

Recreation: Recreational Motor Vehicles (RMV's)

(1) Overview

The 2004 Forest Plan states (D-REC-1) that The Forest provides a range of quality motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities to satisfy diverse public interests while maintaining sustainable ecosystems." The Forest will provide RMV road and trail riding opportunities with experiences in a variety of forest environments (D-RMV-1) ..." and also provide "foot travel throughout the Forest for the wide spectrum of recreation activities and opportunities.....(D-REC-9). To achieve this balance the Forest Plan prohibited cross-country travel of ATVs, Off-highway motorcycles, and four-wheel drive trucks on the Superior National Forest. Cross-country travel is defined as public use of these vehicles off or a designated trail or existing road. ATV and off-highway motorcycles are allowed on most existing low standard roads that are managed for use by high clearance vehicles. In addition, many unclassified roads will continue to be available for use by ATVs and off-highway motorcycles, until such time as a decision is made on the disposition of these unclassified roads. Roads where use by ATVs, off-highway motorcycles and four-wheel drive trucks is inappropriate or would cause unacceptable resource damage are closed to such use. Following are discussions on RMV activity, effects, opportunities, and guidance documented during 2005.

Status of Travel management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use

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, effective November 9, 2005, 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 and 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 enhance management of National Forest System lands; 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.

Collaboration

Collaborative Motorized Recreation Planning with Counties

In collaboration with the State of MN, Cook County, 1854 Authority, and Grand Portage Band of Chippewa a team has been chartered to identify current and potential opportunities in providing ATV routes and trails within Cook County. This process includes conducting appropriate public involvement and completing NEPA requirements and documentation. In addition the

team is to review all unclassified roads within Cook County to determine their appropriate designation. General timeline identifies completion of this project during FY 2006. Once completed, the team will conduct the same process in Lake and St. Louis Counties.

Field Trips



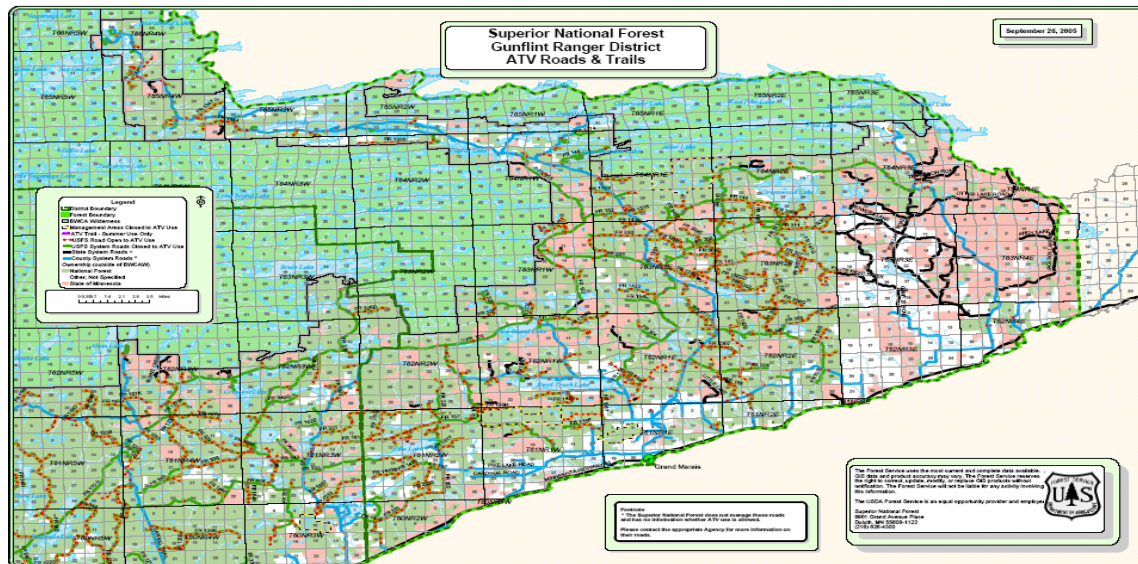
Figure 1. April 29th 2005 Field Trip

During FY 2005 the Forest pursued opportunities to engage interested publics on RMV issues as part of project planning. Two such field trips were held where various topics including RMV opportunities were discussed. Participants represented a broad range of interests.

