

Variance to Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest Master Plan

Property Name: Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest

Date the Current Master Plan Approved: 2005

Approved Amendments: 2006, 2013, 2015, 2017

Approved Variance: 2017

This variance updates language in two Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest master planning documents: the 2005 Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest Master Plan and the 2017 Amendment to the Recreation portion of the 2005 Master Plan (henceforth “the 2017 Amendment”).

Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest Master Plan (NRB-approved October 2005)

The 2005 Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest (NHAL) Master Plan includes sections describing “New ATV Trail Objective” and “All-terrain Vehicles” (Chapter 2, Recreation Management p.165). This variance will add ATV/UTV route and trail use to Table 2.28. The table will now read as below:

Table 2.28 – Motorized Trail Use			
Trail Use	Length (Miles)	Average Width	NR 44 Level of Development
Snowmobile Trails	400	12-16 ft	Lightly Developed
ATV/UTV	202	12-16 ft	Primitive to Fully Developed

Amendment to the Recreation Portion of the 2005 Master Plan (NRB-approved October 2017)

The 2017 Amendment established the department’s goals for public motorized access on NHAL and authorized the department to designate a total of 202 miles of ATV/UTV routes and trails on the NHAL. These designations were made in two categories:

- Bucket A, which includes 42 miles of DNR roads designated as ATV/UTV routes or trails, as indicated on Map G within the 2017 amendment.
- Bucket B, which includes the remaining 160 miles of existing DNR roads as ATV/UTV routes or trails. These routes and trails will include department roads that help connect the larger regional trail network as well as “loops” of routes or trails that provide additional riding opportunities. The locations of these routes and trails were not identified at the time of the amendment, thus, they are not currently mapped. The department is working with local governments, ATV/UTV and snowmobile clubs, and other stakeholders to identify potential routes and trails on DNR roads that most effectively aid connections to the larger regional network.

Proposed Change to the Master Plan:

This variance represents the department’s first designation of additional ATV/UTV routes and trails under Bucket B. The variance will add a table detailing the remaining authorized ATV/UTV routes and trails to be planned following the Motorized Trails table on page 27 of the amendment. The new table will read as follows:

Planned ATV/UTV Trails and Routes in Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest	Length (miles)
2017 Recreation Amendment Authorized Routes and Trails	202
Bucket A	42
Bucket B	160
June 2018 Variance: Town of Woodruff, Oneida County	9.3
Bucket B Remaining to be Planned	150.7

Map G from the 2017 Recreation Amendment will also be updated to reflect the planned ATV/UTV routes and trails. Map 1 of this variance reflects the updated Map G.

The Town of Woodruff in Oneida County and the local ATV/UTV club worked with department staff to determine a suitable route to connect Woodruff with the Village of Sayner. The 2017 amendment included a potential route connecting these two communities, identified as a Bucket A route. After further field review, department staff have found another suitable route. This variance establishes the majority of the additional route as a planned route through Bucket B of the 2017 Amendment.

This variance proposal uses the following to create the 9.3 miles of ATV/UTV route on department roads/trails:

- 9.2 miles on existing DNR roads.
- 0.1 miles of new route construction.

The following DNR roads will host portions of the ATV/UTV routes designated in this variance.

Department Road	Length of ATV/UTV Route on Road (Miles)
American Legion State Forest (ALSF) Road 14762	1.0
ALSF Road 14753	0.2
ALSF Road 14761	0.2
ALSF Road 14740	1.0
ALSF Road 15660	0.3
ALSF Road 18273	0.1
ALSF Road 18198	0.7
ALSF Road 18385	1.0
ALSF Road 17182	0.1
ALSF Road 18241	1.3
ALSF Road 18098	1.7
Northern Highland State Forest (NHSF) Road 18197	0.4
NHSF Road 18196	0.2
NHSF Road 18195	0.2
New Construction	0.1
Miscellaneous Logging Road	0.8
Total	9.3

The updates listed above are shown on Maps 1, 2 and 3 of this variance. These routes are established as planned routes through this variance; they are not open to ATV/UTV use until constructed and signed as open.

