



FORESTRY, RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT
LANGLADE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
1633 NEVA ROAD, ANTIGO, WI 54409
PHONE: 715-627-6300
www.co.langlade.wi.us

LANGLADE COUNTY FOREST ROAD POLICY REVISED 2024

PURPOSE

Langlade County has developed and maintains an extensive forest road network throughout the County Forest. This forest road network consists of more than 1,000 miles of forest roads. These roads range in condition from paved asphalt surfaces to native mineral and organic soil surface. There are many purposes that these forest roads serve including: transportation of forest products, access for forest management, motorized and non-motorized recreational trails, hunter access, wildlife management and general public access throughout the forest.

The construction and location of the forest roads have a significant impact on compatible uses and cost of maintenance. The surface and subsurface material, site moisture conditions and vegetation impact the type and frequency of traffic that a road can handle. This policy will guide decision making to best match roads with appropriate uses there by protecting and directing the County's investment in and maintaining the usability of this critical infrastructure.

The cost of maintaining the forest road system include direct cost of construction, routine maintenance, repair due to storm damage, repair due to unauthorized use and/or misuse. There are also a number of indirect costs associated with a degraded road system which includes decrease in stumpage value, loss of use and access resulting in increased travel distances, environmental degradation, loss of site productivity and public safety. In general, the cost of repairs are greater than the cost of regular maintenance. With limited funding the road system should be managed to maintain needed roads and minimize the need for repair to the extent practicable.

In addition to the cost of constructing and maintaining roads there are costs associated with the road size and density on the forest. Acreage that is dedicated to road use is no longer available for forest production. Likewise, insufficient road density may lead to difficult access, extended accesses to public roads and result in reduced stumpage rates. Many factors impact the optimal density of roads in any given area. The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Department (the Department) will evaluate road densities wherever needed to determine the usefulness of roads and their best uses in the future.



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This forest road policy sets a framework which will guide management of the forest road system in order to provide the many benefits of the road system while managing the direct and indirect costs to the greatest degree possible.

REFERENCE TO ORDINANCE

Langlade County Code of Ordinance Chapter 8- Motorized Recreational Vehicles sets specific regulations for the use for motor vehicles on County Forest Lands including: licensed motor vehicles, off highway motor vehicles, ATVs/UTVs, snowmobiles, undefined motorized vehicles. Langlade County Code of Ordinance Chapter 16- Forest, Parks and Recreation sets specific regulations for use of non-motorized recreation including hiking, bikes, E-bikes, animal propelled vehicles and personal mobility devices. These ordinance chapters also set penalties for misuse of vehicles on County Forest Lands.

THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATION AND BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Langlade County Forest is certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) allowing for sale of certified forest products. SFI has a variety of standards that are required to continue certification. Maintenance of certification provides additional marketability of forest products and timber that is often a demand of customers purchasing wood and secondary products. Best Management Practices for Water Quality (BMPs) are regularly audited by site visits and reporting by third parties through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Some BMP standards relate directly to management of the forest road system. Adherence to BMPs is a requirement of this road policy. BMPs provide considerations for forest road locations (new and existing), road construction, maintenance and proper drainage. These considerations focus on minimizing the long-term cost of roads and reducing the environmental impact of roads for forest management. Even though the BMPs focus on forestry use, they are applicable in a wide range of circumstances occurring on the County Forest. During any management of the road system BMPs will be utilized as a standard for road construction, maintenance and proper drainage for any road usage allowed on the County Forest.

FOREST ROAD CLASSIFICATION

A forest road classification system included in this policy as Attachment 1 was developed to identify compatible uses of forest roads with varying construction standards and conditions while considering the importance of each individual road to the overall forest road network. This classification system will aid in the decision-making process for prioritization of investments, what uses a forest road can sustain and whether or not an individual road serves any necessary purpose within the forest road system. It will also determine if the road use need is temporary, recurring or permanent.



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The road classification system identifies main access into and through the County Forest in Classes 1 through 3. These roads generally will remain open to motorized use, year-round or seasonally, when such use is determined to have a low likelihood of causing damage to the road bed or environment. These roads will be prioritized for maintenance and future improvement and investments. Roads in classes 4 thru 6 will be lower priority except in cases where roads need improvement for winter logging access or are recreational trails that need to be maintained. Class 5A roads lie within wetlands and provide access into large blocks of County Forest lands and are main access roads used for timber harvest. Improvement of these roads is difficult and under many circumstances may not be legal to upgrade to a higher class.

