

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 700

ROADS, TRAILS AND ACCESS

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700 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY

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

Many of the existing roads and trails were originally developed as logging roads, forest fire protection lanes, 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.

Over the years, the road density and frequency of vehicle use on the Forest has increased in response to an expanding number of motorized recreational vehicles and to an active timber 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 an integrated access management plan is needed.

Problem areas and reasons for access planning

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.

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

Litter: depositing garbage and waste on the 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.

Clear and concise policy for the public.

705 CHAPTER OBJECTIVES:

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

710 ROADS

Oconto County Forest staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads within the County Forest. These roads may be constructed and maintained by the County. The

specifications for road construction and maintenance will vary with the frequency, duration, and planned use of each road. Three major types of roads occur on the Forest: permanent primary roads; permanent secondary roads, and temporary roads.

New road establishment should consider information identifying areas with sensitive soils or severe slopes that have the potential for adverse water quality impacts from land management practices. County staff can work with local DNR water resources staff to develop site-specific measures where appropriate.

710.1 PERMANENT PRIMARY 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 essential access corridors for multiple use management. Some 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 to accommodate a groomed snowmobile trail.

Some forest roads in this category qualify for the County Forest Road Aids program. Qualifying roads must meet minimum design standards of a 16-foot surface width and a 20-foot roadway width. 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.

OCONTO COUNTY CURRENT AND FUTURE WDOT CERTIFIED

TOWNSHIP	SECTION	LENGTH (MI)	ROAD NAME/COMMENTS
Abrams	4 & 9	1.24	101
	6 & 7	1.78	102
	5	.37	104

	9, 16, & 17	3.55	105
	5 & 6	1.07	106
	7 & 18	2.68	107
Bagley	25	.75	201
	35	.19	202
	26 & 35	3.89	203
	26	.34	204
	20, 21, & 29	1.6	205
	27	1.07	206
	18, 19, & 30	1.67	301
	19	1.14	302
	19 & 30	.92	303
	6	.15	402
Brazeau	7 & 8	1.92	601
	19	.97	603
Breed	1, 11 & 12	2.85	401
	1 & 2	1.08	402
	2	.7	403
	2	.23	404
	21 & 28	2.6	502
	28	.96	503
	19, 20, & 21	1.47	504

Little River	23	.21	700
Morgan	12	.69	103
Stile	27	.14*	
TOTALS		36.09 (MI)	

*() Indicates the mileage of existing roads that will be improved and certified during the next ten years.

These permanent primary roads will be maintained and remain open to public use. Oconto County Forestry Department does not plow County Forest Roads. Road Access permit holders that utilize a County Forest Road to access their property must plow themselves. Oconto County can not be charged and is held harmless for permittee snowplowing. Chapter 900 shows County Forest Roads that are DOT approved.

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. See Chapter 900 for secondary/temporary roads.

Some roads in this category are located in areas on the Forest where motor vehicle use is limited or restricted. In these instances, the roads will be blocked/gated and/or signed. Many of the roads are blocked/gated due to excessive rutting from traffic at late night gatherings. Current roads not blocked/gated will remain open, but will be closed when abuse occurs.

In instances where motorized traffic is restricted, vehicle access will only be authorized for

planned management activities or fire protection. Foot traffic is allowed on all roads.

Forest Units where all secondary roads are closed to all public motorized use except by permit/authorization by committee/forest administrator include:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| 1) Machickanee Unit | 4) How Unit |
| 2) South Bay Shore Unit | 5) Breed Unit |
| 3) North Bay Shore Unit | |

710.3 TEMPORARY ROADS

Many of the roads on the 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. See Chapter 900 for secondary/temporary roads.

Temporary roads on existing and past sales will be closed when sales are closed or deemed necessary by Forestry Department. 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.

720 RECREATIONAL TRAIL ACCESS

This trail network provides access for many recreational opportunities on the Forest. An important role of the Forest is to provide sustainable recreational trails that do not cause long-term natural resource damage, and that are compatible with other uses. Management activities adjacent to recreational trails will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Where deemed necessary, alterations will be made to accommodate the recreational use. The committee has the authority to open, close or relocate trails.

All of the recreational uses of the Forest have corresponding maps in Chapter 900-Appendix.