This proposal is dependent on the Town of Woodruff to open additional town roads to ATV/UTV traffic to enable logical network connections. On June 12, 2018 the Town of Woodruff Board agreed to amend the town ordinance related to ATV/UTV routes in the State Forest to reflect the routes proposed in this variance. The Town of Woodruff approved the roads listed below to serve as ATV/UTV routes. This variance will update the 2017 Amendment Map G, shown as Map 1 in this variance, to reflect the following town roads as existing ATV/UTV routes on local and county roads:

- Bass Lake Road
- Indian Shores Road

APPROVALS


APPROVED:  10-10-18
Doug Haag, Administrator-Division of Internal Services Date

SUPPORTING APPROVALS:

 10-1-18
Ben Bergey, Director-Bureau of Parks and Recreation Date

 9-24-18
Trent Marty, Director-Bureau of Forestry Field Operations Date

 9/22/18
Diane Brusoe, Property Planning Section Chief Date

 9-20-18
Craig Dalton, Property Manager Date

Variance Initiator: Cameron Bump, Northwest Recreation Liaison

Variance Author: Phil Rynish, Property Planner

Supporting Information

Purpose and need for the plan change:

The Wisconsin Natural Resources Board (NRB) approved the 2017 Amendment in October 2017. The amendment addressed a range of recreation use changes within NHAL, including authorization to designate existing department roads as motorized recreation routes and trails.

The 2017 amendment approved motorized recreation in two distinct groupings. The first, Bucket A, authorized 42 miles of department roads to be designated as routes or trails for ATV/UTV use at the time the amendment passed. The second, Bucket B, authorized an additional 160 miles of department roads to be designated as ATV/UTV routes and trails as opportunity arises for department lands to serve as connectors between designated routes on local, non-DNR, roads.

This variance addresses Bucket B route and trail designations. The Town of Woodruff in Oneida County has indicated its intention to open portions of Bass Lake and Indian Shores roads for designation as ATV/UTV routes. To ensure connectivity of the Town's proposed ATV/UTV routes, the Town has requested certain department roads within NHAL serve as connectors between portions of the proposed ATV/UTV route. The department has authority to make this designation under Bucket B (page 14) of the 2017 Amendment.

In determining the department roads and trails to be designated as ATV/UTV routes through this variance, the department considered:

- Impacts to environmentally and ecologically sensitive areas and resources based on the anticipated level of use.
- Level of community support and compatibility with existing recreational uses.
- Impacts to logging and other forestry operations.
- Connections to existing designated routes and trails.

WHAT DOES DNR MEAN BY "BUCKET A" AND "BUCKET B"?

Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board passed an amendment to the recreation portion of the NHAL master plan in 2017. The amendment authorized up to 202 miles of ATV/UTV routes on department roads in NHAL. The 202 miles were split into two groups.

Bucket A

In 2017, 42 miles of routes had been identified by department staff. These 42 miles are known as **Bucket A**.

Bucket B

After the establishment of the initial 42 miles of ATV/UTV route, 160 miles were left to be identified. These 160 miles are referred to as **Bucket B**.

The 9.3 miles of routes proposed in this variance are the first of the Bucket B routes, meaning the department is authorized to plan **150.7 miles** of additional ATV/UTV routes.

- Ability of the road or trail to sustainably support motorized recreational use based on the anticipated level of use.
- Ability of the department or partners to maintain and operate the route or trail based on the anticipated level of use.

DNR found the proposed route to be compatible with the listed factors for consideration and anticipates minimal adverse impact resulting from this variance. Furthermore, in planning ATV/UTV access, the department found the routes proposed in this variance more consistent with nearby existing recreational uses than previously planned Bucket A routes. The routes proposed in this variance were planned following staff determinations that Bucket A routes directly to the east may cause unwanted noise near a designated quiet campground.

The 2005 Master Plan identified ATV riding opportunities as a need in the region. The 2017 amendment documented and addressed this continuing need. Local municipalities have also identified ATV riding opportunities as a need for their communities. This variance is an opportunity for DNR to partner with a local community to address a need identified by both entities. Connecting communities surrounding NHAL via ATV/UTV is a benefit of the variance. DNR staff have met with the Town of Woodruff and the local ATV/UTV club to determine a suitable route to connect Woodruff with the Town of Sayner.

