



Black River State Forest Master Plan

Preferred Alternative and Options Summary of Public Comments August 2008



A public meeting was held on April 1, 2008 to present and discuss the proposed Preferred Alternative and Options for the Black River State Forest Master Plan. A 45-day public comment period followed. This document broadly summarizes the 55 comments received, but does not address the Department's response to these comments.

Currently the Black River State Forest Planning Team is developing a draft master plan that will incorporate consideration of public feedback. A public meeting to review and discuss the draft plan is targeted for early 2009.

Motorized Recreation

- **Trail management** – Wise management of the trail was acknowledged as important by both motorized and non-motorized supporters.
- **Economic impacts** – Motorized recreation is widely recognized as an economic stimulus to local communities. Some believe this should be a driving force to further develop trails, while others feel it should not imply a higher priority for managing recreation on the property. Some question if the state forest budget is disproportionately funding motorized recreation at the expense of resource management or primitive facilities. One stakeholder believes the economic objectives of all alternatives should be considered and strengthened, not just those of motorized recreation. Concern exists that the statutory reference to support local economies is misconstrued toward recreation, when the initial intent was for local forest economy.
- **Mileage reduction** – Views exist that decreasing the total Black River State Forest trail miles will put pressure on the remaining trails in the region, specifically onto the county forest trail system. Some felt that because ATV use is increasing, trail miles should not be reduced. Some felt that fewer miles would decrease users' riding experiences.
- **ATV enthusiasts** – Prefer to maintain the existing number of trail miles or to develop additional miles, citing the sport's high popularity and related economics to maintain or expand ATV miles on the property.
- **Non-motorized supporters** – Appreciate noise-free areas, generally support fewer ATV trail miles, express concerns about environmental damage created by motorized recreation, express concerns of energy/carbon fuel use by ATVers, and suggest gradual abandonment of the motorized trail system.
- **Off-road motorcycle users**– Some support the creation of a use area (specifically Crawford Hills to Lake Arbutus) and support access of non-licensed motorcycles on trails.
- **Safety** – Clearing the inside corners of vegetation would reduce the number of blind corners on the trail system.
- **Youth/family use** – Some express that low use trails or loop trails provide a good, safe, family riding experience.
- **Connectors** – Some requested that routes be established to connect Bear Bluff and Burr Oak.
- **DNR is anti-motorized recreation** – Some respondents expressed this viewpoint and felt it was the reason behind the proposal to close some areas to motorized access.
- **Trail open/close dates** – Suggestion to establish fixed-day open/closed dates (2nd/3rd Friday or 2nd/3rd Monday), rather than specific dates.

- **Construction standards** – One stakeholder requested that road construction level standards be avoided when upgrading trails. Other comments suggested placing boardwalks in wet areas.
- **Communications** – One stakeholder expressed concerns that adjacent county forest partners are seldom consulted, especially regarding adjoining recreation trails.
- **Trail #1**
 - Some expressed concern that the proposed re-route directs riders away from the Jackson County ATV Park, creates adverse affects to the county, and may reduce usage in this area.
 - One stakeholder stated that DNR has not secured permanent easement from road authorities for the proposed re-route onto town/county roads.
 - Some recommended re-routing the horse trail instead of the ATV trail since their use is less and generally occurs seasonally in the spring and fall.
- **Trail #2**
 - No comments received.
- **Trail #3**
 - No comments received.
- **Trail #4**
 - Some respondents would like to keep this section open to ATV use.
 - Some believe closure will create fewer problems with wet areas and less public conflicts.
- **Trail #5**
 - Support exists to close this trail section to motorized use.
- **Trail #6**
 - Some comments indicated this section was good for family rides and asked that it remain open to ATVs.
- **Trail #7**
 - No comments received.
- **Trail #8**
 - One stakeholder supported the proposal to designate two sections (1.1 miles) of snowmobile trail for ATV use.
- **Trail #9**
 - No comments received.
- **Trail #10**
 - One stakeholder suggested developing ATV camping at the Castle Mound campground.
- **Trail #11**
 - No comments received.

