travel Management Project is expected to be completed in 2008 and will make changes to the road and trail designations, especially with respect to RMV use. Use of motor vehicles off the designated system, will be prohibited. Figure 1 displays the trend of roads open vs closed to RMV travel from 2004 through 2007.



The Forest Plan states that a maximum of 90 additional ATV trail miles may be added to the designated SNF National Forest Trail System. During 2007 no motorized trails were added to the designated National Forest Trail System. In 2005, 5 miles were added to the System. To date the 5 miles added to the Forest Trail System represent about 5.5 % of the maximum potential amount of 90 miles.

RMV Effects

Unauthorized RMV use and impacts were immediately brought forward to District Rangers and Law Enforcement personnel. Law Enforcement followed up on user created trail use, particularly within the BWCAW and filed incident reports. Several of the incidents are still ongoing. The Districts have addressed motorized incursions into the BWCAW and travel on closed roads outside the wilderness through barricades, road and or trail obliterations, and improved signing.

Due to reduced monitoring during 2007, the extent of unauthorized RMV use as a percentage of roads visited between 2006 and 2007 was not compared. However, as reported in last year's M&E report, the percentage of user created trails encountered decreased between 2005 and 2006 (44% in 2005 compared to 31% in 2006).

Changes in Inventoried Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation Opportunity Spectrum

Road and trail management decisions between 2004 and 2007 did influence existing Inventoried SPNM ROS within the Devils Trout, Tomahawk, Echo Trail, Virginia projects and Whyte project areas as shown in Table 2. Changes were analyzed in all the projects except for the Whyte project which be analyzed during FY 2008. There was a minor increase (22 acres) in the overall Inventoried SPNM ROS. However, when analyzing each project area, SPNM acreage within the Echo Trail project increased by 2,138 acres and the other three project areas had a decrease in inventoried SPNM acreage because of net additional road mileage and/or road location.

Table 2. Changes in Inventoried SPNM Within Project Areas					
Project Name	Inventoried SPNM Acres	SPNM Acres Added	SPNM Acres Lost	Adjusted SPNM Acres	Net Change in Acres
Devil Trout	2,641	0	530	2,111	-530
Tomahawk	2,524	1,338	2,000	1,862	-662
Echo Trail	23,932	2,138	0	26,070	+2,138
Virginia	20,840	17	941	19,916	-924
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>49,937</i>	<i>3,493</i>	<i>3,471</i>	<i>49,959</i>	<i>+22 Acres</i>

In addition, smaller non motorized areas or polygons less than 1,500 acres were created in project areas due to transportation decisions. However, since these new areas were each less than 1,500 acres and did not meet the Minnesota ROS classification, they do not qualify as SPNM ROS. They are important to document and spatially map to assist managers in evaluating or selecting future decisions. Table 3 displays acreages of these small polygons resulting from project transportation decisions.

Table 3. Acres of Small SPNM Polygons by Project Area			
Project Name	# of Polygons	Total SPNM Acres	Average Polygon Size
Devil Trout	1	45	45
Tomahawk	22	2,106	96
Echo Trail	18	1,352	75
Inga South	4	147	37
Tomahawk	2	487	243
Virginia	31	1,629	53

Management Considerations

- * Adjust language and definition in Forest Plan to reflect Travel Management Rule once Forest wide Travel Management Project is implemented.