How the proposed plan change is supported by or is inconsistent with the property vision, goals and objectives or other plan provisions:

This plan change is consistent with the vision and goals of the property. Specifically, the change aids in fulfilling goals 6,7,9, and 10 from the 2005 Master Plan.

Goal	Variance Support for Goal
6. Provide a variety of recreational settings and activities, ranging from primitive to developed consistent with resource capabilities.	The variance provides opportunities for additional recreation activities to occur within NHAL thereby increasing the variety of recreational opportunities available to users of the property. The additional ATV/UTV trails and routes will be designated on existing trails and roads, maintaining consistency with resource capabilities.
7. Provide a diversity of hunting, trapping, fishing and wildlife viewing opportunities.	The variance expands ATV/UTV access to new areas of the property, allowing for easier access to remote stretches that may otherwise not be accessible by visitors. Increasing access to these areas offers additional opportunities to trap, hunt, fish, and view wildlife in varied settings throughout the NHAL.
9. Resolve or minimize conflict among various types of forest users and management activities.	The designated ATV/UTV routes in this variance were proposed only after careful consideration of impacts on other user groups. By designating routes on existing DNR roads, use change is minimal and ATV/UTV use is limited to areas DNR has deemed appropriate.
10. Provide a variety of educational opportunities for state forest visitors	Increased access to the property will increase the options available to property managers and program specialists to provide educational opportunities to the public.

The ATV/UTV routes and trails designated by this variance intersect two land management areas with designated management classifications under ch. NR 44.06, Wis. Adm. Code, shown in the table below. The ATV/UTV route designation authorized by this variance does not conflict with the objectives of the areas below.

Land Management Area	Land Management Classification
Big Arbor Vitae Loamy Hills	Forest Production Management Area
Oneida Sandy Plains	Forest Production Management Area

The 2005 Master Plan states the department’s support for the development and maintenance of ATV riding opportunities on appropriate trails, especially those that contribute to the regional network. The ATV/UTV route in this variance strengthens the regional network of trails and creates a connecting route.

Anticipated primary benefits of the proposed plan change:

The routes and trails designated in this variance connect the larger regional network being planned as well as loops of routes and trails which provide additional riding opportunities. A desire to create a network of ATV/UTV routes that provide connections east-west and north-south across the NHAL exists as documented in the 2017 Amendment.

Additional anticipated benefits:

Trails and routes designated for ATV/UTV use in the NHAL are also open to dual-sport motorcycles. Thus, the increase in designated ATV/UTV routes will also increase the number of dual-sport motorcycle routes.

Unavoidable adverse impacts:

The introduction of an activity to areas where that activity has not occurred in the past will inevitably have an impact on the local environment. Designation of ATV/UTV routes on department roads and trails may lead to a moderate increase in noise as motorized recreation vehicles pass through the area and a slight increase in dust during dry times of the year. Given that ATV/UTV route designation is occurring primarily on existing department roads and trails, the department believes the adverse impacts will be minimal. Additional social impacts are expected to be minimal as this variance has been requested by local governments and the regional trail system being created has local support.

Summary of any alternatives considered:

Alternate Route Alternative: the 2017 Amendment proposed an alternate route for the north – south ATV trail/route connecting Lake Tomahawk to St. Germain. After field review in the spring of 2018, it was determined that route was not preferred due to its wetland implications and proximity to quiet lakes and a designated quiet campground.

No Change Alternative: the alternative of making no change was not selected. This alternative would not allow the designation of ATV/UTV route or trails and would prevent completion of the north – south connection through NHAL.

Compatibility with statutes, codes, and department policies:

This variance has been written in compliance with all applicable statutes, codes, and department policies. The variance process has followed ch. NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code requirements, including public notification and involvement. The authorization to designate additional ATV/UTV routes or trails to serve as connectors between local municipality road ATV/UTV routes was approved in the 2017 Amendment.

