

WDNR NORTHERN HIGHLAND - AMERICAN LEGION STATE FOREST

Implementation Plan for Motorized Access for Fall Hunting



August 2018

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to share the departments final implementation plan to adjust access on department roads to increase opportunities for fall hunting while balancing ecological, economic and social considerations and interests. The implementation plan is in response to the October 2017, Natural Resources Board NHAL recreation master plan amendment to increase motorized access opportunities while balancing motorized and non-motorized areas.

Guiding Directives and Authorities

The Natural Resources Board amended the NHAL Master Plan in October 2017, DNR PUB LF 107 2018. The plan amendment included elements related to road access and fall hunting use. (NHAL Plan amendment pages 11 and 15).

3. Motorized access and recreation opportunities.

The NHAL has a large number of existing roads, most of which are used to support logging and other forestry activities. Public access to roads on the NHAL and their management classification¹⁵ are:

ROAD STANDARDS	PUBLIC ACCESS			Total
	Open to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	Open seasonally to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	Closed to licensed, street-legal vehicles (miles)	
Fully developed road	21	3	0	24
Moderately developed road	10	19	2	31
Lightly developed road	21	129	59	209
Primitive road	453	192	517	1162
Total	505	343	577	1425

The department addresses motorized use of department roads in the master planning process and the amendment is an opportune time to examine and update what types of motorized vehicles are authorized on which DNR roads on the NHAL. This amendment establishes that the department's goals for public motorized access on the NHAL are to:

- Provide public access on roads to developed sites and designated use areas (e.g., campgrounds, picnic areas, and boat launches).
- Provide public access on a network of roads – ranging from developed to primitive – to outlying parts of the property as a means to facilitate auto touring as well as to access sites in more remote areas (e.g., carry-in canoe launches, trail heads, and prime hunting locations).
- Provide motorized recreation opportunities for snowmobiles, ATV/UTVs, off-highway motorcycles, and licensed 4-wheel drive vehicles, with a focus on connecting regional trail and route networks.

In addition, the department will increase seasonal road openings to facilitate hunter access from September 1 through the last day of the December 4-day antlerless gun deer season and maintain a balance of both motorized and non-motorized areas.

Implementation Plan

The department is planning to open 31 miles of roads from September 1 to the last day of the December 4-day antlerless gun deer season to provide additional access for fall hunting opportunities (Map 1). The roads will be gated during times outside of the above dates and signed explaining the opening and closing dates.

Road openings would occur in two phases. Phase one roads are currently in a drivable condition with a solid road base that can support vehicles with minimal improvements. These roads are currently, or have been recently used, to conduct forest management activities and used as primary haul routes for heavy vehicles. These roads could be opened for fall vehicle use by September 1, 2018 with some minor improvements. Minor improvements include; additional gravel on existing base, access control structures on adjacent spur roads and gates and signs at start of road. Approximately 15-20 miles are phase one roads.

Phase two roads are also primary forest management roads but have small segments that would require some base improvements to improve access for vehicle use. These roads would be opened once the improvement work is completed in the 2019 and 2020.

None of the proposed roads connect to ATV/UTV trails, routes, or Town roads designated as ATV/UTV routes, therefore ATV/UTV use is not included at this time.

Evaluation criteria

Roads considered to be opened for fall vehicle use followed the departments December 2015 guidance, "Evaluating and Determining Motorized Use on Department Roads: Goals, Principles, Assumptions, Considerations, and Definitions. (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/masterplanning/roadaccess.html>). A key consideration as directed by the October 2017 Master Plan amendment was to maintain a balance of motorized and non-motorized areas.

Analysis and Application of Criteria

Roads proposed to be opened are existing forest management roads used frequently for management activities. The road base and footprint exists and located on dry ground. The vast majority of proposed roads are located in Forest Product management areas and currently used for management purposes throughout the year. No roads are proposed in Natural Areas or Recreation Areas and a short segment is located in a Native Community Management Areas. An evaluation of current road densities was used to identify areas with underrepresented access. Maintaining several large areas where access is limited to within one half mile provides hunters desiring a remote experience that opportunity.

Summary of Public Input and comments

The draft Implementation plan was shared with the public for 15 days, **July 9 through July 23, 2018**.

The Northwoods Recreation Opportunity Analysis (ROA) was also considered as public comment, broadly for the NHAL and the region.

There were 103 public comments received on the implementation plan. The majority of the comments either opposed the implementation plan all together or opposed specific road segments. The ROA public input reflected a more balance response to motorized access with about one third favoring opening all roads, one third favored opening some roads, and one third favored not opening any roads.

