



# Recreation

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## Carlton County Tax Forfeited Land Management Plan

### 9.I

#### Assessment

Currently and traditionally the Land Department's role in recreation has been to provide general opportunities for dispersed recreation. The County has parks on County-fee land not under the jurisdiction of the Land Department.

Recreational opportunities are available on most tax-forfeited lands. These opportunities include hunting, various forms of trail use, nature observing, and non-commercial gathering of non-protected nuts and fruits. As noted in Chapter 6.0 Land Administration, the County has issued a limited number of leases for individuals to construct hunting cabins on tax forfeited lands.

#### Trails

The County cooperates with user groups to designate routes for authorized recreation trails. The County itself owns the Soo Line Trail which is governed by a County ordinance. The creation of ad hoc or non-designated trails is not allowed.

Carlton County Ordinance 14 sets forth rules and safety regulations for the Soo Line Trail. The ordinance identifies authorized uses not requiring a permit, authorized uses requiring a permit, and unauthorized uses. The Land Commissioner monitors the trail while the Sheriff enforces the ordinance.

In late 2002 the County Board designated an ATV "scramble" area at the Soo Pit on County fee land north of Moose Lake. There is some tax forfeited land near this site which will likely serve as a buffer. The County is cooperating with a newly formed club regarding site development, maintenance, and operation. The facility will be privately developed.

#### Camping

Primitive and short-term camping, most often during big game hunting season, is allowed on tax-forfeited land. Permanent camp sites are not allowed. The only recreational structures allowed on tax forfeited land are formally permitted hunting shacks.

To date there have not been any serious problems with people squatting on public land, being a nuisance, or ruining the resource. However, the County feels it is prudent to set policy to ensure no problems emerge in the future. The policy presented in this plan generally conforms to that of the MnDNR, USFS, and adjoining counties. It is intended to allow camping in appropriate areas and for appropriate lengths of time without creating unnecessary hardships for people wishing to do this form of camping. No permits or fees will be required.

## Hunting Stands

A long-running discussion throughout Minnesota has centered on whether permanent hunting stands should be allowed on public lands. The pro side of the argument focuses on maintaining tradition, safety, and ease of use. The con side focuses on damage to trees (considered by State law as timber trespass), threat of damage to harvest and processing equipment and operators, illegal cutting of shooting lanes, debris left by abandoned stands, unsightliness, unauthorized trails created by hunters using ATVs to haul in building materials, and implied exclusive use of public land.

Permanent stands come in two varieties. First there is the traditional stand placed in a tree or group of trees. The second is the free-standing unit often involving posts embedded in the ground and elaborate fully enclosed shooting platforms.

Some states such as Wisconsin do not allow permanent stands. Such stands are not allowed in Minnesota's Wildlife Management Areas. Beltrami County is in the process of prohibiting such stands on its officially designated park and recreation land. Crow Wing County is considering an ordinance banning permanent stands and Cass County's management plan proposes a similar action. Other counties such as Hubbard have recently opted to continue allowing permanent stands. The State of Minnesota is beginning an educational campaign to discourage permanent stands citing existing regulations; the initial phase will consist of posting stands with notices identifying which existing laws the stands violate and encouraging removal of the stands.

## 9.2 Policies

**Objective:** *Carlton County intends to provide quality opportunities for dispersed recreation (e.g., trails, hunting, wildlife watching).*

The following are the policies of Carlton County regarding recreation:

1. Provide dispersed recreational opportunities on most County managed lands.
2. Undertake efforts to encourage and support additional recreational trail routes including those for snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, horseback riding, skiing, hiking, and hunting/walking.
3. Manage trails, forest roads and lands according to the following guidelines:
  - a. Allow the use of motorized recreational vehicles including four wheel drive trucks, all terrain vehicles (ATVs), motorcycles, and snowmobiles on County managed roads and trails except where expressly prohibited for valid management reasons including, but not limited to, protection of tree plantations, protection of sensitive natural resources (e.g., certain types of wetlands, highly erodible soils, certain types of wildlife habitat and/or biotic communities, etc.), and non-motorized hunting.
  - b. Sign trails and roads regarding purpose, allowable uses and vehicles, seasonal restrictions if any, firearm restrictions if any, and similar information.
  - c. Close grant-in-aid financed snowmobile trails to other types of vehicles and trail users from December 1 through April 1. Exceptions will be made for forest management operations.

- d. Off-trail travel by all terrain vehicles is allowed to retrieve downed game during big game hunting season, to access hunting stands, and for trapping during trapping season.
  - e. Soo Line Trail will be operated under a separate County ordinance.
4. Carlton County will inventory and map its roads and trails.
  5. Carlton County will revisit its policies regarding motorized recreational vehicle use on County managed lands in conjunction with reviews of those uses by the Minnesota DNR on the state forests within the county or within 10 years whichever comes first.
  6. Encourage the use of specific areas for traditional, non-commercial gathering activities including berry picking, nut gathering, and maple syrup tapping.
  7. Issue permits for maple syrup tapping operations so as to prevent conflict over use of sugar bushes.
  8. The following policies govern hunting stands on Carlton County tax-forfeited lands:
    - a. "Permanent hunting stand" means any structure, or any production of piece of work artificially built up or composed of parts joined together in some definite manner; that which is built or constructed; an edifice or building of any kind; a combination of material to form a construction for occupancy, use or ornamentation whether installed on, above, or below the surface of a parcel of land; and which is not portable and removable.
    - b. Permanent hunting stands existing at the time of adoption of this plan shall be allowed as long as they are maintained in sound condition.
    - c. Permanent hunting stands affixed to trees by way of nails, screws, bolts, spikes, wire, or any other fastener are prohibited on County administered tax-forfeited lands.
    - d. The use of permanent, free-standing (that is, not affixed to a tree) hunting stands is allowed provided they do not have permanent walls greater than 42 inches in height and have a gross floor area not exceeding 32 square feet.
    - e. The use of temporary portable hunting stands is encouraged. Screw-in steps and anchor bolts for temporary stands are allowed providing they are removed when the stand is removed and do no permanent damage to trees.
    - f. The County has the right to remove any non-authorized structure on County managed lands without cause or notice.
    - g. The cutting or felling of live trees regardless of size for the purpose of creating shooting lanes is considered timber trespass and prohibited. Cutting of lateral limbs and branches less than two inches in diameter is allowed to facilitate use of portable stands; all other cutting is prohibited.
  9. Integrate considerations for aesthetics, site design, and visual impact into the management of every unit and stand.
  10. Primitive camping on County-administered tax forfeit land is permitted under the following guidelines: camps cannot be used for more than 14 consecutive days; persons wishing to camp more than 14 days must relocate their camp onto a site more than a mile distant from the first camp; campers must remove all trash and debris from the site; live trees

may not be felled for making a camp, accessing a camp , or for use as firewood; no camping is allowed within a quarter mile of a public boat access or a designated County, State or Federal campground; camping is not allowed in any area designated no camping by the County.

11. Inform the public about recreational opportunities on County managed lands. This can include publication of brochures and maps indicating locations, signs, identifying trails, and other activities.

### 9.3

#### Strategic Actions

Carlton County will undertake the following actions relative to recreation to implement this strategic plan:

1. Map roads and trails and integrate into GIS inventory.
2. Designate allowable uses for all roads and trails and sign appropriately.
3. Review trail use designations within 10 years.
4. Apply site-level guidelines regarding visual quality management of cuts, road design, and trail layout, where appropriate. Further, specify in stand prescriptions any such considerations and recommended actions.