Federal aid limitations:

Portions of the NHAL were acquired with assistance from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) grant program, starting with the first LAWCON acquisition in 1969. Currently, more than 219,000 acres within the NHAL have federal interest via the LAWCON program. Federal interest requires that the department obtain approval from the National Park Service prior to granting any permanent real estate interests or building permanent structures that impact public outdoor recreation opportunities.

Public review process used:

A press release and Gov Delivery email to subscribers to the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest topic announced the beginning of the public input process. The proposed variance was posted to

the department's website for a 14-day public review period. This review period ran from June 19 – July 3, 2018. The public was welcome to review and submit comments on the variance by contacting department staff via email, phone, or mail. Relevant staff contact information was posted on the website.

Description of the support and/or opposition to the proposal:

The Town of Woodruff in Oneida County supports this proposal. This support was demonstrated by the Town Board amending the town ordinance related to ATV/UTV routes in the State Forest to designate Bass Lake Road and Indian Shores Road as ATV routes.

Through the public input process, the department received a total of nine phone calls, two written letters, and 78 emails. The communication received was a mix of support and opposition to the variance. Many respondents submitted input related to the Town of Boulder Junction. Those responding expressed both concerns and support for ATV/UTV use within the Town of Boulder Junction. These comments are outside the scope of this master plan variance process as the proposed routes do not enter the Town of Boulder Junction. The proposed ATV/UTV routes on DNR lands in this proposed variance are in the Towns of Woodruff, Arbor Vitae and St. Germain.

Concerns related to the routes listed in Bucket A were also received. While Bucket A routes are outside the scope of this process, this proposed variance is partly in response to concerns raised during Bucket A route planning. The routes outlined in this variance represent a shift west, away from sensitive areas the Bucket A routes had potential to impact.

Concern was expressed with the potential of other Bucket A routes entering the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) project boundary near the Rainbow Flowage. One of the areas in question has been shown, on Map G of the 2017 Amendment and Map 1 in previous drafts of this variance, as a "potential ATV/UTV route." This line illustrated a conceptual route the department aims to accomplish while working with partners. To further emphasize the conceptual nature of the potential route, the line has been removed from Map 1 and replaced with points A and B. The mileage associated with the line between points A and B, remains part of Bucket A as the department hopes to connect points A and B with ATV/UTV routes on local and department roads.

The NRB approved a short ATV/UTV route loop east of County Highway O, as shown on Map G of the 2017 Amendment. The coarse drawing scale used on Map G led to confusion regarding the location of the proposed loop route in relation to the FERC boundary. The NRB and department representatives stated at the time of the Amendment's passage that the department has no intention to conflict with FERC boundaries in its ATV/UTV route planning. The loop route east of County Highway O has been clarified, represented in Map 1, using the exact DNR roads that may be designated as routes to create this loop.

The segment of proposed ATV/UTV route leading into Sayner shown in the original draft of this variance caused concern. A portion of the proposed segment is currently a snowmobile trail that serves locally as a walking trail in the summer. The concerns over this segment stemmed from its proximity to a neighborhood west of Sayner and the department road's heavy use by walkers. The department has

removed this segment from the proposed variance and will work with the Town of Plum Lake to assess alternative routes.