Road Inventories

In order for the public to know where they are permitted to ride ATV's, it was important to produce an ATV use map. ATV use maps for each ranger district were first made available to the public in the fall of 2004. Inventory and monitoring was necessary for the Forest Service to implement these new policies. Therefore, Forest Service field crews worked to update road locations on national forest system lands, including unclassified roads. During 2005 about 257 unclassified roads, totaling fifty-one and a half miles, were inventoried. Also noted were roads where use would cause resource damage. Moreover, 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. Based on inventories, recent decisions and internal and public feedback, the map was updated in 2005 (Figure 1) and made available to the public. Along with these maps, the Forest Supervisor signed a Forest order that listed all roads open to ATV use and all roads closed to ATV use. Open and closed roads and trails were clearly marked on the



ground (Figure 2). News releases were periodically issued to remind the public of the off-highway vehicle policies (Figure 4). The maps, signing and information helped to meet Forest Plan desired conditions. D-RMV-2 states "Allowed, restricted, and prohibited RMV uses are clearly defined to the public." D-RMV-1 states "The Forest provides RMV road & trail riding opportunities..."



Figure 2 – Road Open to ATV Use

1 2 3 4 5 6

Press Release: Hunting and ATV use

USDA Forest Service

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November 1, 2005
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REMINDER TO HUNTERS AND OTHER VISITORS HEADED TO THE SUPERIOR NATIONAL FOREST

Visitors are welcome to hunt on Forest Service lands inside the Superior National Forest as long as safety rules are followed and State, federal, and tribal hunting regulations are observed. Use of all terrain vehicles within the Forest is allowed only on designated roads or trails. Permanent hunting stands or permanent hunting blinds are illegal on national forest lands.

Updated maps are available that show where ATVs may be used on Superior National Forest lands. Generally, ATV use is allowed on two Forest Service designated trail-systems, on low maintenance roads, and on unclassified roads on Forest lands, unless posted closed. Cross-country ATV travel is prohibited and ATV travel is not allowed in ditches or shoulders of National Forest roads. Visitors may contact the closest Superior National Forest Ranger District Office for specific information about areas open for ATV use. ATV riders are encouraged to follow "Tread Lightly" principles that include avoiding soft ground or water bodies and respecting other uses.

Hunters may use portable hunting stands that do not damage live trees and that are removed at the end of the hunt. Portable stands are defined as those that are chained, belted, clamped, or tied with rope and do no permanent damage. A free-standing blind or elevated stand that is removable may also be used. Portable hunting stands and blinds may be set up one week prior to the hunt and must be removed within one week after the hunt.

Figure 4.

RMV Impacts

Regulation 36 CFR 219.21[g] states that the Forest Service will “evaluate the potential effects of vehicle use off roads...” During 2004 and 2005 surveys/inventories were done and impacts most notably user created trails and cross county travel were documented in several locations (Figures 3 & 4). Several user created trails were constructed to access hunting locations (deer stands) and trout stocked lakes.



FIGURE 3. Cross Country ATV Impacts



FIGURE 4. User Created ATV Trail

OHV Travel Compliance

Recognizing that much of the OHV use is associated with the fall hunting season, FS employees conducted surveys across the Forest to document compliance with the 2004 and 2005 ATV Travel maps.

Following are brief summaries of the Forest Wide and Project Area surveys (More complete write-ups can be found in Appendix K-Recreation Motor Vehicles):

Forest Wide Surveys

Prior to, during, and immediately following the deer rifle hunting season Law enforcement and other personnel on the Superior National Forest conducted patrols and other surveys to assess compliance with the 2004 and 2005 Forest Motorized Vehicle policy. Table 1 displays incidents encountered across the Forest. and Figures 5 & 6 display where those incidents occurred. See Appendix M (Law Enforcement Summary) for more complete description of Travel regulations and restrictions.

TABLE 1. OHV INCIDENTS REPORTED DURING 2005.

