

(1) Overview

Road Inventories

During 2005 approximately 257 unclassified roads totaling 60 miles were inventoried by the Forest Monitoring crew and others resources, within two project areas. Other inventories were also conducted across the Forest but are not highlighted at this time. The intent of the project inventories was to verify the accuracy of mapped unclassified roads. During the inventories when previously unknown or unmapped roads or user created trails were encountered they were also noted. Following is an example of such an inventory within the Whyte Project Area on the Laurentian Ranger District.



Unmapped Road – not useable



Unmapped Roads with ATV Use

Laurentian District

Unclassified and unmapped roads within Whyte Project Area were inventoried in August and September of 2005 by biological technicians from the SNF Monitoring Program to validate road location and assess current use. Unknown roads are typically roads which exist on GIS data layers but have not been field verified. The Whyte Project area includes approximately 850 miles of classified and unclassified roads and many miles of roads of "unknown status". Of these roads, we were assigned to inspect and photo-document all unknown status roads. Photographs and GPS points were taken at the beginning of each road, at any barrier, culvert, wetland, gravel pit, large mud holes, unusual sights, and at the end of the unknown road. Current motorized use was documented. Environmental impacts (i.e. wetland crossing) resulting from motorized use was noted. The intent of this inventory was to assess only "unknown" roads. Other Forest personnel conducted inventories on known classified and unclassified roads.

Road/stream crossings were also inventoried. Information collected during these surveys included site information, culvert statistics, condition assessments, approach condition, stream geomorphology, fish passage assessment, and photo documentation. Information will be used to prioritize stream crossings and stream reconstruction projects that will promote quality native and desired aquatic species habitats.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

At the time of this report, all accessible and/or existing unknown roads within the Whyte Project Area were surveyed. Table 1 summarizes types of roads encountered and associated miles. We surveyed 41 miles of unknown roads. Roads not surveyed were deemed to be inaccessible, no longer existing, or belonging to ownership, other than the U.S. Forest Service.



Table 1. WHYTE ROAD SURVEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Survey Classification	Current Use	Miles
"Naturally Decommissioned"	atv only	.42
Unclassified Roads Suitable to ATV's only	no motorized use	21.7
Unclassified Roads Suitable to -4wd & ATV;s only	4wd auto	6.7
Unclassified Roads Suitable to all motorized travel	all autos	4.4
ATV User Created Trail		7.78
Total Miles Surveyed		41.00

Table 2. SUMMARY OF ALL PROJECT INVENTORY

Survey Classification	Current Use	Miles
"Naturally Decommissioned"	atv only	4.72
Unclassified Roads Suitable to ATV's only	no motorized use	27.3
Unclassified Roads Suitable to -4wd & ATV;s only	4wd auto	8.5
Unclassified Roads Suitable to all motorized travel	all autos	4.4
ATV User Created Trail		9.6
Total Miles Surveyed		60

Road Decommissioning

During this reporting period approximately 16 roads totaling 2.6 miles were decommissioned. The intended outcome of decommissioned roads is to “make the road disappear to a casual viewer and to render it not drivable from the beginning of a road to the furthest point seen from a Forest system road or other public road”. (Forest Plan Appendix F). A number of practices and techniques were implemented including removal of drainage structures and temporary bridges, removal of ruts and berms, reshaping and re-contouring, seeding and mulching, drainage control, and effective road blockage. Many of these practices and techniques were adopted from earlier projects particularly fuel reduction projects associated with the 1999 blow-down event. Monitoring of decommissioned roads within these earlier projects has been ongoing for several years and found to be successful. Following is a brief summary of our documentation. More complete documentation of road decommissioning on the Forest can be found in Appendix L1.

Kawishiwi District

During the summer of 2005 the effectiveness of fifteen 2001 road decommissioning and watershed improvement projects were assessed within the Kawishiwi District. Photos were taken at all sites. In addition, preexisting photo points were duplicated. At the time of this report, sites visited were in their fourth year of vegetation recovery. General re-vegetation conditions were noted, as well as any off-road and/or ATV use. Following is an excerpt from the complete report. The complete report is shown in appendix L1.

Site 4 Evaluation – Abandoned Road Segment, FR424G (UTM N: 5285235; E: 597109)

History – The old asphalt was removed and boulder field blockage installed 100 yards off of FR 424, near the junction with the snowmobile trail. Road blending into surroundings.



