

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 700

ROADS AND ACCESS

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700 ACCESS CONTROL AND HISTORY

Resource management, protection activities, recreational uses, and other public uses on the Polk County Forest require several different types of access. Since the Forest is large and diverse, and broken in ownership, a broad network of access opportunities have developed over the years. 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, nor were they maintained on a regular basis.

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 provide access for our 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 integrated access management planning is needed.

Factors affecting access on the Polk County Forest

User conflict between groups: 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 without routine maintenance.

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

Litter: depositing garbage and waste on the Forest.

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. 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.

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 within 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

Polk 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, private

contractors working under contract, other public resource agencies, or by cooperative agreement with non-profit organizations. 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 forest hydrologists to develop site-specific measures where appropriate and to follow all required permitting processes when applicable

The forest should have enough roads to provide sufficient access, without degrading water resources, while still maintaining recreational experience. Program evaluation of road infrastructure will continuously occur.

710.1 PERMANENT PRIMARY FOREST ROADS (County Forest Roads WDOT certified)

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. 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 for safety reasons.

Forest roads in this category qualify for the County Forest Road Aids program. Qualifying roads in this program must meet minimum design standards set by WI Statute Section [86.315 \(4\) \(a\)](#) and [86.315 \(3\)](#) and administered by WDOT. 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.

Table 700-1. Certified WDOT Forest Road Miles by Town

POLK COUNTY CURRENT WDOT CERTIFIED

TOWNSHIP	SECTION	LENGTH (MI)	ROAD NAME/COMMENTS
LORAIN	36	1.2	Sand Creek Trail FR#700
STERLING	21	1.99	Bear Track Forest Road FR#704
STERLING	22	.99	Bear Track Forest Road FR#703
STERLING	23	.47	Bear Track Forest Road FR#702
STERLING	24, 25	1.21	Fox Track Forest Road FR#700
STERLING	25	1.25	Wolf Track Forest Road FR#701
STERLING	25	.5	Turkey Track Forest Road FR#705
TOTAL		7.61	

Table 700-2. Planned WDOT Certified Forest Roads.

POLK COUNTY PROSPECTIVE FUTURE WDOT CERTIFIED

TOWNSHIP	SECTION	LENGTH (MI)*	ROAD NAME/COMMENTS
STERLING	25	.5	
STERLING	24	.4	

*() 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, though most are not plowed in the winter.

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. In many cases snowmobile trails follow these roads. The Forestry Department will be requesting funds to maintain these roads in the operating budget.

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 and/or signed as restricted. Unless posted otherwise or physically blocked, these roads are open for use by

the public.

In instances where motorized traffic is restricted, vehicle access will only be authorized for planned management activities, fire protection, and in cases where motorized handicapped access has been approved. Foot traffic is allowed on all roads.