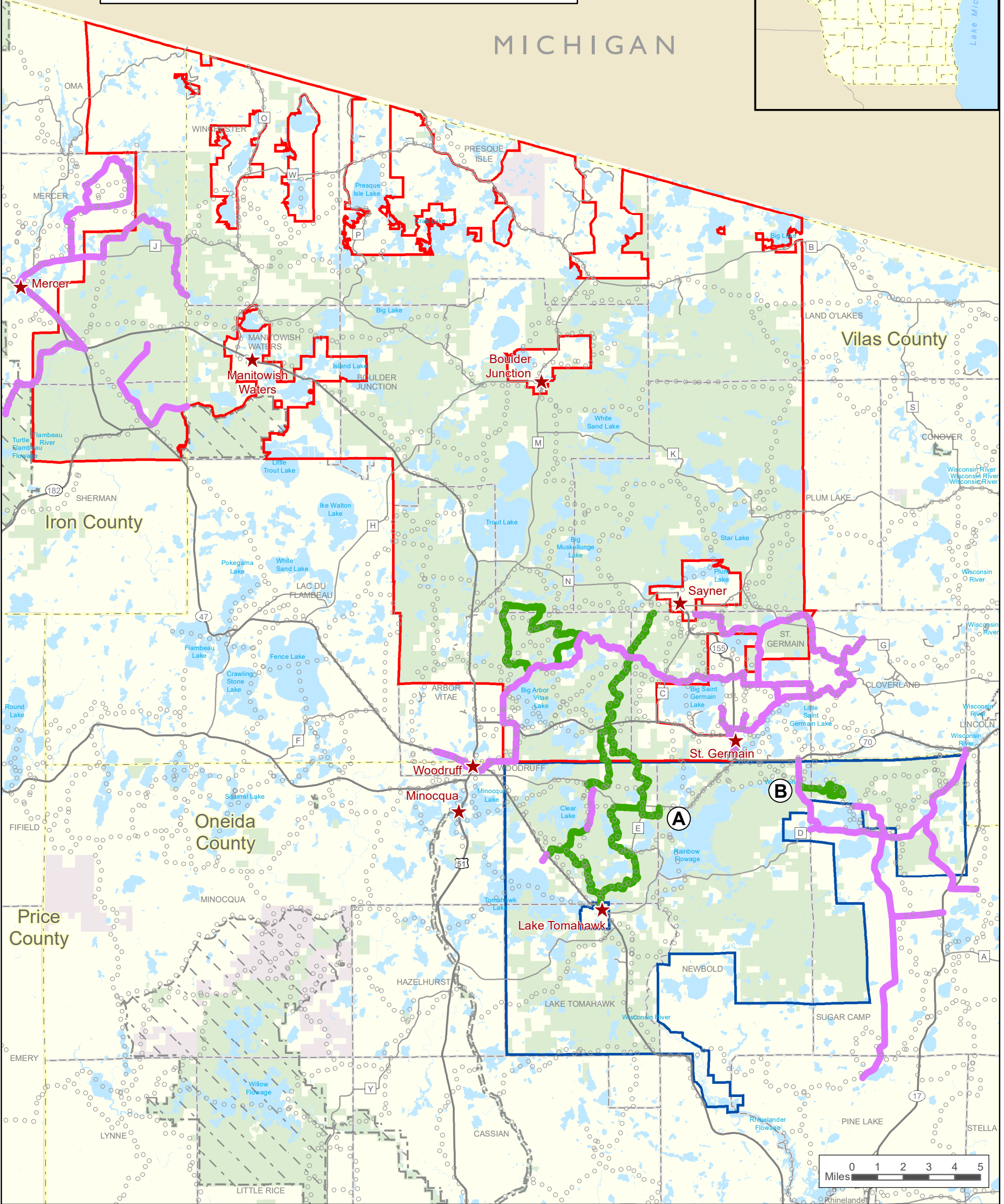
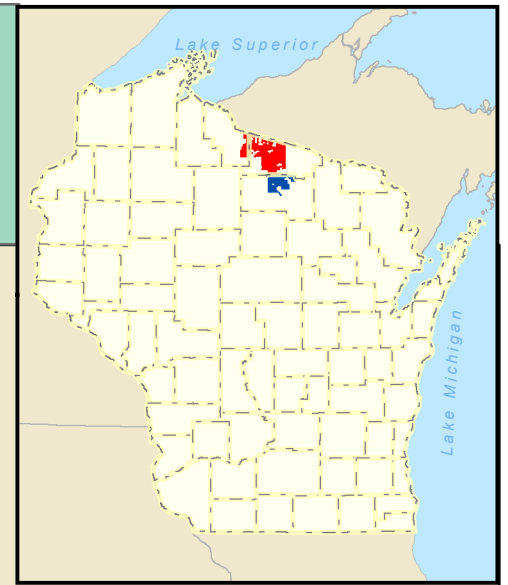
Much of the input the department received related to social, environmental and economic impacts from ATV/UTV route designation in the NHAL. Comments in support of the proposed variance frequently cited expected economic benefits to local businesses as a reason for their support. Comments opposed to the variance also often cited potential economic loss from forest users choosing to recreate elsewhere due to ATV/UTV use.