BEFORE. 2000



AFTER. Same Road. 2005.

Gunflint District

On August 29th 2005 the Gunflint Ranger District hosted a field trip with several interested groups to evaluate the success of eight 2001 road decommissioning projects. Overall the groups acknowledged that: **(1)** Re-vegetation was successful, particularly where upright snags and other vegetation were placed in the road prism by the contractor, blurring the line



BEFORE. Gunflint Polygon 156.6.
7/01.



AFTER. Gunflint Polygon 156.6.
6/05.



BEFORE. Cross River Tributary.
7/01.



AFTER. Cross River Tributary.
6/05

between the road and adjacent forest. **(2)** Motorized Use was not observed on any of the obliterated roads. **(3)** Stream restoration work in polygon 202 was successful. **(4)** Scarification of road beds prior to planting or allowing natural re-vegetation. Road beds that were scarified or otherwise loosened had much more robust plant growth than non-scarified road beds.

However, the group expressed concern that several of the obliterated road corridors were still visible to the public and as such could attract unauthorized motorized use. They suggested within the foreground, as viewed from the main road, the FS establish more large shrubs, trees, and snags as done in polygon 36.2. This suggestion was noted by Forest personnel and we will attempt to incorporate these practices when warranted.

The photos at left are excerpts from the complete report. The complete report is shown in appendix L1.

(2) Monitoring Activities

Monitoring Question

To what extent is the Forest, in coordination with neighboring public road agencies, providing the minimum safe, affordable, and minimum impact road system for administrative and public use.

Monitoring Driver(s): Objective. O-TS-3. New roads built to access land for resource management will be primarily OML 1 or temporary and not intended for public motorized use. Temporary roads will be decommissioned after their use is completed. All newly constructed OML 1 roads will be effectively closed to motorized road and recreation vehicles following their use unless they are needed for other management objectives.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
Miles of new OML1 roads built. Miles of new OML1 roads effectively closed to RMV's. Miles of new temporary roads built. Miles of new temporary roads Decommissioned.	Review INFRA data base.	End of each year.	Forest Wide.

Monitoring Driver(s): Objective O-TS-6 & 8. Decisions will be made on Forest unclassified roads to designate them as a NF system road or trail, or to decommission them. The Forest will decommission approximately 80 miles of road over the next 10 to 15 years.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
Miles of Roads/Trails Effectively Decommissioned	Inspect temporary road locations as they are being built, during treatments, between treatments, and after they are closed. Foot surveys will be conducted in order to verify re-vegetation of the road prism and stability of streambanks at former stream crossings and to determine the effectiveness of closures and identify additional work that may be required. Document with photo points & narrative. GPS travel route & photo points.	End of growing season. October.	(1) Silver Island Project Area. (2) Virginia EIS Forest Wide.

(3) Evaluation and Conclusions.

Desired Conditions/Objectives

Monitoring Driver(s): Monitoring Driver(s): Objective. O-TS-3. New roads built to access land for resource management will be primarily OML 1 or temporary and not intended for public motorized use. Temporary roads will be decommissioned after their use is completed. All newly constructed OML 1 roads will be effectively closed to motorized road and recreation vehicles following their use unless they are needed for other management objectives.

2005 Accomplishment During 2005 about 257 unclassified roads totaling sixty were inventoried, GPS'd, and entered into INFRA Roads data base. Most of these unclassified roads were very short in length, with a average length of 0.2 miles.

Decision documents signed under the Revised Forest Plan proposed to add 46 miles of OML 1 roads and 18.4 miles of OML 2 roads to the Forest Service Road system. Of the OML 1 mileage, 41 miles would be converting existing, open, unclassified roads to OML 1 and 5 miles would be newly constructed OML 1 roads. All of the added OML 2 miles would be converted from unclassified status. Consequently 59 miles of unclassified roads were converted to System roads.