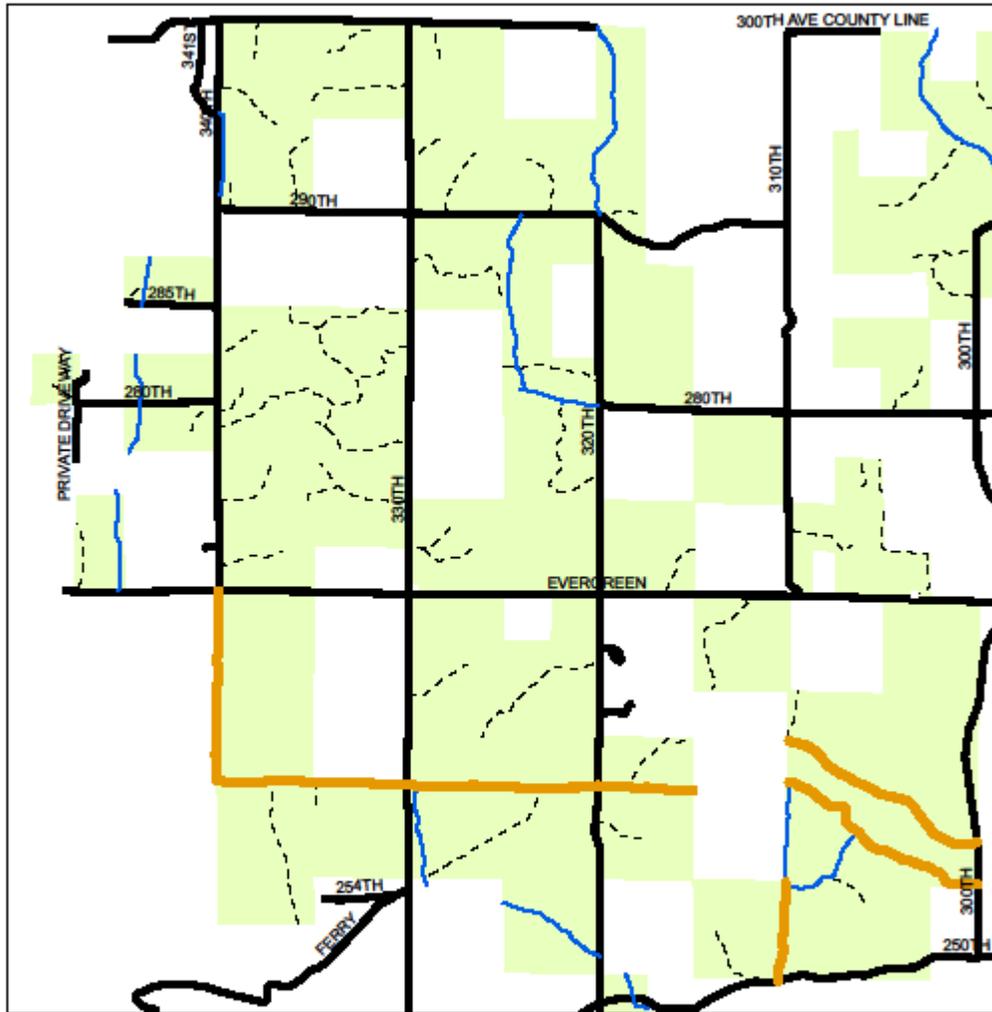
710.3 TEMPORARY ROADS

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 may be closed by use of earthen berms/bunkers or other physical barriers. In some cases, roads are completely closed with slash and debris to prevent future use and to encourage natural regeneration of trees.

Temporary roads on existing and past sales will be considered for closure. 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.

Polk County Forest Road West Part Sterling



Legend

-  Gas Tax Roads
-  2nd Forest Road
-  Temporary Road
-  Township Road
-  Polk County Forest

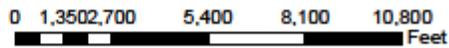
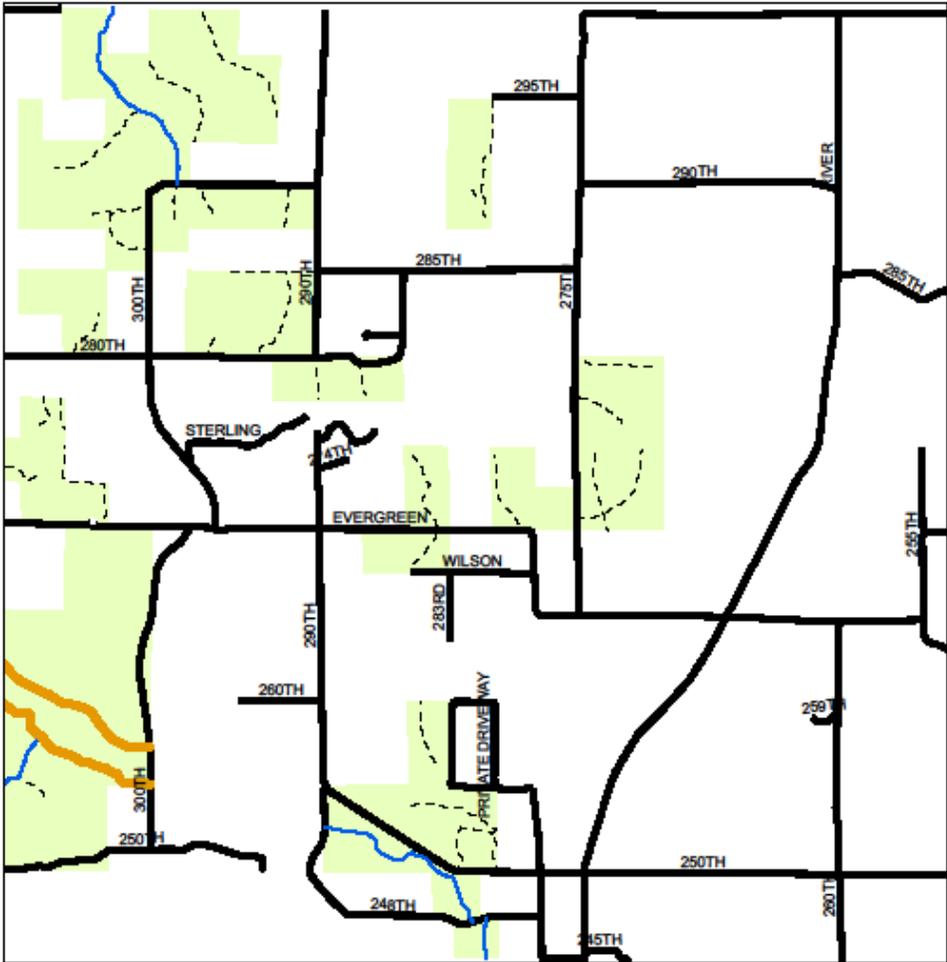


