LINCOLN COUNTY FOREST FIFTEEN-YEAR 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 Lincoln County Forest require several different types of access. Since the Forest is large and diverse, a broad network of access routes has 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 on the Lincoln County Forest 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 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.

Lincoln County, along with a Citizen's Advisory Group, embarked on a plan to involve the public in the process of developing an Access Plan for the Lincoln County Forest. The intention of the Citizen's Advisory Group was to promote awareness of conflicts and reduce and resolve those conflicts. Ongoing cooperation and respect for other users, along with public involvement are essential in making the Access Plan a good working document. The result of this 2-year process can be found in this chapter. A copy of "The Lincoln County Forest Access Plan," adopted by the Lincoln County Board of Supervisors in May of 2004, is appended in Chapter 900. The Access Plan is a tool that can be used by the Committee and Forestry Department personnel to implement procedures that will enhance uses of Forest resources.

LIST OF 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.

Damage to access: rutted or impassable roads requiring costly repair by the County or other specific user groups.

Law Enforcement: protection of the public and the County's natural resources.

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.

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 with 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 compliments the economic, environmental, and social interest in the County Forest.
3. Identify the existing and future County Forest roads eligible for transportation aids

under §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

Lincoln County Forest staff will oversee the construction and maintenance of all roads within the County Forest. 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: primary roads, secondary roads, and temporary roads. Foot traffic is allowed on all 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 PRIMARY 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. 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 or ski trail.

Forest roads in this category qualify for the County Forest Road Aids program. 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 §86.31(1), Wis. Stats.

LINCOLN COUNTY WDOT CERTIFIED ROADS

ROAD NAME	LENGTH (MI)	TOWNSHIP
Horn Lake Road	3.70	Birch/Merrill/Schley
Camp Ave.	6.60	Harding/Tomahawk
Swamp Road	2.69	Tomahawk
Cinder Road	2.70	Harrison
Wildwood Ave	4.55	Tomahawk
Poplar Road	2.66	Tomahawk
Armstrong Creek Road	3.54	Tomahawk
Ament Lake Road	0.71	Harrison
High Lake Road	0.10	Harrison
TOTAL	27.25	

These permanent primary roads will be maintained and remain open to public use. These roads must be designated as a snowmobile or ATV route to be open for snowmobile or ATV use.

710.2 SECONDARY ROADS

Secondary roads are defined in Lincoln County's Forest Access Plan as roads or woods trails which have been approved by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Department; are not eligible for county forest road aid payments; have been developed primarily for use in the management and protection of the forest or for recreational use and receive maintenance or improvements periodically by the County Forestry staff or its agents.

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 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.

Some roads in this category are located in areas of the Forest where motor vehicle use is limited or restricted. In these instances, the roads will be blocked and/or signed as restricted.

In instances where motorized traffic is restricted or protection of the resource is a concern, vehicle access will only be authorized for planned management activities, fire protection or by permit.

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.

Temporary roads on existing and past sales will be considered for closure. Reasons will include protection of natural resources, 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 or location, potential use, and soil type.

720 RECREATIONAL TRAIL ACCESS

Lincoln County Forest's trail network provides access for many recreational opportunities. 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 minimize the effects to the recreational use. The Committee has the authority to open, close or relocate trails. Many of the recreational uses of the Forest have corresponding maps in Chapter 900-Appendix.

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 Lincoln County with liability insurance coverage as determined by the Committee and provide a certificate of insurance as proof of coverage.

Construction 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 (NR 216, Wis. Adm. Code and §283.33, Wis. Stats). Construction or development for silvicultural purposes is presently exempt from these requirements. Recreational trail development in Lincoln County will employ Best Management Practices for water quality (PUB-FR-093-95) to mitigate any adverse impacts. For projects requiring a stormwater permit, an erosion control plan may be prepared. The plan will depict the location of the project and surrounding wetlands and will indicate erosion control measures to be employed.

725 NON-MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL TRAILS

725.1 HIKING TRAILS

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

<u>Ice Age Trail</u>

The Harrison, Underdown, New Wood, and Turtle Rock segments of the Ice Age Trail cross the Forest. This trail follows the end moraines of the most recent glaciations in Wisconsin. The Ice Age Trail Council will coordinate the construction and maintenance as approved by the Committee.