The road classification system does not evaluate road use limitations imposed due to special management designations such as silent sports areas, hunter walking trails areas or wildlife management units that are addressed in the Langlade County Forest 15-year plan. These additional special designations will impact decision making related to road use and will be considered during management of the road network but are not incorporated into the road classification system.

All official forest roads are mapped by the Department. All roads within the County Forest will be assigned a classification. Road classifications will be updated as needed. An updated map will be produced annually if any changes occurred during the calendar year or as requested by the Forestry and Recreation Committee.

RECREATIONAL TRAILS

Approximately 1/3 of the Langlade County forest roads are also designated recreational trails. This includes uses such as ATV trails, snowmobile trails, ski trails, snowshoe trails, hiking trails, hunter walking trails, biking trails, sled dog trails, equestrian trails and others. Recreational trails on the County Forest range from graveled ATV trails to single track biking/ hiking trails. The majority of recreational trails on the County Forest are located on forest roads. The various ways recreational trails are used have a wide range of impacts on the forest roads and therefore require maintenance consistent with their use.

Most of the recreational trail systems are managed with partner groups that operate the trail system under a contract or license agreement. These agreements typically allow for the partner group to conduct regular maintenance restricted to signing, brushing and grooming. Other maintenance including major trail reroutes, ditching, grading or hauling/spreading of material requires approval of the Department prior to work. Wherever possible the Department will work with recreational trail user groups to leverage resources to create mutually beneficial outcomes for the trail/forest road system.



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ROAD MANAGEMENT AND USE

The Department shall manage and maintain the forest road system to maximize the benefits to Langlade County. The Department will also manage the forest road system to provide its citizens and various user/interest groups with opportunities where they are possible, practical and maintainable. The Department and the Committee acknowledge that there are many user groups on the County Forest and that one groups use of forest roads may be incompatible with another. The Department also recognizes not all possible uses of the forest can be accommodated in the same area of the forest. The Department will consider the impacts to various user groups, the resources on the forest and the impact to Langlade County when managing forest roads.

The Department will utilize available funds, gas tax funds and grant funding as available to maintain and improve the forest road system to the benefit of the County and the general public. The Department will seek funding opportunities where such funding is deemed beneficial to the County. With limited budgets and an extensive forest road network needed for forest management operations, the Department will evaluate a variety of information which may include: road classification, road condition and location, road density, current and expected use and available funding when managing forest roads.

The Department where appropriate will maintain or improve existing forest roads, develop new forest roads, abandon forest roads that no longer meet the needs of the County, restrict access to motorized vehicle types (e.g. ATV/UTV only), restrict through traffic or close forest roads to motorized use as needed.

General Priorities for Road Management shall include:

1. On roads classed 1, 2 or 3 maintain roads to maintain public access by various types of vehicles as determined appropriate by the Department.
2. On roads classed 1, 2 or 3, repair damage to ensure continued use and avoid violations of BMP requirements.
3. On roads classed 1, 2 or 3, improve roads to facilitate planned/future logging and create better public access to recreational opportunities.
4. On roads classed 4, 5 or 6, reduce road maintenance budget needs and minimize indirect losses by restricting traffic on (berms, rocks, or gates) or abandoning such roads as determined appropriate by the Department.
5. On roads classed 4, 5 or 6, bring roads back into BMP compliance by leveling, seeding and travel restrictions (berms, rocks, or gates) as determined appropriate by the Department. Close or abandoning roads classed 4, 5 or 6, as determined appropriate by the Department.
6. Increase road grant funding by increasing mileage of roads that qualify for WisDOT county forest road aids on roads classed 1, 2 or 3 as determined appropriate by the Department.



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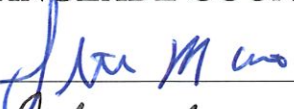




Deviation from the general priorities listed above to achieve specific desired outcomes such as improving a lake access or improvement of a recreational trail on a class 4 road and will be conducted at the discretion of the Forest Administrator having evaluated the entirety of information pertinent to the decision.

POLICY APPROVAL AND ENFORCEMENT

Upon committee approval of this policy the committee authorizes the Forest Administrator to implement this policy and grants the authority to determine where available funding and resources are applied to develop, improve, maintain, close or abandon forest roads in implementation of this policy.

The Langlade County Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee officially approved this Forest Road Policy by Committee action and this policy shall become effective **August 1, 2024**.