Figure 700-1. Forest Roads West Sterling

Polk County Forest Road East Part Sterling



Legend

- Gas Tax Roads
- 2nd Forest Road
- Temporary Road
- Township Road
- Polk County Forest

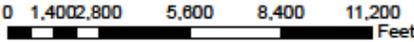
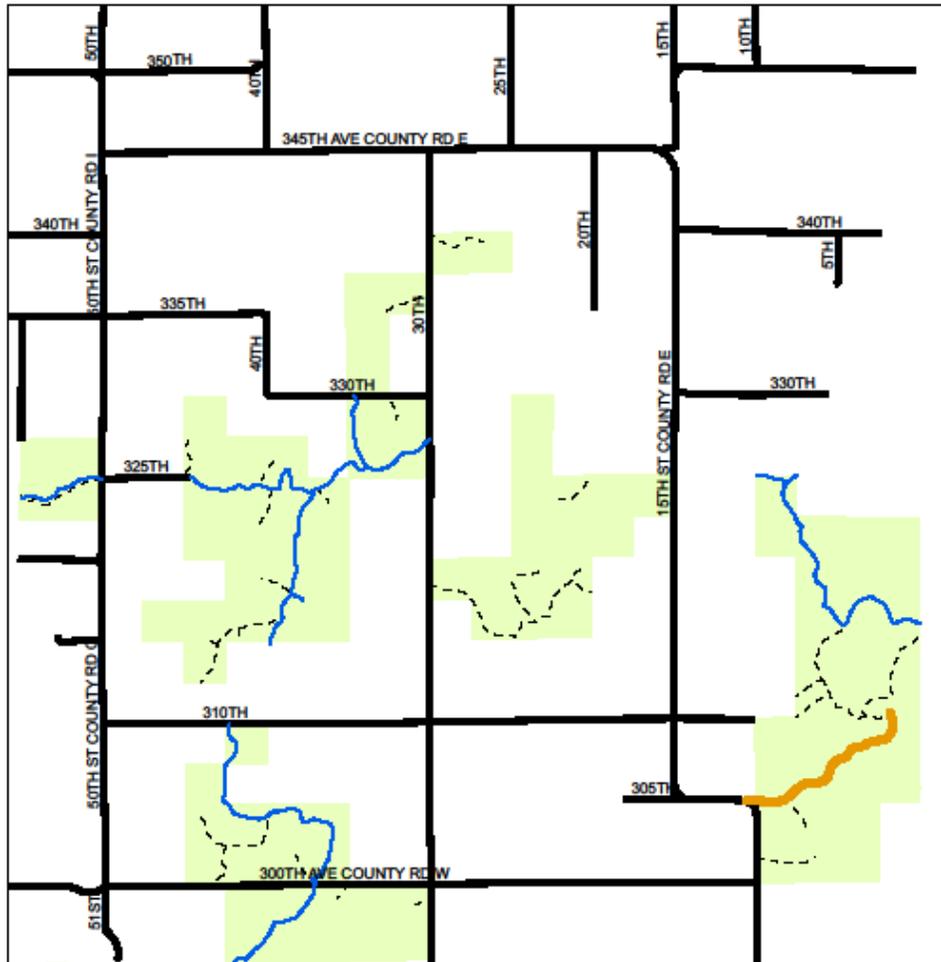


Figure 700-2. Forest Roads East Sterling.

Polk County Forest Road Lorain



Legend

- Gas Tax Roads
- 2nd Forest Road
- Temporary Road
- Township/County Road
- Polk County Forest