<u>Otter Lake Nature Trail</u>

Nature hiking trails presently exist at Otter Lake Park. A minimum disturbance of nature will

be practiced when developing study and/or nature trails. This includes minimum but adequate signing.

Other Trails

Plans are in place to develop additional walking and nature trails in the Roothouse Lake Special Use Area and also at Prairie Dells Scenic Area.

Management practices on and adjacent to these designated trails will be designed to minimize disruption to the trail and its users. Temporarily rerouting the trail to avoid conflict and safety concerns may be necessary. Trees and signing identifying the trail will be maintained and protected if possible. Trails bisecting timber sales will be cleared of trees and logging debris daily.

725.2 BICYCLE TRAILS

725.2.1 Undesignated Bicycle Trails

Bicycle travel is allowed on all primary roads year round, and on all secondary roads from May 1-March 31 unless posted closed. Bicycle travel is prohibited on winter recreational trails after grooming activities for these trails have begun. Cross-country travel is prohibited due to environmental concerns. It is suggested that cyclists wear blaze orange during any deer rifle season.

725.2.2 Designated Bicycle Trails

The Underdown Block features 3 mountain biking trail loops which consist of a 15, 10, and 5 mile long trail. The Northcentral Chapter of Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycling Association (WORBA) has produced maps for these trails. A copy of the Mountain Bike Trail Map can be found in Chapter 900, Appendix.

725.3 HORSEBACK RIDING TRAILS

725.3.1 Undesignated Horseback Riding Trails

Equestrian travel is allowed on primary roads year round, and on secondary roads from May 1-March 31 unless posted closed. Equestrian travel is prohibited on winter recreational trails after grooming activities for these trails have begun. Cross-country travel is prohibited due to environmental concerns. It is suggested that horseback riders wear blaze orange during any

deer rifle season.

725.3.2 Designated Horseback Riding Trails

There is a bridle trail located in the Underdown Block of the Lincoln County Forest. This trail receives use by local clubs and organized groups for occasional riding events. Individuals and family groups are also frequent users of the trail. The Underdown Horse Club will coordinate construction and maintenance of the trail as approved by the Committee. A horse trailer camping facility is also available for use at "Horsemans Park," located at the trailhead area in the Underdown. This facility is not exclusive to the horseback riding public.

725.4 CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS

725.4.1 Undesignated Cross-County Ski Trails

It is the policy of the Committee to provide cross-country skiing opportunities on the County Forest. Forest management activities may dictate a specific trail facility be temporarily closed or relocated. It will be the goal to offer both ski-skating and diagonal skiing facilities and to include a variety of types of terrain and scenery.

725.4.2 Designated Cross-Country Ski Trails

The Underdown Block contains a marked and regularly groomed ski trail which is available for public use on the Forest. This trail network consists of a 5k, 12k, and 18k loop with various cutoffs. Between the dates of December 1 and March 31, no person shall operate any type of unapproved motorized or non-motorized vehicle or ride any horse on this trail after grooming activities have commenced.

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 grooming activities are occurring for a designated use or where trails are posted 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. Trails must conform to State guidelines.

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 except as outlined in the general guidelines found in the Signage Chapter of the Lincoln County Forest Access Plan. All trail signs must be mounted on wooden or metal posts.

730.1 SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

730.1.1 Undesignated Snowmobile Trails

Primary roads will be closed to snowmobile use unless posted open. Secondary roads will be closed to snowmobile use when designated by the presence of gates, signs, rocks, berms, or any other device placed by the County or its designee for the purpose of blocking a road. Cross-country use is not permitted.

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 Lincoln County and local snowmobile clubs. These trails may be open by the County Snowmobile Coordinator between the dates of Dec. 1 and March 31 when conditions are favorable.

730.1.2.1 State Trails

A system of State approved and funded snowmobile trails is authorized on designated trails, logging roads, and fire lanes. This system is part of the statewide network of snowmobile trails which links Lincoln 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.