State Forest Facilities/Other Recreation

- **River access** – Keep Pattie’s river access open; keep Morrison Creek river access open; keep Bottom Road landing open.
- **Fisheries and aquatic management** – Fish management alternatives were missing from the document and should be included in the plan.
- **Primitive facilities** – It was questioned whether the state forest was trying to accommodate too wide of a variety of recreational users, was maintaining too much of an infrastructure (toilets, landings, trails, becoming resort managers), or was discouraging commercial developers linking ATV trails to resorts/parks.
- **Pigeon Creek** – One stakeholder suggested the state forest improve services at this facility rather than reduce sites.
- **Bike trail** – It was suggested that the Perry Creek to Hawk Island trail would get a lot of use if it were open and maintained again.

- **Signage** – Points of interest should be more effectively marked.
- **Staffing** – Consider developing a naturalist position or more educational events, work cooperatively with partners to plan activities.
- **Global warming** - Encourage climate-neutral recreational activities.

Management Activities

- **Recreation vs. timber production** – One stakeholder expressed that the Overmeyer Hill set aside area is excessive for silent sports, and that more areas should have active management while still remaining compatible with recreational uses.
- **River corridor management** – Create more buffer/set back/protection areas along Morrison Creek when establishing timber sales, and along Halls Creek if it is acquired.
- **Forest health** – One stakeholder expressed that there is little emphasis on forest health or species diversity, but more emphasis on creating natural areas.
- **Intent of state forest** – One stakeholder stated that the Alternative and Options document lacked reference to the economic goals and purpose of the state forest consistent with Chapter 28.04.
- **Oak management** – One stakeholder inquired how the oak type acres would be maintained into the future, and questioned why a “let burn” policy was not necessary on the state forest.
- **Access** – Some commented that bermed or gated roads limit vehicle access and services to the public.
- **Global Warming** – Some commented that the alternative document did not reference global climate change.
- **Wilderness Areas** – One comment supported expanding a wilderness designation.
- **Active management** – Support exists for appropriately harvesting and managing the timber resource.
- **Jack Pine Habitat Area** – Support exists for management prescriptions which promote jack pine retention.

Invasive/Exotic Species

- No comments received

Forest Habitat

- **Resource management** – Wildlife groups support aspen management within the three forest production areas, support early successional forest management in the Dike 17 Wildlife Area, and support age diversity in aspen, jack pine, and oak areas for improved habitat. These groups also express concern for the continuing decline of aspen on a national, regional, and local scale, and believe more shrub sapling or young forest habitats are needed.
- **Hunters** – More information is needed to address the value the forest has for hunters.
- **Dike 17 Wildlife Area** – Support exists to expand the acreage designation.
- **Karner Blue Butterfly (KBB)** – Addressing KBB habitat management in the document was viewed as favorable.
- **Wolf/elk** – Some supported habitat for wolves and elk reintroduction.

Native Community Management/SNA

- Wildlife groups expressed concerned with the loss of aspen in Native Community Areas, but see a balance with the increase of aspen in Forest Production Areas.
- Some stakeholders requested reconsideration of Native Community Area or State Natural Area acreage. The proposed acreage was viewed as excessive, reducing the ability to provide raw forest products to the market, and potentially creating forest health impacts to

adjacent public lands if unmanaged. One comment questioned whether the proposed areas match the description on the Department's Bureau of Endangered Resources website for SNA designation.

- Public support exists for State Natural Area designations, passive management, barrens restoration, and protection of rare plants/animals.
- One stakeholder expressed views that white pine saw timber was singled out to become unmanaged old growth, and believes prescriptions for oak and white pine thinning from below to maintain a closed canopy discriminates against intolerants and is unproven forest practice.

Boundary Expansion

- Strong support exists for boundary expansion, especially along the Black River or East Fork of the Black River.
- Several comments suggested further expansion of the proposed property boundary (beyond Pray Road, south of East Forest area to the state forest boundary, extend Jay Creek to Hwy 54, include Levis Creek to current boundary, consider larger designation along Black River).
- Views were expressed against trading public land for cranberry expansion.

Partnership Interest

- A number of partners expressed interest in working with the state forest to support early successional management activities, to assist with the improvement of the Morrison Creek landing, to provide staffing to seek solutions on ATV trails, or to create more enjoyable and safer trails for recreational users.

Other

- **Future public meetings** – Hold at least one public meeting on a weekend so out of town participation is accommodated.
- **Military use** – Address acceptable military use in the final plan.
- **Name change** – Consider changing the name of Squaw Mound flowage.
- **Roads** – work with towns to improve road quality.
- **ATV registration fee** – Consider implementing a higher registration fee to help pay for trail maintenance.