INCIDENT	INCIDENT	REMARKS
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON FOREST DEVELOPED ROAD OPERATING ATV WITH MORE THAN ONE PERSON ON ATV THAN IT WAS DESIGNED FOR	
OHV	PROHIBITED USE OF ATV ON FOREST DEVELOP ROAD	
OHV	ATV ON TRAIL	trail closed to such use.
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON SNOWMOBILE TRAIL OPERATING ATV WITH MORE THAN ATV IS DESIGNED FOR	CARIBOU TRAIL SNOWMOBILE TRAIL
OHV	OPPERATING ATV CROSS COUNTRY	
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON FOREST DEVELOPMENT ROAD	
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON FOREST DEVELOPMENT ROAD	
OHV	MOTORIZED VEHICLES IN NON MOTOR AREA	Operating an ATV on a road closed to such use.
OHV	CROSS COUNTRY TRAVEL W/ATV	
OHV		Cross country travel w/atv.
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS	OPERATE ATV ON PROHIBITED ROAD	Verbal warning per new OHV rules. Order R909-04-05
OHV	RP CAME INTO SUF SO TO CHECK REGULATIONS AND REPORT VIOLATIONS	RP IS ADJACENT PROPERTY OWNER AND WISHES NOT TO IDENTIFY VIOLATORS AT THIS TIME.
OHV	OPERATING ATV CROSS COUNTRY	
OHV	OPERATING ATV OFF ROAD	Operating an ATV on a road closed to such use.
OCCUPANCY USE	USE OF MOTOR VEHICLE OF FOREST ROADS	
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON FOREST DELOP ROAD OML3-5	
OHV		ATV cross country use - tracks left
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		operating an ATV in campground on National Forest roads
OHV	OPERATING ATV ON FOREST DEVELOP ROAD	
OCCUPANCY USE	TWO (2) ILLEGAL ATV TRAILS	RECENT USE
OCCUPANCY USE	ILLEGAL ATV TRAIL	MAINTAINED THIS YEAR. BRUSH AND SMALL TREES CUT. AT OR NEAR CANDIDATE RESEARCH NATURAL AREA.
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		operating a dirt bike in campground on National Forest Develop Road.
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		operating ATV in campground on National Forest Developed road.
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		operating an ATV in campground on national Forest Develop roads
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		operating an ATV in campground on national Forest Develop roads
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS		4X4 traffic through ditch and over berm onto closed road.
FOREST ROADS/TRAILS	USE OF VEHICLE WHICH IS PROHIBITED	four different ORV 's driving on Echo Trail between campground and Little Indian Sioux River.