Public input submitted opposing the proposed variance cited concerns regarding the impact to the environment. These concerns included noise impacts, ruts and other soil disturbances, invasive species spread, impact to native species and the proximity of the proposed route to the Bittersweet Lakes State Natural Area. Comments supporting and opposing the proposed variance also addressed the social impacts of recreation. Those opposed to the variance frequently discussed concerns with ATV/UTV use conflicting with their enjoyment of other activities in the forest. The increase in ATV/UTV route availability was heavily cited as a positive by those in favor of the variance.

Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

ATV/UTV ROUTES

* For planning purposes only; routes shown may or may not be constructed.
Always follow signs located at property for allowed activities on department roads.



Project Boundary

- Northern Highland State Forest
- American Legion State Forest
- Other Project Boundaries

- DNR Fee Title
- DNR Easement
- County Boundary
- Town Boundary
- ★ Town Center

- Planned ATV/UTV Route on DNR Roads/Trails
- Existing ATV/UTV Route on Local and County Roads
- ○ ○ Existing Snowmobile Trails

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES



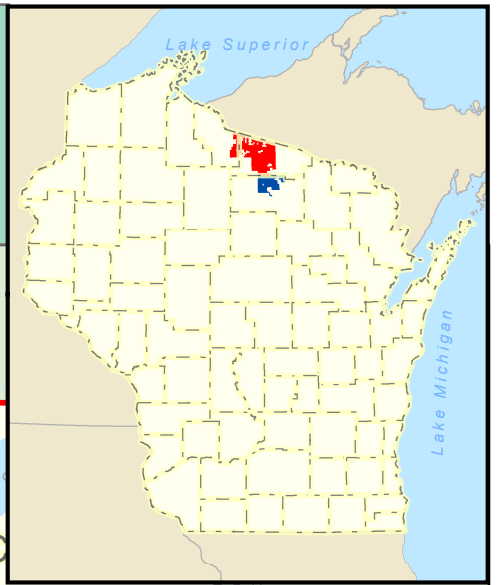
Bureau of Facilities and Lands
September 13, 2018
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MAP I

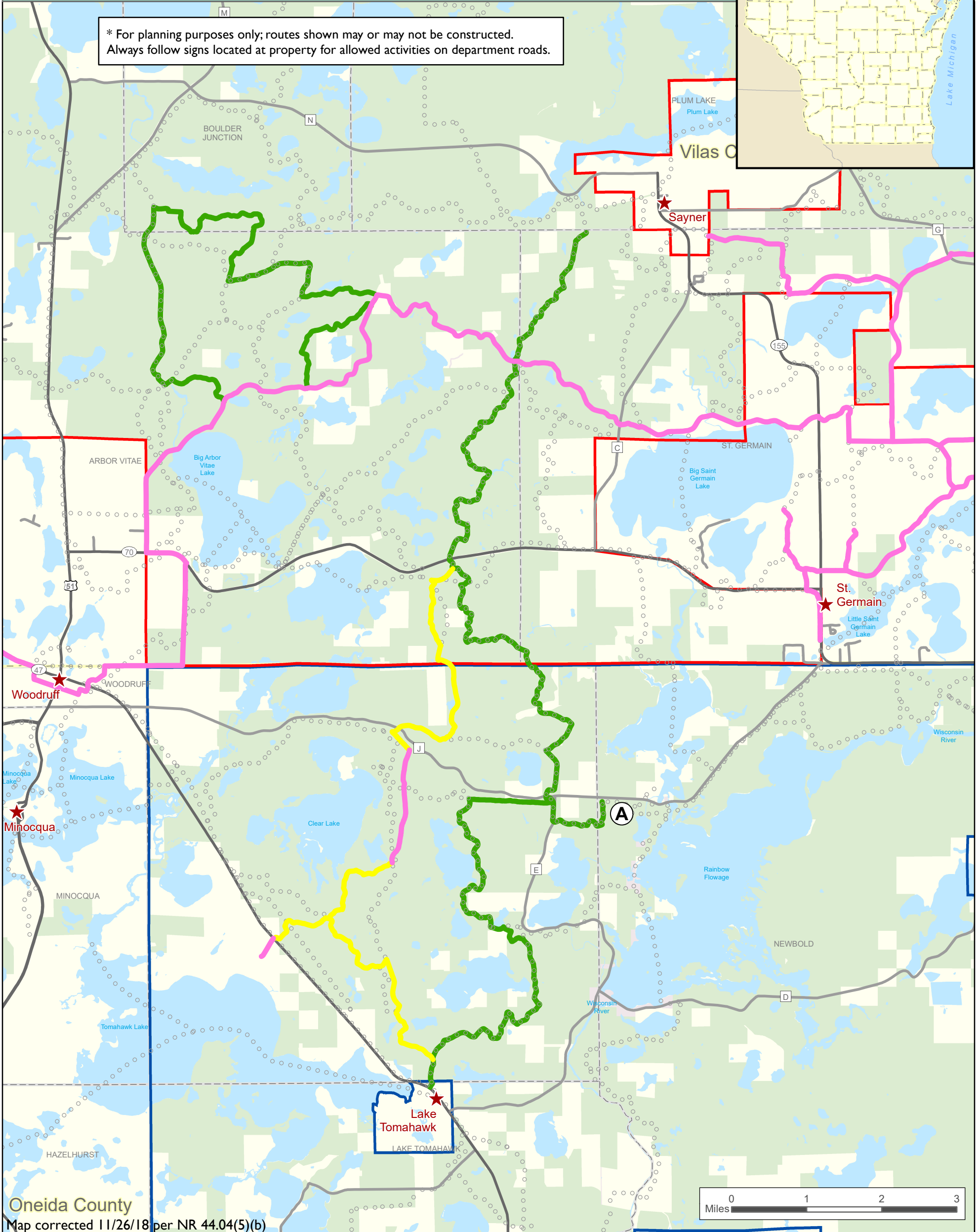
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Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