730.1.2.2 Club 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. All snowmobile trails on Lincoln County Forest property are closed to any type of unauthorized motorized vehicle, mountain bike or equestrian traffic from December 1 - March 31 after grooming activities for these trails have commenced. When vehicle use is authorized for timber sale activities, the contractor must maintain the trail in a safe condition, free from debris and equipment, and with ample snowpack. Trail width shall not exceed 16 feet on the Lincoln County Forest.

730.2 ALL TERRAIN VEHICLE (ATV) TRAILS

730.2.1 Undesignated ATV Trails

Primary roads will be closed to ATV use unless posted open. Secondary roads will be closed to ATV use when designated by the presence of gates, signs, rocks, berms or any other device placed by the County or its designee for the purpose of blocking a road. All secondary roads will be closed to motorized use from March 31 - May 1. Cross-country ATV use is prohibited on the County Forest.

730.2.2 Designated ATV Trails

Two types of designated ATV trails exist; summer trails and winter trails. Trail use may be temporarily closed for protection of the Forest resources. The County maintains or has contracts with local clubs and organizations for the grooming, brushing and signing of these trails.

730.2.2.1 Summer ATV Trails

Summer ATV trails are open for use except from December 1 - May 1 or when posted closed.

730.2.2.2 Winter ATV Trails

Winter ATV trails may be open between December 1 - March 31. Between the dates of December 1 - March 31 no person shall operate any type of unapproved motorized

vehicle on a snowmobile, ATV, or cross-country ski trail after grooming activities for these trails have commenced. No person shall operate an ATV on any snowmobile trail within the County between these dates when the temperature on the trail at a point four feet above the trail surface is 28 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. Winter ATV trails will not be opened until 7 days after the State funded snowmobile trail system is officially opened.

730.3 OTHER MOTORIZED RECREATIONAL VEHICLE TRAILS

Motorized recreational use of the Lincoln County Forest is prohibited on those trails designated for other recreational uses or where trails are rocked, bermed, gated or otherwise blocked. Cross-country use of the Forest for motorized use is prohibited. Non-licensed, moto-cross dirt bikes are not allowed on County Forest property.

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. 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 Lincoln County Forest (See Lincoln County Forest Access Plan, appended in Chapter 900 for further information):

Mail Route Block

Wildwood Block

Underdown Block- Core Area

Harrison Block- Wirth Property and approved surrounding area

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. 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.

740.1 PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS SITES MAINTAINED BY LINCOLN COUNTY FORESTRY, LAND AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

1. Horn Lake
2. Luecks Lake
3. Kordick Lake
4. Otter Lake
5. Tahoe Lake
6. Ament Lake
7. Fox Lake
8. Harrison Flowage

740.2 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.

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 fee is $100.00 plus the cost of filing plus any costs incurred by the County. The permit is non-transferable and solely for the accommodation of Permittee. If additional time and material is required to establish access site, the Permittee agrees to reimburse the County for said expense.
4. Accessway improvements and upgrading must be approved and will be supervised by the Lincoln County Forest Administrator. Prior notification of ten (10) days is required before work starts.
5. All wood cut is the property of Lincoln County.
6. Roadway must be opened to the public through County land. No gate may be erected on County land without permission.
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 Lincoln County Forestry Department.

The standard Land Use Agreement Access permit is included as an exhibit in Chapter 900.

760 PUBLIC UTILITY ACCESS

Access of the County Forest for utility reasons is covered in Chapter 500(515.5), 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. Soil disturbance activities in areas with highly erodable soil types, close proximity to streams or lakes, or steep slopes 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 the Committee. The DNR handbook on signing, and each individual user groups formal agreement with Lincoln County shall be consulted for trail signing guidelines. 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 Lincoln 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. The Lincoln County Access Plan Signage Chapter can be found in the Lincoln County Forest Access Plan, appended in Chapter 900.

1. All signs will be mounted on treated wood posts or steel 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 and ATV 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 Forestry personnel. No compensation will be afforded for loss or damage to signs during removal. Individuals erecting unauthorized signs may be prosecuted under §943.13(3), Wis. Stats.