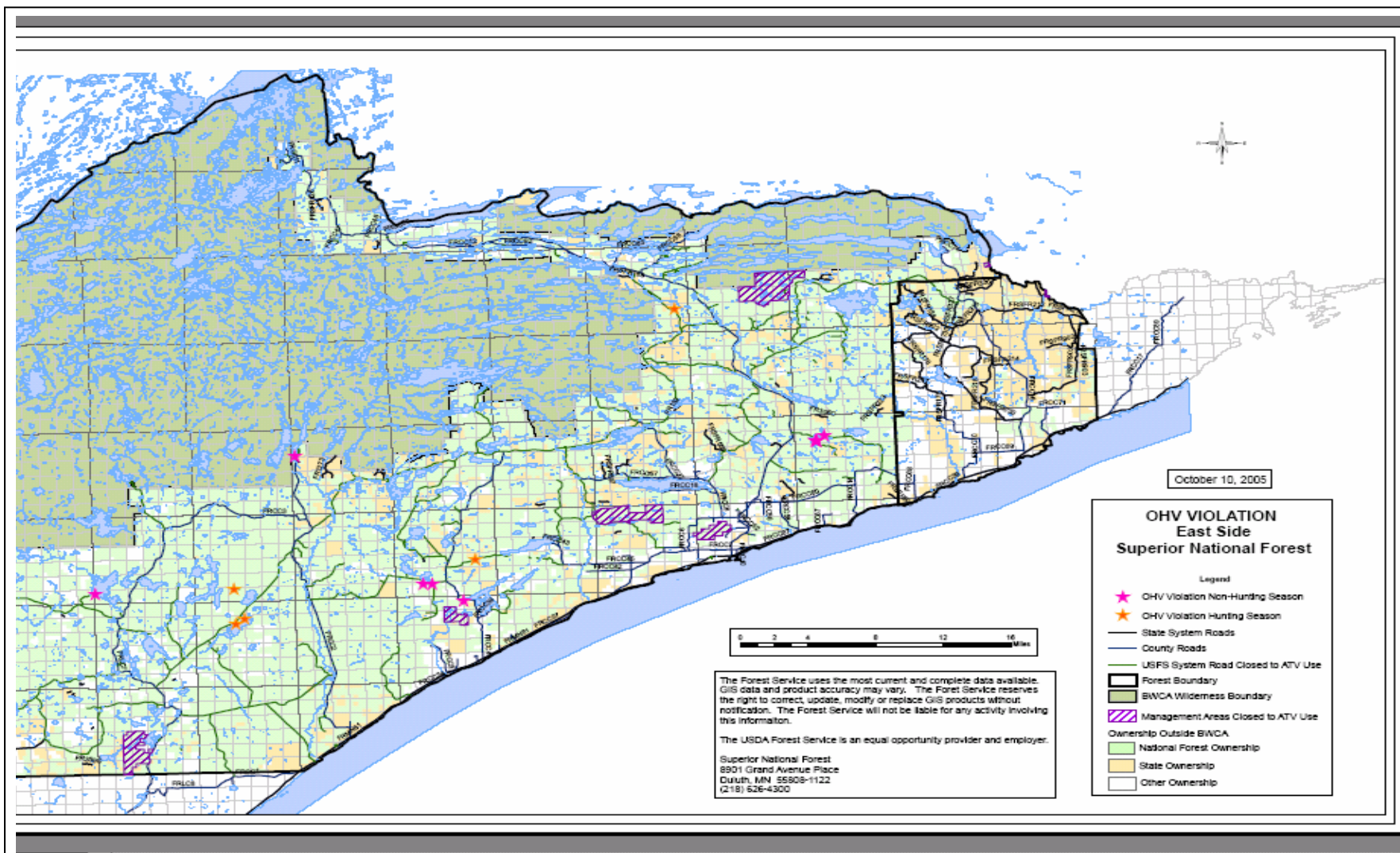


Figure 5 OHV Violations. East Side of Forest

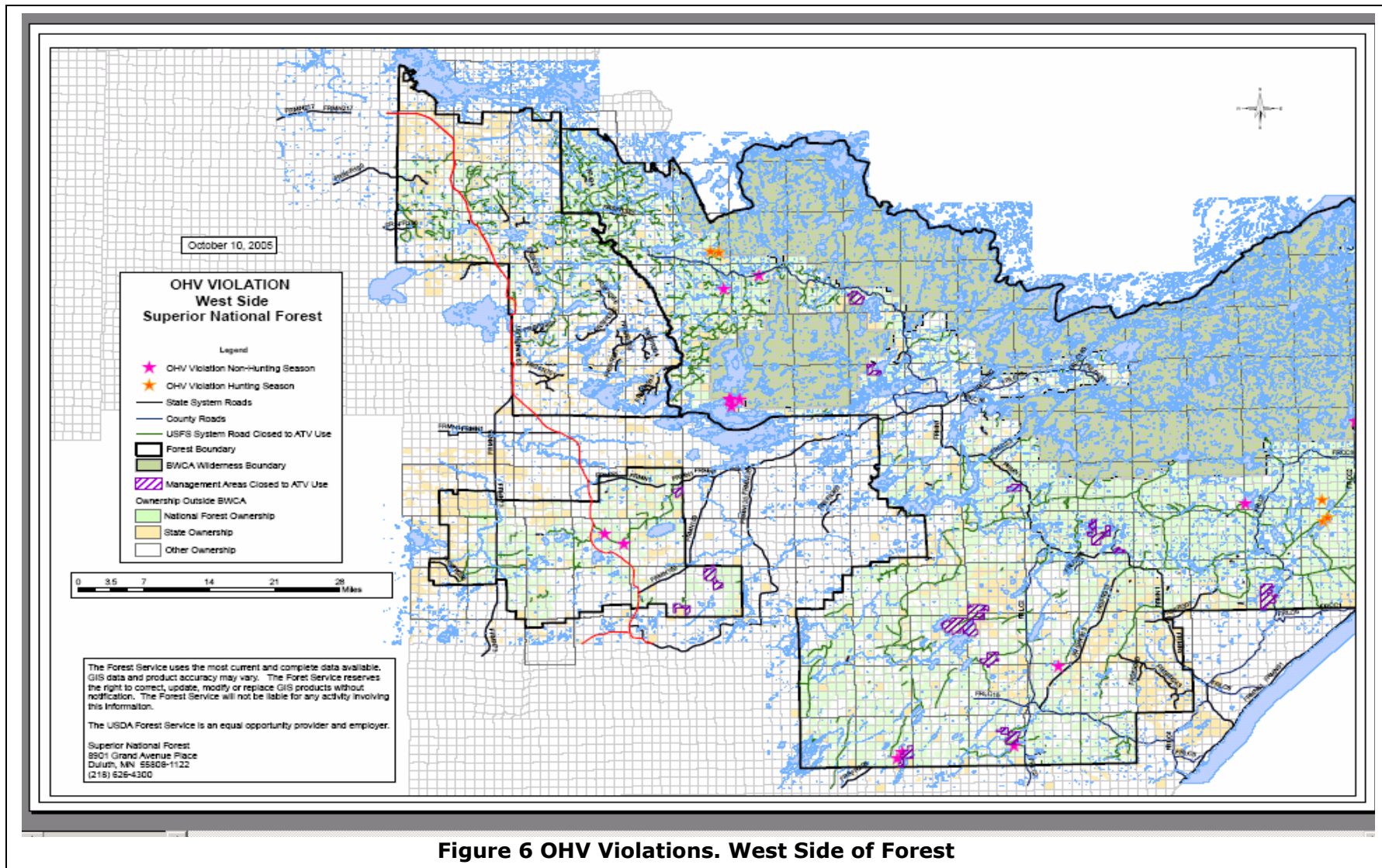


Figure 6 OHV Violations. West Side of Forest

Project Area Compliance Surveys

Prior to, during, and immediately following the deer rifle hunting season monitoring crew sampled 23 roads/trails within three project areas to assess compliance with the 2004 and 2005 Forest Motorized Vehicle policy.

Within the three Project areas, 3 of 23 roads shown as "System Roads Closed to ATV's" on the ATV Map had evidence of ATV use before or during the 1st day of hunting season. In addition ATV cross country travel (including 2 user created trails into the BWCAW) occurred 10 times and motorized use upon roads not shown on the ATV map were observed at three points within the project areas immediately prior to the hunting season (See Table 2). The illegal use into the Wilderness resulted from user created trails and did not result or originate from recent management activities such as timber sales. Moreover, none of the roads surveyed, including those depicted on the ATV Map, had information signs posted. ATV use occurred on both unclassified and system roads. Resource damage was observed on unmapped roads and from cross country travel.

Table 2. ATV Use Occurrences. Immediately Prior to 2005 Deer Rifle Season			
Mapped Roads Open to ATV Travel	Mapped Roads Closed to ATV Travel	Unmapped User Created Trails	Unmapped Unclassified Roads
= > 7	3	10	3

(2) Monitoring Activities

Monitoring Question

What are the effects of RMV's on the physical & social environment & how effective are forest management practices in managing RMV use?