LANGLADE COUNTY FORESTRY & RECREATION COMMITTEE

	Steve Maier, Chairman
	John Medo
	Reinhardt Balcerzak
	Roger Buck
	Rick Bina



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Attachment 1

Forest Road Classification Criteria

Class 1

- Established permanent road;
- Improved surface consisting of ¾"-1" gravel up to asphalt;
- Suitable for year-round motor vehicle use including 2wd vehicles;
- Provide main access to large blocks of County Forest or Developed Recreation Area;
- May have specifications or meet qualification for DOT and/or summer ATV funding;
- Annual maintenance or inspections occurs;
- Managed as three season or all-season roads;
- Significant investment has been made in these roads.

Class 2

- Established permanent road;
- Surface partially improved (approximately 40% or more) with gravel or breaker run (3 inch- rock) type materials;
- Suitable for motor vehicle traffic most of the year including 2wd vehicles (typically not suitable for spring time use);
- Provides main access to large blocks of County Forest or developed Recreation Area or is a motorized Recreational trail;
- Receives periodic maintenance;
- Requires reasonable amount of investment to meet specifications of Class 1;
- Managed as three season roads. May require seasonal closure to protect Investment;
- Significant investment has been made in these roads.

Class 3

- Established permanent seasonal road;
- **Provides main access to large or moderate size blocks of County Forest or is a motorized recreational trail;**
- Surface comprised of native materials. May have some limited use of breaker run or gravel to stabilize short segments (<40% of the road surface);
- Road quality varies widely due to use, site conditions and prior investment;
- Suitable for vehicle traffic during dry periods. Limited to 4x4/high ground clearance vehicles or ATV/UTV most of the year depending on weather;
- Requires substantial investment to meet specifications of Class 1;
- Receives limited maintenance as needed, when funds or resources are available;
- May require seasonal closure (gates) to preserve the road bed and County Investment;
- Moderate investments have been made in these roads.



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Class 4

- Established permanent seasonal road;
- Surface comprised of native materials with limited additions of breaker run or gravel;
- Suitable for intermittent vehicle traffic on either dry or frozen ground;
- **Provides access to a small number of timber stands/acreage typically less than 150 acres or maintained wildlife openings;**
- Receives maintenance when needed to facilitate harvesting or to mitigate BMP issues;
- May require vehicle use restrictions to preserve the road bed and County Investment that may include closure or partial closure (restricting through traffic) via gates/berms and/or ATV/UTV only restrictions with or without seasonal restrictions;
- Upgrade to Class 1 is cost prohibitive and unnecessary.

Class 5

- Established permanent winter only road;
- Surface comprised of native materials;
- Only suitable for vehicle traffic on frozen ground only;
- Spring-summer-fall use of these roads is likely to cause severe, possibly irreversible damage;
- Provides main access to large, moderate or small size blocks of County Forest (See sub-classes);
- Requires vehicle use restrictions that may include closure via gates/berms or ATV/UTV only restrictions with seasonal restrictions;
- Upgrade to Class 1 is cost prohibitive and unlikely to be permitted.

Sub-Class A

- Provides main access to large or moderate size blocks of County Forest;
- Used for access to multiple timber sales or Management blocks.
- Receives maintenance when needed to facilitate timber harvesting operations or when funds are available and upgrade/maintenance is needed to support timber harvesting/forestry operations;

Sub-Class B

- Provides access to a small number of stands/acreages typically less than 200 acres;
- Receives maintenance when needed to facilitate timber harvesting operations;

Class 6

- **Temporary Road;**
- Surface comprised of native materials;
- Generally, only suitable for dry or frozen ground vehicle traffic;
- Provides access to a small number of stands (typically less than 50 acres);
- Typically, but not always are dead end roads;
- Road will not be maintained outside of timber sale operations;
- Receives maintenance only when needed to facilitate harvesting;
- Full time vehicle closure necessary typically via berm;
- Consider abandonment.



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Sub-Class A

- Road is suitable for dry ground use. May be open to vehicle traffic under some circumstances.

Sub-Class B

- Requires frozen ground for traffic;
- Spring-summer-fall use of these roads is likely to cause severe, possibly irreversible damage.

Skid Trail

- Not designed or constructed;
- Created by repeated off road traffic during forestry operations;
- Sole purpose is to get timber products to forest roads for transportation to a mill.

* All designated ATV trails shall be maintained as class 3 or better. All ATV trails will receive maintenance relative to use in all classifications. Upgrade of ATV trails to Class 1 or 2 is preferred where possible and practical.

* All other recreational trails located on forest roads will be Class 4 or higher except winter recreational trails maybe on Class 5.