- 1) Machickanee Cross Country Ski Trails
- 2) Outback Riders Horse Trails
- 3) Dusty Trails ATV Trails
- 4) Snowmobile Trails

720.1 TRAIL CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Requests for recreational trails will be reviewed by the Committee. Groups requesting specific trail development or use must present a plan for the long term funding and maintenance of proposed trails. Organized trail uses and group-sponsored activities must protect Oconto County with \$1,000,000.00 liability insurance coverage and provide a certificate of insurance as proof of coverage.

Construction or maintenance of any recreational trail in which the activity would increase the erosion potential of one acre or more of land is subject to state and federal stormwater runoff requirements (NR216, Wis. Adm. Code and s. 283.33, Wis. Stats). Construction or development for silvicultural purposes is presently exempt from these requirements. Recreational trail development in Oconto County that meets these parameters will employ best management practices for water quality (PUB-FR-093-95) to mitigate any adverse impacts. In addition, an erosion control plan will be prepared for each project depicting the location of the project and surrounding wetlands and what erosion control measures will be employed.

725 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS

725.1 HIKING

725.1.1 Undesignated Hiking Trails

All portions of the County Forest are open to hiking or foot travel unless marked with signs closing an area.

725.1.2 Designated Hiking Trails- None

Nicolet State Recreational Trail

Approximately 3 miles of this state trail border the Oconto Forest. This trail is multi-use and is part of the ATV & Snowmobile Trail System. This trail is closed to hunting.

725.2 BICYCLING

725.2.1 Undesignated Bicycle Trails

All trails, roads, and fire lanes are open for recreational bicycle use. Off-trail mountain bike use may be restricted in specific areas if use causes erosion or other environmental damages.

725.2.2 Designated Bicycle Trails - None

725.3 HORSEBACK RIDING

725.3.1 Undesignated Horseback Riding Trails – Only on horse back trails designated by the Forest, Parks, & Recreation/Land Information Systems Sub Committee.

725.3.2 Designated Horseback Riding Trails

- 1) Outback Riders-Machickanee Forest Unit Only

725.4 CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING

725.4.1 Undesignated Cross-Country Ski Trails

All trails, roads, and fire lanes are open for cross-country skiing. Cross- country skiing on groomed snowmobile trails is discouraged due to serious safety concerns.

725.4.2 Designated Cross-Country Ski Trails

- 1) Machickanee Cross Country Ski Trails

Machickanee Cross Country Ski Trails are regularly groomed ski trails available for public

use on the Forest and are maintained for public skiing under provisions of Special Use Permits with Oconto County. The Machickanee Cross Country Ski Club has agreed to maintain these trails.

725.5 OTHER NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL USE

Other non-motorized recreational trail uses including, but not limited to, snowshoeing, dog sledding and, hunting on foot are permitted on all trails except where otherwise posted as closed.

730 **MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS**

The use of motorized vehicles on the Forest continues to increase. The design, maneuverability, and power of the vehicles have improved. This has led to greater use; increased trail use conflicts, unnecessary environmental damage, and increased expenses for trail maintenance. Additional regulation on these types of recreational vehicles is needed to protect the Forest and limit adverse impacts on non-motorized uses.

730.1 SNOWMOBILING

730.1.1 Undesignated Snowmobile Trails

Only on designated trails authorized by the Forest, Parks, & Recreation/Land Information Systems Sub Committee.

730.1.2 Designated Snowmobile Trails

Two types of groomed snowmobile trails are authorized on the Forest: state-funded trails and local club trails. Annual agreements outline the operation, maintenance, and insurance obligations between Oconto County and local snowmobile clubs.

State trails: A system of state approved and funded snowmobile trails is authorized on designated trails. This system is part of the statewide network of snowmobile trails which links Oconto County with adjoining counties as well as the rest of the

state. Snowmobile registration and out-of-state user fees are used to support trail development, signing, maintenance, grooming and bridge construction.

Local trails: A smaller network of local club-sponsored snowmobile trails is also permitted on designated trails, logging roads, and fire lanes. Maintenance of these trails is supported by club membership fees and fund raising activities.

DNR's Trail Signing Handbook will be used as the guide for posting standardized signs and will assist in promoting uniformity for trail signing throughout the county. Only trail signs that provide information for safety, regulations, or trail directions will be permitted. Private and business signs are not authorized on the Forest. All trail signs must be mounted on wooden or metal posts.