Modifications to initial proposal

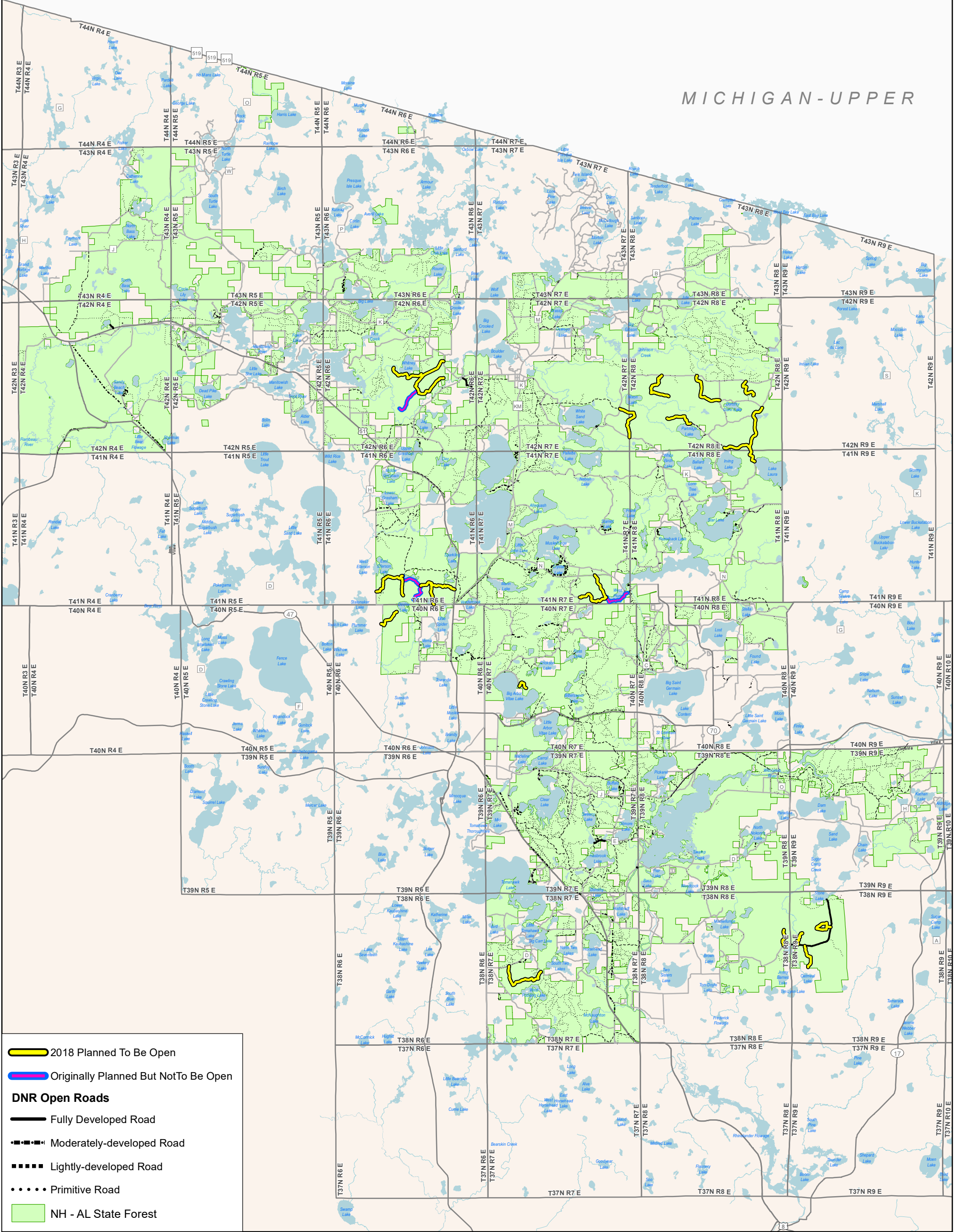
Based on public comments approximately four and a half miles of the original 35 miles proposed will remain closed to public motorized vehicles, including approximately 1.5 miles in the west Plum Lake area, 2 miles in the Little Rock Lake area, and 1 mile in the Whitney Lake area.

Maps

Map. Existing and Planned Road Openings

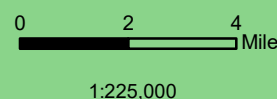
NHAL FALL ROAD OPENING IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

MICHIGAN-UPPER



- 2018 Planned To Be Open
- Originally Planned But Not To Be Open
- DNR Open Roads**
- Fully Developed Road
- Moderately-developed Road
- Lightly-developed Road
- Primitive Road
- NH - AL State Forest

The data shown on this map have been obtained from various sources, and are of varying age, reliability and resolution. This map is not intended to be used for navigation, nor is this map an authoritative source of information about legal land ownership or public access. Users of this map should confirm the ownership of land through other means in order to avoid trespassing. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding accuracy, applicability for a particular use, completeness, or legality of the information depicted on this map.



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