EXISTING AND PLANNED ATV/UTV TRAILS AND ROUTES



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Always follow signs located at property for allowed activities on department roads.



Oneida County
Map corrected 11/26/18 per NR 44.04(5)(b)



Project Boundary	DNR Fee Title	Planned "Bucket A" ATV/UTV Route - 2017 Amendment
Northern Highland State Forest	DNR Easement	Existing ATV/UTV Route on Local and County Roads
American Legion State Forest	County Boundary	Planned "Bucket B" ATV/UTV Route - 2018 Variance
Other Project Boundaries	Town Boundary	Existing Snowmobile Trail
Town Center		

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November 26, 2018
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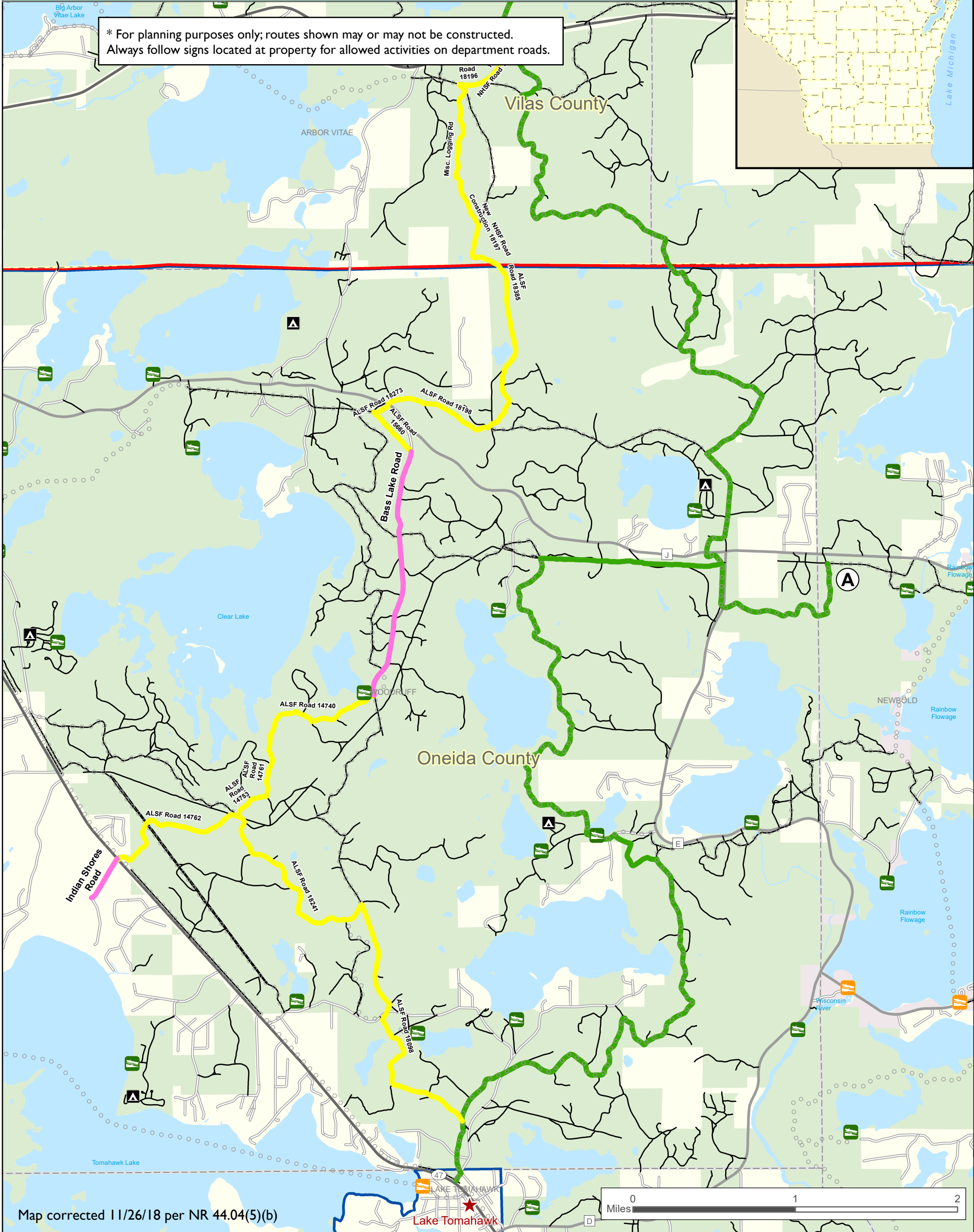
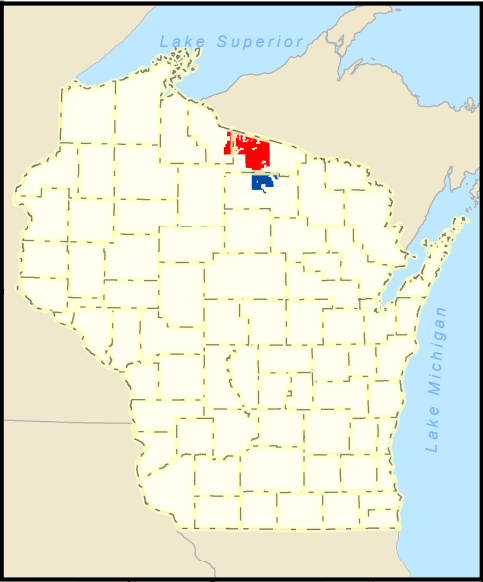
MAP 2

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Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

VARIANCE 2018 ATV/UTV TRAILS AND ROUTES

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Map corrected 11/26/18 per NR 44.04(5)(b)

Project Boundary <ul style="list-style-type: none">Northern Highland State ForestAmerican Legion State Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">DNR Fee TitleDNR EasementCounty BoundaryTown BoundaryTown CenterDNR Road Open for Motorized AccessExisting Snowmobile Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Existing ATV/UTV Route on Local and County RoadsPlanned "Bucket A" ATV/UTV Route - 2017 AmendmentPlanned "Bucket B" ATV/UTV Route - 2018 VarianceCampgroundBoat Landing (DNR)Boat Landing (Non-DNR)	<p>WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES</p> <p>Bureau of Facilities and Lands</p> <p>November 26, 2018</p> <p>jst</p> <h2>MAP 3</h2>
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