2005 Accomplishment Contribution Towards Desired Conditions & Objectives

A. FOREST PLAN DIRECTION/FEIS CONDITION				
Record of Decision (July 2004)	(DECADE 1)		2005 Accomplishments and/or Condition	
Existing Condition	FP DC, Objective, or S&G's	FEIS Projected or Proposed Condition	Actual Accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions+04 EC
Roads in Miles OML1 Roads: 883 OML2 Roads: 867 OML3 Roads: 248 OML4 Roads: 322 OML5Roads: 86 Unclassified: 223		Roads in Miles OML1 Roads: 1132 OML2 Roads: 867 OML3 Roads: 248 OML4 Roads: 322 OML5Roads: 86 Unclassified:0	None actually Accomplished	Roads in Miles OML1 Roads: 46*+883=929 Miles OML2 Roads: 18.4*+867=885 Miles OML3 Roads: 0+248=248 Miles OML4 Roads: 0+322=322 Miles OML5Roads: 0+86=86 Miles Unclassified: 223-59=164 Miles *Includes miles converted from existing unclassified

B. ACHIEVEMENT OF FOREST PLAN DIRECTION/FEIS CONDITION			
% Achievement of Decade 1 Direction/Condition		Trend	
Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions	Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions
None actually Accomplished	Roads in Miles *OML1 Roads: 18% **OML2 Roads: 104% OML3 Roads: 0 OML4 Roads: 0 OML5Roads: 0 Unclassified: +26%	Roads in Miles OML1 Roads: Up OML2 Roads: DOWN OML3 Roads:Acceptable OML4 Roads:Acceptable OML5Roads:Acceptable Unclassified: Up	
*Difference between Existing Condition EC (883 miles) and Decade 1 Projected Decision (1132miles)=244 Miles. NEPA decisions propose adding 46 miles=18% of 244 miles. ***Difference between Existing Condition EC (867 miles) and Decade 1 Projected Decision (867miles)=0 Miles. NEPA decisions propose adding 18 miles=104% of Decade 1 projection.***Difference between Existing Condition EC (223 miles) and Decade 1 Projected Decision (0 miles)=223 Miles. NEPA decisions propose reducing 59 miles=26% of 223 miles.			

Monitoring Driver(s): Monitoring Driver(s): Objective O-TS-6 & 8. Decisions will be made on Forest unclassified roads to designate them as a NF system road or trail, or to decommission them. The Forest will decommission approximately 80 miles of road over the next 10 to 15 years.

2005 Accomplishments. During FY 2005 approximately 2.6 miles of forest system road were decommissioned. In addition approximately 65 miles of roads were identified for decommissioning in the Virginia EIS, Tomahawk EA, and Dunka EA Decision Documents. Decommissioning will begin on these roads in FY 2006.

2005 Accomplishment Contribution Towards Desired Conditions & Objectives

A. FOREST PLAN DIRECTION/FEIS CONDITION				
Record of Decision(7/04)	(DECADE 1)		2005 Accomplishments and/or Condition	
Existing Condition	FP Desired Condition, Objective, or S&G's	FEIS Projected or Proposed Condition	Actual Accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions
Unknown		84 Miles	Miles Decommissioned 2.6	Miles Decommissioned 67.6
B. ACHIEVEMENT OF FOREST PLAN DIRECTION/FEIS CONDITION				
% Achievement of Decade 1 Direction/Condition			Trend	
Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions		Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions
3%	80%		UP	EXPECTED TO EXCEED OBJECTIVE