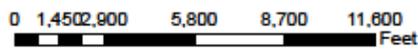
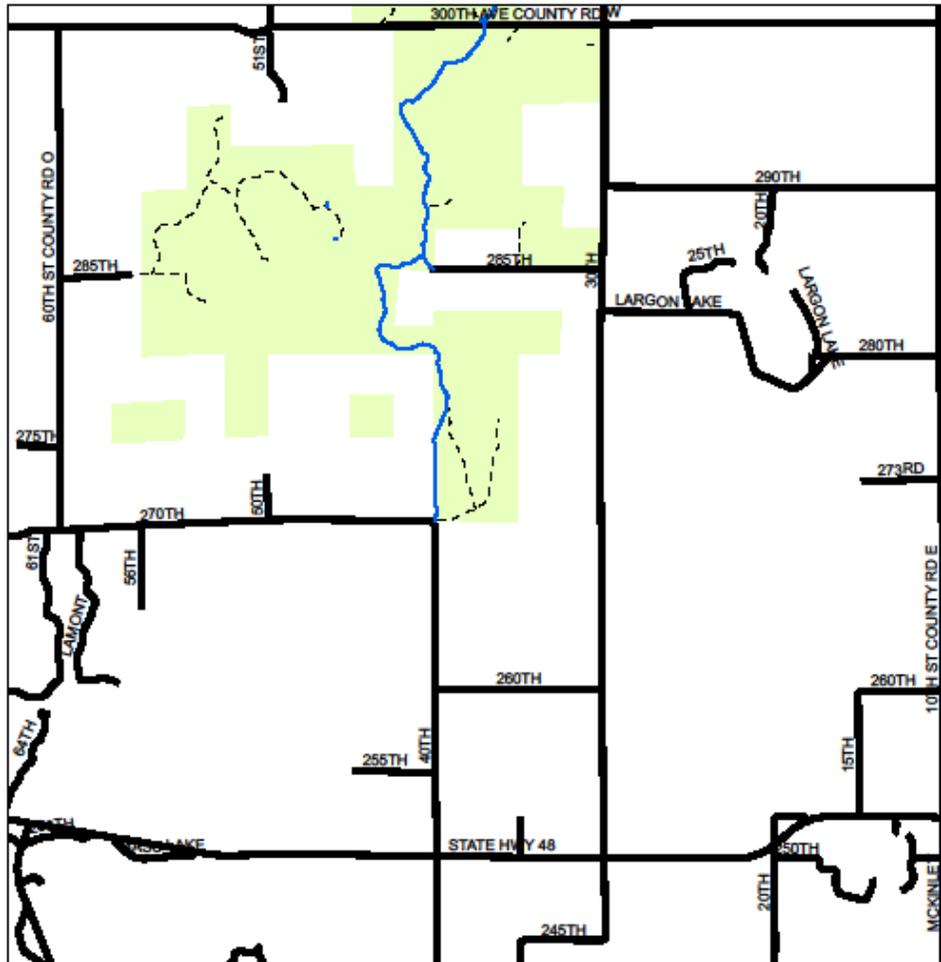


Figure 700-3. Forest Roads Lorain.

Polk County Forest Road McKinley



Legend

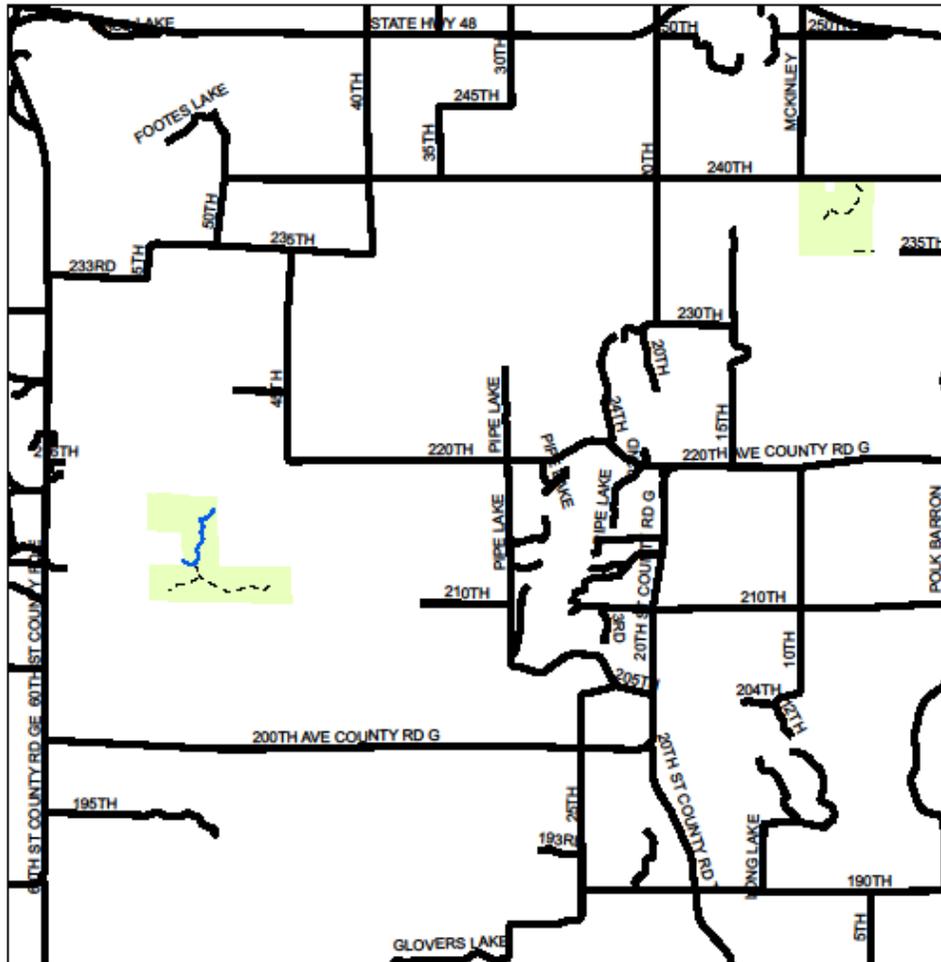
-  Gas Tax Roads
-  2nd Forest Road
-  Temporary Road
-  Township/County Road
-  Polk County Forest

