

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the anticipated environmental impact of resource management and public use actions included in this master plan. Impacts of common habitat management practices and recreational use/management activities occurring on DNR properties are described in separate Common Elements documents: [Impacts of Habitat Management Practices](#) and [Impacts Associated with Outdoor Recreation](#). The analysis presented here focuses on the impacts of specific actions, particularly those that are new or constitute changes to the current management, development, or use of a property. Actions representing practices that are commonly applied on DNR properties, and whose impacts are adequately described in the two Common Elements documents cited above, are not discussed here.

IMPACTS OF EXISTING MANAGEMENT ACTIONS AND PUBLIC USES

Chapter 2 of the NES plan describes existing habitat and public use objectives and strategies that the department proposed to continue using at the properties in the NES. The proposed continuation of management actions in this plan provide for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of upland and lowland deciduous and coniferous forests, open and forested wetlands, globally imperiled pine barrens, rare bracken grassland habitats, and high-quality surface water features. These actions are expected to have many net beneficial environmental effects, including for a wide variety of game and non-game species, such as forest-interior breeding birds, rare reptiles and amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, and coldwater fish.

Recreation facilities on most of the properties in the NES plan are few and simple in nature, supporting dispersed recreation in largely remote or lightly developed settings.

The impacts associated with the existing management actions at department properties in the NES are expected to be consistent with those described in the Common Elements documents cited above. Any adverse impacts that result from these continuing management and use actions at NES properties are expected to be minor, local, or temporary in nature. No unusual, unique, or exceptional outcomes are expected from the department continuing existing management actions on its properties in the NES.

IMPACTS OF PROPOSED NEW ACTIONS

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

Chapter 2 also describes new habitat and public use objectives and strategies that the department proposes to use at properties in the NES. Proposed new actions include:

- Establishment of a new State Natural Area on the Pine-Popple Wild Rivers property. Proposed management does not represent a substantive change to current management objectives and strategies. Management proposed for the new SNA will protect high-quality natural communities and promote and enhance underrepresented successional stages and existing characteristics of older forest while continuing to provide for timber production. The proposal maintains public access to the

area as well as existing recreational activities. The new SNA is expected to have a positive impact on the resources of the Pine-Popple Wild Rivers property.

- Expansion of aspen management on Governor Thompson State Park. This proposal will follow all existing sustainable forest management practices and Best Management Practices (BMPs) while maintaining the aesthetic values of the park. Management for a range of forest age classes will enhance habitat diversity for a variety of species. Proposed expansion of aspen management is expected to have a positive impact on species associated with earlier-successional forest, and will reduce the incidence of potential recreation hazard trees. The majority of forested acreage on the property will remain unmanaged (forested wetlands) or continue to emphasize longer-lived species. Substantive impacts on later-successional forest species are not anticipated.

PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

The NES plan does not propose any new recreational activities nor significant expansion of existing activities or facilities on any of the properties. New recreation developments and proposals are few and intended to enhance existing low-impact activities. They include:

- Additional carry-in boat access, small parking areas, access road improvements, signage improvements, and a new hiking trail. These will all be primitive or lightly developed features. Construction/installation of these features is not expected to have any substantial impacts on the physical environment and will expand and enhance recreation opportunities on the properties.
- Closing a total of 7.83 miles of roads to public motor vehicle access on Dunbar Barrens State Natural Area (4.29 miles), the Pike Wild River (0.94 miles), and the Pine-Popple Wild Rivers (2.6 miles) and changing the public access designation from Open to Open Seasonally on 2.4 miles of roads on Spread Eagle Barrens State Natural Area. The intent of these proposals is to limit damage and the need for costly repairs on roads where soils and topography greatly increase susceptibility to erosion and damage (rutting, wash-outs), particularly in wet conditions, or to restrict winter access when conditions are not suitable for street-licensed vehicles. In the case of the Pike and Pine-Popple Wild Rivers, there is also the intent to close roads that are in close proximity to the riverway and that provide limited connectivity or utility for resources management, in order to protect the scenic qualities of the wild rivers pursuant to NR 302. The proposed closure of a limited number of miles of road will not substantively impact public motorized access on these properties. In all cases, the roads closed to motor vehicles will remain available for foot travel.
- Closure of a small area (14.7 acres) on the Potato Rapids Flowage Unit of the Peshtigo River State Forest. This parcel contains a network of trails that currently allow recreational uses including hiking, biking, hunting, horseback riding, and snowshoeing. It has been discovered that a small portion of this informal trail network is impacting an archaeological site. In accordance with federal and state laws and department policy, the NES plan proposes to close this area to public use to prevent further soil disturbance and impacts to the site. The area proposed to be closed represents a very small portion of the informal trail network. The closure does not represent a barrier to use of the remainder of the trail network and is not expected to materially impact trail users.

WEPA COMPLIANCE

Property planning under Ch. NR 44, Wis. Admin. Code is an integrated analysis action under NR 150.20(2)(a)1, Wis. Admin. Code, and therefore complies with the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA), s. 1.11, Wis. Stats. and Ch. NR 150, Wis. Admin. Code.



Sitting by Meyers Falls, Pine River; photo by WDNR