Standards and Guides

Standard & Guide Descriptor	Standard & Guide Description	Compliance	Remarks
S-TS-1	Newly constructed or reconstructed road and trail crossings of streams will be designed and built to minimize erosion. Surfacing (such as gravel, crushed rock, or asphalt) will be used at all crossings where vegetative cover is either inappropriate or expected to be inadequate for effective long term erosion control. Solid surfaces will be used in the construction or reconstruction of bridge decks on unpaved roads.	Yes	Aquatic passage design criteria.
S-TS-2	During non-frozen road surface conditions, close winter roads to all motor vehicle traffic.	Yes	Timber sale admin & road mgt policy.
G-TS-1	Generally use minimum road and trail design standards to meet the appropriate purpose of the road or trail and to fit the land characteristics (form, line, texture, TEUI units, etc.).	Yes	Forest Plan and FS Manual direction.
G-TS-2	Road or trail reconstruction will generally follow the existing corridor alignments.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Transportation
G-TS-3	New roads and trails constructed in High and Moderate SIO areas will generally blend in with the surrounding landscape as much as practical.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Scenic Integrity.
G-TS-4	Roads and trails will generally be designed so that stream crossings are not located at the low point in the road grade (e.g. avoid bridge and culvert locations where sediment-laden runoff from the road approaches or ditches can collect and directly enter the stream).	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Riparian
G-TS-5	Clearing widths for roads and trails at riparian area crossings will generally be kept to the minimum needed to provide a safe and functional crossing.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Riparian.
G-TS-6	Where practical and beneficial, all stream crossing structures and associated road embankments in the flood-prone areas on OML 1 roads will generally be removed if the road will not be used again within five years.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Vegetation Management
G-TS-7	Construction or reconstruction of permanent roads or parking lots will generally be avoided within the 150 feet of perennial streams or lakes, except in the situations where: a. Physical conditions preclude road locations at distances greater than 150 feet. b. Roads are needed to approach a designated stream crossing or water access site. c. Parking lots are needed to serve a designated water access site.	Yes	Aquatic passage design criteria.
G-TS-8	Adjacent to roads and trails, generally manage erosion and sedimentation to maintain water flow to protect natural stream behavior and allow for natural aquatic species movement.	Yes	
G-TS-9	Where roads and trails cross streams, generally use structures that permit passage for fish and aquatic life and properly distribute flood flow, bankfull flow, and sediment transport capacity. Generally favor bridges and arches (including temporary bridges where appropriate) rather than culverts.	Yes	Forest Plan and FS Manual direction.
G-TS-10	Where ditches are needed, generally use techniques to minimize subsurface flow interception and flow concentration.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Transportation
G-TS-11	Restrictions on using National Forest System roads and trails may be required under certain circumstances, such as short term closures during spring thaw.	Yes	Forest Plan direction – Scenic Integrity.
G-TS-12	On existing OML 1 roads, an effective barrier will generally be installed as needed to prevent use by highway licensed vehicles and ORVs. ATV and OHM use may continue to be allowed on some existing OML 1 roads.	Yes	
S-TS-3	As soon as access use is completed, stabilize temporary roads and effectively close them to motorized traffic. Vegetation will be established within 10 years after the termination of the	Yes	

Standard & Guide Descriptor	Standard & Guide Description	Compliance	Remarks
	contract, lease, or permit.		
G TS-13	Locate temporary roads in areas where they minimize resource damage.	Yes	
G TS-14	Temporary roads are generally not intended for public use, but public use may be temporarily allowed if needed to meet management objectives.	Yes	
S-TS-4	Decommission unclassified roads that are not needed in the National Forest road and trail system and special use permitted roads that are no longer needed. Decommissioning will make the road unusable by motorized vehicles and stabilize the roadbed.	Yes	
G-TS-15	In High and Moderate SIO areas, generally obliterate roads and trails that are decommissioned and restore to a natural appearance.	Yes	

(4) Necessary Follow-up and Management Recommendations

Monitoring Driver	Follow-up Actions
O-TS-3	Monitor closure and subsequent use of new OML 1 roads.

Monitoring Driver	Recommended Management Actions
O-TS-6 & 8	During project planning, consider analyzing and making transportation decisions within entire project planning area including roads not associated with vegetation management projects. <u>Supporting rationale</u> . Recent NEPA decisions have focused on vegetative treatments and associated access roads.
O-TS-6 & 8	Avoid designating rmv use on roads which terminate in sensitive areas that may result in or encourage resource impacts (i.e. wetlands). <u>Supporting rationale</u> Monitoring has shown that several, short roads designated & signed open to ATV's terminated within sensitive habitats (wetlands). Such designations could encourage unauthorized travel and resource damage.
O-TS-6 & 8	Ensure that thorough accurate road inventories are completed and entered into the roads data base before printing next atv map. <u>Supporting rationale</u> . Within a sampled area , several roads (OML 1 & 2 Roads & non system roads) not shown on the forest atv travel map were being used by atv's during the 2005 hunting season. Some of these unmapped roads resulted from incomplete inventories.

(5) Collaborative Opportunities To Improve Efficiency And Quality Of Program

Collaborator/Partner	Monitoring Activity	Accomplishment
DNR/Counties	Coordinate closure of high clearance roads.	Increase efficiencies of closures.