0 1,400 2,800 5,600 8,400 11,200
Feet



Figure 700-4. Forest Roads Mckinley

Polk County Forest Road Johnstown



Legend

-  Gas Tax Roads
-  2nd Forest Road
-  Temporary Road
-  Township/County Road
-  Polk County Forest

0 1,850 3,300 6,600 9,900 13,200 Feet



Figure 700-5. Forest Roads Johnstown

Polk County Forest Road Apple River



Legend

- Temporary Road
- Gas Tax Roads
- Polk 2nd road
- Polk County Forest
- TWP Roads

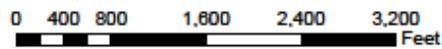


Figure 700-6. Forest Roads Apple River.

710.4 STATE, COUNTY, TOWN DRIVEWAY PERMITS

710.4.1 State Highways

Wisconsin DOT generally requires permits for permanent and temporary driveways on state highways. The County should track and retain permit records and work with local DOT officials for access.

710.4.2 County Highways

The Polk County Access Control Policy regulates and controls all accesses to county highways in order to promote public safety and protect the public investment in county highways. Construction of new accesses and modifications to existing accesses require prior approval by the Polk County Highway Department.

Access permit fees are payable at time of application, are based on the type of access being constructed and are non-refundable. Refer to the policy for a current schedule of fees. The current access control policy can be found on the Polk County Highway Dept webpage or by contacting the Polk County Highway Dept. directly.

710.4.3 Town Roads

Permanent or temporary access to town roads are regulated by the individual town policy. New permanent or temporary accesses for the Polk County Forest will follow the town policy in which the access occurs.

710.5 CULVERTS

In many cases culverts are needed in all three classifications of roads that are on the County Forest when dealing with drainages, wetlands and stream crossings. Some of these are temporarily placed culverts that are used during a specific project then removed, while others are permanent structures.

In all instances, culverts should be placed according to required DNR permitting procedures and should follow BMP's for culverts that can be found in chapters 4 and 5 of the WI BMP's for [Water Quality PUB FR-093 2010](#).

The County should consider documenting the location of the culverts within the forest for periodic maintenance and checks.

715 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.

720 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 Polk 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 Polk County Forest the following lake is designated as a "Wild Lake":

1. Mackie Lake – Town of McKinley

725 ROAD CONSTRUCTION BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY

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. The BMP Manual provides guidelines for road construction. Soil disturbance activities in highly erodible soil areas may require mitigating measures in excess of those currently listed in the Best Management Practices manual [PUB-FR-093-2010](#). Wider buffers, sediment control structures and water diversion techniques will be used as appropriate in these sensitive areas.

730 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 Polk 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 Polk 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.
3. Signs that enhance emergency response such as address signs, and National

Grid signs utilized by the US Forest Service.

730.1 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 backed wooden 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/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 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.

740 ROAD AND ACCESS PLAN

740.1 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 necessary, alterations deemed will be made to accommodate the recreational use. The committee has the authority to open, close or relocate trails.

If in the opinion of the committee an existing trail has either failed to satisfy the intended purpose or are found to contribute to resource degradation, a trail may be closed or its use designation changed.

740.2 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

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 Polk 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.

740.3 WATER ACCESS

Water access may be planned, developed, or restricted as a component of the overall Forest access management plan. Canoe landings or adjacent roads currently provide water access on the Forest primarily for recreational activities. Not all watercraft will be able to use these access points. Mooring or storing boats for longer than 24 hours is prohibited.

740.3.1 UNDEVELOPED WATER ACCESS POINTS

1. Mackie Lake

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.

740.4 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.