Monitoring Driver(s): 36 CFR 219.21[g]. Off-road vehicle use shall be planned and implemented to protect land and other resources, promote public safety, and minimize conflicts with other uses of the National Forest System lands. Forest planning shall evaluate the potential effects of vehicle use off roads and, on the basis of the requirements of 36 CFR 295 part of this chapter, classify areas and trails of National Forest System lands as to whether or not off-road vehicle use may be permitted.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
(1) Document OHV use & effects: (a) Cross Country Travel. (b) User Created (c) Open & Closed OML 1&2, unclassified, & temporary roads including roads displayed in latest OHV Travel Map. (2) OHV Signs are inspected &/or placed at appropriate locations.	(1) Complete inventories of OML1 & 2, unclassified, & temporary roads. Document OHV use & effects on as follows: (1) GPS & photograph routes surveyed & impacts. (2) Display survey routes & findings on maps & within data bases. (2) Inspect existing Travel Mgt signs for damage or occurrence. Identify use-compliance with signing. Ensure mapped roads are legitimate & match field locations.	May- November	(1) Inga South (2) Whyte (3) Dunka. (4) Echo Trail. (5) Tomahawk

Monitoring Question

To what extent is the Forest providing RMV opportunities?

Monitoring Driver(s): Desired Condition. D-RMV-1. The Forest provides RMV road & trail riding opportunities with experiences in a variety of forest environments, while protecting natural resources.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
Document OHV use & effects on/to roads displayed in latest OHV Travel Map, FS Closure Order, and/or most recent NEPA decision.	(1) Complete inventories of OML1, OML 2, unclassified, & temporary roads.	May through August	Forest Wide

Monitoring Driver(s): Desired Condition. D-RMV-2. Allowed, restricted, and prohibited RMV uses are clearly defined to the public. Where practical, RMV policies are consistent with adjacent public land management agencies.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
(1) Document authorized & non authorized OHV use on roads displayed in latest OHV Travel Map, FS Closure Orders, and/or most recent NEPA decision. (2) OHV Signs are inspected and/or placed at appropriate locations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The miles of roads/trails open & closed to cars, trucks, & RMV use. Inspect existing Travel Management signs for damage or occurrence. Identify use/compliance with signing. Ensure mapped roads match actual field locations and that mapped roads are legitimate.	May thru November w/ emphasis during deer rifle season.	Forest Wide

Monitoring Driver(s): Objective. O-RMV-1. A maximum of 90 additional ATV trail miles and 130 snowmobile trail miles with associated trail facilities (trailhead parking, signs, toilets, etc.) may be added to the designated National Forest Trail System.

Applicable Monitoring Activity, Practice, Or Effect Measured	Methods	When Monitored	Location or Project Area
New ATV Trails (Miles)	As soon as designations are complete on a particular unit, coordinate with Forest Transportation/Recreation Program managers.	Throughout Year	Forest Wide

(3) Evaluation and Conclusions.

Desired Conditions/Objectives

Monitoring Driver(s): 36 CFR 219.21[g]. Off-road vehicle use shall be planned and implemented to protect land and other.

Desired Condition. D-RMV-1. The Forest provides RMV road & trail riding opportunities....

AND **Desired Condition. D-RMV-2.** Allowed, restricted, and prohibited RMV uses are clearly defined to the public.

2005 Accomplishment During 2005 about 257 unclassified roads totaling 51 1/2 miles were inventoried. Most of these unclassified roads averaged only 0.2 miles in length. Decision documents signed under the Revised Forest Plan proposed to add 44 miles of OML 1 roads & 18.4 miles of OML 2 roads to the Forest Service System and decommission approximately 63 miles of unclassified roads. Of the OML 1 mileage, 39 miles would be converting existing, open, unclassified roads to OML 1 and 5 miles would be newly constructed roads. All of the newly constructed roads and 13 miles of the converted OML 1 roads would be closed to RMV's. All of the added OML 2 roads would be converted from unclassified status with 1/2 mile closed to RMV's. All of the decommissioned roads are closed to ATV's. Subsequently 76 miles of unclassified roads previously open to ATVS were closed via decision documents under the Revised Forest Plan.

