



Mississippi Headwaters Protection Alliance

People for Responsible Stewardship of the Land

A Call to Action

Who we are: Mississippi Headwaters Protection Alliance is a group of concerned citizens united by our love for the headwaters of the Mississippi River. We are paddlers, skiers, hikers, birdwatchers, parents, grandparents, property owners, tourists and some of us are ATV owners and riders.

We have joined together to urge the State of Minnesota and Beltrami, Clearwater and Hubbard counties to keep the public lands in the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest non-motorized.

What you need to know: Designating the forest as closed means that ATVs and OHVs cannot be used on forest trails. The state is reviewing its classification for the forest now. Current state law allows counties to opt out of the state plan. We believe that the same level of protection should apply to all public lands in the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest.



Non-Motorized Use

The number of people who engage in non-motorized use on public forest lands in Minnesota is roughly 7 to 8 times larger than those who use motorized means of travel.

Non-motorized uses include:

Camping	Canoeing
Hiking	Mountain Biking
Cross-country skiing	Berry Picking
Mushroom gathering	Camping
Hunting	Fishing
Snowshoeing	Bird Watching
Trapping	Wild Rice Harvesting



DNR OHV FACTS

DNR Borders to Borders study says:

- 70% of ATV owners ride on private land
- 30% ride on public land "all or most of the time."
- *Independent analysis of ATV use indicates that of users riding on public land: half ride on public lands and half ride on highway right of ways*
- Most Minnesota Deer Hunters (78%) do NOT use an ATV in any way.
- Of 1.2 million acres in state forests, less than 55,000 (or 4%) acres are closed to ATV use

The first 40 miles of the Mississippi River is a special place! As headwaters of the nation's greatest river, its corridor is designated as "wild" by the state of Minnesota and it has been declared eligible for the National Wild and Scenic River System. In its first 40 miles, it alternates between broad wetland plains and narrow river valleys. The river has cultural, ecological, scenic, recreational and economic value to the region and the entire nation.

Here are the numbers:

29 = forests classified or with plans sent to DNR Commissioner's office for approval since 2003

19 = forests classified or proposed to be "Limited" and open to ATVs

6 = forests classified or proposed to be "Managed" and open to ATVs

4 = forests classified or proposed to be "Closed" to ATVs

2 = forests classified or proposed to be "Managed" but also have areas within them classified as "Closed" (note: this is a subset of the 6 Managed forests, above)

1,265,432 = acres of state land in DNR-Forestry management within those 29 forests' boundaries

56% = amount of the total acreage in proposed Managed forests open to ATVs (704,021 acres/1,265,432 acres)

40% = amount of the total acreage in proposed Limited forests open to ATVs (507,963 acres/1,265,432 acres)

4% = amount of the total acreage in proposed Closed forests closed to ATVs (53,448 acres/1,265,432 acres)

250,000 = ATVs registered in Minnesota*

5,000,000 = the state's current population*

5% = Minnesotans who own an ATV

** numbers are rounded*

DNR Reclassification

- The DNR is in the process of reclassifying another group of our Minnesota State Forests as either "limited" or "closed" to ATVs and other Off Highway Vehicles (OHVs).

What this means:

- **A limited system** - has trails open to OHV/ATVs only if posted open
- **A closed system** - state forest is closed to OHV/ATVs
- The latest group of forests in the process of reclassifying are in the "West Central State Forest Planning Unit". This includes the following State Forests:

White Earth
Smokey Hills
Huntersville

Two Inlets
Lyons
Mississippi Headwaters

Closing the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest Area to OHVs

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is reviewing classification for several state forests; counties with public lands in these forests can "opt out" of the state plan under current law. If the state classifies the forest as closed, then **ATVs, dirt bikes, and ORVs or "mudder" trucks will not be permitted on** forest trails. **There are places in state forests for OHV trails when appropriately placed, contained, enforced, and maintained. We believe that the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest is not such a place.**

Designating the forest as "closed" will prohibit ATVs and OHVs on forest trails **ONLY**. Riders **will still be able to drive their ATV through the forest** in county road ditches and on township road surfaces in order to get to neighbors. **Snowmobile trails within this forest will not be closed.**

The Mississippi Headwaters State Forest is a narrow corridor of woodlands, two to three miles wide, protecting the infant Mississippi River. Closing the forest trails protects the most sensitive lands but still allows **motorized access**.



Rare Plant and Animal Species

In the Mississippi Headwaters State Forest the DNR inventory has identified:

Resident Timber Wolves and Trumpeter Swans nests (**protected species**) in Beltrami County

Bald Eagle nests and Bog Adders Mouth (**endangered species**) in Iron Springs Bog in Clearwater County

Hump Bladderwort (**rare**) and Ramshead Orchid (**a threatened species**) in Hubbard County

Additionally, the Virginia Rail, Clustered Burr Reed and two mussels are of concern: the Creek Heel Splitter and Black Sand Shell Mussels.

More on rare and endangered species in Minnesota at:
<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/ets/index.html>

Want to help?

Visit our web site to learn more
www.mhpalliance.org

Write a letter to a resource manager – **DNR Commissioner, County Board of Commissioners, township officers** – asking that the state forest be closed

Write a letter to your state legislator asking that all public lands be managed under one set of rules

Write a letter to editor

Join our alliance!