730.1.3 Designated County Forest Road Snowmobile Route

Designated County Forest Road Snowmobile Routes are designed to give public access from residential area's to Funded Trail System or to connect to funded trail segments. Following are the designated County Forest Snowmobile Route:

- 1) South Peshtigo Brook Unit
 - County Forest Road 201
 - County Forest Road 203
 - County Forest Road 205
 - County Forest Road 302
 - County Forest Road 303
 - County Forest Road 401
 - County Forest Road 402
- 2) North Peshtigo Brook Unit
 - County Forest Road 601
- 3) Machickanee Forest Unit
 - County Forest Road 101
 - County Forest Road 102

- County Forest Road 107

730.2 ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATV)

730.2.1 Undesignated ATV Trails

Only on designated trails authorized by the Forest, Parks, & Recreation/Land Information Systems Sub Committee.

730.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

Dusty Trails ATV Trail

Designated ATV trails are; state funded. State funded trails run both in the summer and fall months. Summer trails are open from May 1st through October 31st. The county has contracts with Dusty Trails, ATV Club and organizations for the grooming, brushing, signing and maintenance of these trails.

730.2.3 Designated County Forest Road ATV Routes

Designated County Forest Road ATV Routes are designed to give public access from residential area's to Funded Trail System or to connect to funded trail segments. Following are the designated County Forest ATV Route:

- 1) South Peshtigo Brook Unit
 - County Forest Road 205
 - County Forest Road 302
 - County Forest Road 303
 - County Forest Road 401
 - County Forest Road 402
- 2) North Peshtigo Brook Unit
 - County Forest Road 601

730.3 OTHER MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL VEHICLE TRAILS

730.3.1 Undesignated

Vehicles currently registered with the WI DOT are permitted on existing trails that are 12

feet (clear) and not closed by a gate, berm, obstacle and not designated for other recreational use, (see Chapter 900 for ordinance).

730.3.2 Designated - None

735 RESTRICTED ACCESS AREAS

In addition to providing trails for motorized vehicle use, the Forest may also provide and designate areas where motorized equipment is not permitted unless authorized by the Committee/Forest Administrator. 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. The following areas have been designated as restricted access areas on the Oconto County Forest:

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1) Butler Rock | 4) Weso Flowage |
| 2) Brazeau Swamp | 5) Indian Mounds |
| 3) Wolf Marsh | |

740 WATER ACCESS

As a result of the wide distribution of lakes, streams, rivers, and other surface waters on the Forest, water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall Forest access management plan. Several boat landings, canoe landings, and adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest primarily for recreational activities. In addition, these water access points also provide water supply points for fire apparatus working to suppress forest fires or nearby structural fires.

The existing water access points will be maintained to provide a place to launch a small fishing boat or canoe. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. These landings are built for public use and not for private boat mooring sites. Mooring or storing

boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

The following public boat access sites have been developed on the Oconto Forest and are open to public use:

- 1) Patzer Park
- 2) North Bay Shore Park
- 3) Underwood Lake
- 4) Weso Flowage Access

740.1 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS SITES MAINTAINED BY OCONTO COUNTY FOREST

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Machickanee Flowage | 5. North River Road Access |
| 2. Chute Pond | 6. Iron Bridge Access |
| 3. Pensaukee Landing | 7. Anderson Lake |
| 4. Riverside Park | 8. Grange Park |

740.2 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS SITES MAINTAINED BY TOWNS.

None on County Forest Property.

740.3 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS SITES MAINTAINED BY DNR.

None on County Forest Property.

740.4 UNDEVELOPED WATER ACCESS POINTS

Other undeveloped water access points for canoes and boats currently exist on the Forest. These are used routinely to hand launch boats or canoes but have not been developed for boat trailer launching. These sites are not routinely maintained and may be closed if erosion damage becomes severe. All new sites for developed water access must be reviewed and approved by the Committee.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1) Bass Lake | 4) Reader Lake |
| 2) Holt Lake | 5) Cooley Lake |

3) Perch Lake

6) Wolf Marsh

745 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, water craft, or snowmobiles except when snow covered. In general, all or most of the shorelines of these lakes and streams are owned by Oconto County. Counties 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. On the Oconto County Forest the following lakes are designated as “Wild Lakes”:

1. Lost Lake-Town of Brazeau
2. Kobus Lake-Town of Brazeau
3. Marsh Lake-Town of Brazeau
4. Holt Lake-Town of Brazeau
5. Ponsegrau Lake-Town of Bagley
6. Reservation Lake-Town of Breed
7. No Man’s Lake-Town of Bagley
8. Perch Lake-Town of Brazeau
9. Turtle Lake-Town of Bagley
10. No Name-SENE 25-30-18-Town of Bagley
11. No Name-SENW 25-30-18-Town of Bagley
12. No Name-SESE 34-30-18-Town of Bagley
13. No Name-SESW 2-31-18-Town of Brazeau
14. No Name-NENE 11-31-18-Town of Brazeau

750 WETLANDS

In addition to surface waters, all wetlands on the Forest are closed to motorized recreational vehicle use when soils are not frozen. Vehicle use during non-frozen seasons causes soil rutting, compaction and damage to vegetation. The wetlands are not listed individually here

but include all areas where soils, groundwater or surface waters support the growth of vegetation commonly associated with wetland plant communities.

755 ACCESS TO PRIVATE LANDS

Applications by private parties to build or improve access roads through County Forest land will be considered by the Committee on a case-by-case basis. The following stipulations will be adhered to before an "Access Permit" is granted.

1. Access across County Forest lands must be demonstrated by the applicant as the route of last resort. Proposed uses must be documented by the applicant.
2. No legal easement will be granted, just permission to cross county lands.
3. The permit is non-transferable. New landowners must apply to continue the land use agreement.
4. Road improvements and upgrading must be approved and will be supervised by the Forestry Department staff. Prior notification of five (5) days is required before work starts.
5. All wood cut is the property of Oconto County and may be sold back to permittee at current Oconto County price in Timber Sale Hand Book.
6. Roadway must be opened to the public through county land. No gate may be erected on county land unless authorized by committee.
7. The County continues full ownership of the improved roadway; however, it shall not be liable for maintenance or upkeep of the road.
8. Permittee waives any rights to any declaration of ownership or interest in the road on county land for administrative costs as a result of this "Access Permit". The access permit is granted upon the signature and any fees being received by the Oconto County Forestry Department.
9. The fee schedule for a two year permit is set at \$25.00 (or current fee) and then renewed every two years for \$25.00 (or current fee). If permittee has a home for the access permit, the access permit will be automatically renewed unless permittee violates terms of permit.
10. The standard Road Access permit is included as an exhibit in Chapter 900.

760 PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS

Access of the County Forest for utility reasons is covered under Chapter 500, Special Uses.

765 BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The layout and construction of any new road or trail situated on the County Forest shall adhere to *Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for Water Quality* (PUB-FR-093-95). This access management plan addresses the need and diversity level of forest roads and trails within the County Forest. Chapter 6 of the BMP Manual provides guidelines for road construction. Areas with highly erodable soil types, close proximity to streams or lakes, or steep slopes are identified on the erosion susceptibility map included in Chapter 900-appendix. Soil disturbance activities in these areas may require mitigating measures in excess of those currently listed in the Best Management Practices manual PUB-FR-093-95. Wider buffers, sediment control structures and water diversion techniques will be used as appropriate in these sensitive areas.

770 SIGNS

Signs on the County Forest will be used discreetly to perform and function with minimal disruption to the multiple uses of the Forest. Private signs promoting personal, commercial or political objectives will not be permitted without authorization from Oconto County. Signs erected by the county for management purposes or by non-profit recreational trail groups will be as follows:

1. Informational Type Signs
 - A. Interpretive Signs - to educate the general public about forest management practices.
 - B. Public Land Signs - to identify the land as Oconto County Forest property.
 - C. Trail Markers - to provide direction and safety to trail users.
 - D. Scientific, Historical or Geological Markers - to identify points of

interest.

E. Recreational Facility Markers - to identify park entrances, etc.

F. Directional Markers.

2. Regulatory Type Signs - to regulate the use of the Forest in specific areas.

770.1 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 treated wood posts or steel approved posts.
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 trails must conform to state standards and be approved by the committee.
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 Forestry staff. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during removal. Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under s. 943.13(3), Wis. Stats.