2005 Accomplishment Contribution Towards Desired Conditions & Objectives

A. FOREST PLAN DIRECTION/FEIS CONDITION				
Record of Decision (7/04)	(DECADE 1)		05 Conditions	
Existing Condition	FP Des Condition, Objective, or S&G's	FEIS Projected or Proposed Condition	Actual Accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions
Road Miles Open To RMVs* OML 1 Summer; 398. OML 2..... 867 Unclassified.....223 TOTAL.....1488**		Road Miles Open To RMV's OML 1 Summer; 565 OML 2..... 867 Unclassified.....0 TOTAL.....1432	None in 2005	Road Miles Open To RMVs OML 1 Summer; 424 OML 2.....867 Unclassified.....160 TOTAL.....1412***
*Assumes all winter OML 1 roads, and all OML 3,4, & 5 are closed to RMV's. Assumes all summer OML1 roads, all OML 2 roads, & unclassified roads are open to RMV's. **Best Estimate. ***As more in depth inventories have been accomplished during project planning, "current conditions" reflect both new management actions on the ground as well as the fresh inventory data.				

B. ACHIEVEMENT OF FOREST PLAN FEIS CONDITION			
% Achievement of Decade 1 Condition		Trend	
Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions	Actual accomplishments implemented	Actual Accomplishments & Approved NEPA Decisions
None in 2005	(a) Projected decrease in total miles open to RMVs from ROD (1488) to Decade 1(1432) = 56 Miles. (b) Decrease in miles from ROD resulting from Approved NEPA=76 miles. (c) Achievement of FP direction=76/56= 135%	Upward	Upward

Monitoring Driver(s): Objective. O-RMV-1. A maximum of 90 additional ATV trail miles and 130 snowmobile trail miles may be added to the designated National Forest Trail System.

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
NA	Up to 90 addtl. ATV Miles		4.75 miles new ATV Miles	4.75 miles new ATV Miles

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
Decade 1 ATV Miles (90)/New ATV Miles =5% Achievement	Decade 1 ATV Miles (90)/New ATV Miles =5% Achievement	Up	Up

Standards and Guides

Standard & Guide Descriptor	Standard & Guide Description	Compliance	Remarks
S-RMV-1	Motorized recreation use of designated National Forest System Trails is prohibited unless the trail is designated open for specific motorized uses such as for ATVs, OHMs, and snowmobiles.	YES NO NA	
S-RMV-2	The Forest will not develop RMV challenge, mud hole, or scramble areas.	YES NO NA	
S-RMV-3	Cross-country OHV travel is prohibited. Standards and guidelines for cross-country snowmobile use are described in Chapter3 because direction for that use varies by management area.	YES NO NA	
G-RMV-1	OHV use is generally prohibited on OML 3, 4, and 5 roads. OHV use may be allowed on specific segments of OML 3, 4, and 5 roads to provide connections to other roads and trails open to OHVs, if safety, resource, and other requirements can be addressed.	YES NO NA	
G-RMV-2	Snowmobile use is generally prohibited on plowed National Forest System roads.	YES NO NA	
G-RMV-3	Travel with OHVs is generally prohibited in ditches and on shoulders of NFS roads.	YES NO NA	
G-RMV-4	RMV use will generally be allowed on existing unclassified, OML 1, and OML 2 roads. (Except ORVs will generally be prohibited on OML 1 roads) Roads that are determined through site-specific analysis to have immitigable resource and social concerns and/or do not meet management objectives would be effectively closed. (See exceptions for Management Areas: Eligible W&S Rivers, SPNM Recreation, RNA's, CRNA's, and Unique Biological Areas.)	YES NO NA	

(4) Necessary Follow-up and Management Recommendations

Monitoring Driver	Recommended Management Actions
O-REC-3	When considering management effects on ROS, ensure non-FS lands within project area are accounted for. <u>Supporting rationale:</u> Several of our inventoried SPNM ROS areas include non-fs lands that we have no control over.

Monitoring Driver	Follow up Actions
36 CFR 219.21g	Ensure Road Management Decisions Reflect MA Direction. (Example: cRNA's SPNM)
D-RMV-2	Issue correction to Forest Plan glossary, replace existing ORV definitions with national definitions, as per Washington Office Plan Appeal direction.
D-RMV-2	Ensure public forest ATV maps reflect accurate inventories
O-REC-1	Begin to Implement Recreation Facilities Master Plan.

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

Collaborator/Partner	Monitoring Activity	Accomplishment
DNR, Counties, & 1854 Authority	Merge data on roads, trails, & ATV use.	