

# Forest Recreation Management

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REMEMBER:

Guidelines help with *how* to manage,  
not *whether* to manage.

These guidelines focus on *how* to protect the functions and values of forest resources during forest management activities. They do not provide advice on *whether* to manage or which management activities are needed.

Guidelines provide a *menu*, not a *mandate*.

Site-level resource management decisions are based on many different factors, including resource needs, landowner objectives, site capabilities, existing regulations, economics and the best information available at any given time. No one will apply all of the guidelines related to a particular activity. Instead, the landowner, resource manager or logger will consider many different factors in determining which combination of guidelines provides the best “fit” for a particular site at a particular time. The intent of having multiple guidelines is to provide decision-makers with as much flexibility—and as much choice—as possible in taking steps to effectively balance forest management needs and resource sustainability.

*General* guidelines and *activity-specific* guidelines  
are closely related.

Frequent references from activity-specific guidelines back to the general guidelines will make it easy for landowners, resource managers, loggers and others to consider all of the related guidelines—both general and specific—that apply to a particular management activity.

Guidelines are supplemented from time to time  
by “Additional Considerations.”

The guidelines are supplemented from time to time by “Additional Considerations,” which provide additional guidance to further promote sustainability of our forest resources.



The goal of forest recreation management is to select, develop, operate and maintain forest recreation areas to provide quality outdoor experiences for the recreational user. *Photo courtesy of Minnesota DNR*

## INTRODUCTION

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The goal of forest recreation management is to select, develop, operate and maintain forest recreation areas to provide quality outdoor experiences for the recreational user.

### The Benefits of Guidelines

**Benefits to cultural resources:** Recreation management guidelines address the fact that campgrounds, boat landings and other recreational facilities tend to be located in areas that have high sensitivity for cultural resources. Guidelines can help assure that construction and operation of such facilities do not adversely affect cultural resources through soil disturbance, rutting, compaction and erosion. Guidelines also address issues of public use that may increase the potential for deliberate vandalism or inadvertent disturbance of sensitive sites.

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Benefits to riparian areas: Recreation management guidelines address the fact that development of trails, campsites or other recreational facilities can alter the vegetation within the riparian area. That vegetation is important for providing inputs of coarse woody debris and fine litter to water bodies; retaining nutrients, sediment and energy; bank and shoreline stabilization; maintaining moderate water temperatures through shading; and wildlife habitat. Guidelines for retaining vegetation can also have a positive impact on aesthetics, wood products and recreation.

Benefits to water quality and wetlands: Recreation management guidelines help assure that development of trails, campsites or other recreational facilities do not disturb sensitive sites or water features, thus reducing sedimentation to water bodies and wetlands. Guidelines that address equipment operations and maintenance can help protect water quality and wetlands.

Benefits to wildlife habitat: Recreation management guidelines can minimize the disturbance to sensitive sites, rare species, water features or unique habitats that may occur directly or as a result of development of trails, campsites and other recreational facilities, or indirectly through increased human use of an area that such facilities bring.

### Considerations

- ❑ Planning for recreational development should address cultural resource issues in terms of both protection and interpretation. Existing cultural resource inventories should be reviewed early in the planning process. If no information is available, field inspections should be conducted before development plans are finalized to determine presence or absence of cultural resources.
- ❑ If cultural resources are present in the development area, it may be possible to modify construction plans to reduce or eliminate damage to the resources. Cultural resource professionals can help determine the best approaches to mitigation of potential damage. For sources of information and assistance, see *Resource Directory*.
- ❑ Recreational developments provide opportunities for education through interpretation of on-site cultural resources. For sources of information and assistance, see *Resource Directory*.



Have you identified  
your goals and objectives?

See *Identifying Goals and Objectives*  
in General Guidelines.

Have you conducted a site inventory?

See *Conducting a Site Inventory*  
in General Guidelines.

## PLANNING

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IMPORTANT! Review General Guidelines:

- Incorporating Sustainability into Forest Management Plans
- Maintaining Filter Strips
- Managing Riparian Areas



## CONSTRUCTION OF RECREATION AREAS

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IMPORTANT! Review General Guidelines:

- Protecting Cultural Resources
- Managing Equipment, Fuel and Lubricants
- Protecting the Normal Flow of Streams and Wetlands
- Protecting Wetland Inclusions and Seasonal Ponds
- Retaining Leave Trees
- Providing Coarse Woody Debris

**U** Conduct on-site meetings with the contractor, landowner and resource manager prior to moving equipment onto a site. Such meetings can help assure common understanding of landowner objectives, contract specifications and site conditions.

### Protecting Cultural Resources

**U** Select and designate borrow areas and gravel quarries prior to the start of construction to avoid cultural resource locations.

**U** Select and designate the staging area for equipment prior to the start of construction to avoid cultural resource locations.  
If avoidance is not feasible or practical:

- Use “fill-only” construction techniques in the area of the cultural resource.
- Construct temporary crossings over the cultural resource (including slash, tire mats, or fill over geotextile).

**U** Do not allow surfaces in archaeologically sensitive areas to erode, slump or wash out. Implement temporary stabilization methods to preserve the shape, slope, elevation and contours of archaeological sites and historic features. Stabilization should not alter the historic character of the cultural resource.

**U** If practical and feasible, avoid cultural resource areas when constructing recreational facilities.

**U** If it is not possible to completely avoid a cultural resource, minimize or eliminate soil disturbance and erosion in the vicinity of the resource by:

- Minimizing cut sections and following existing contours to the extent possible
- Avoiding unnecessary disturbance to the ground surface
- Considering data recovery if it is not possible to avoid impacting the resource

For sources of information and assistance, see *Resource Directory*.



Archaeologists excavate a site in advance of development of a new recreational facility. *Photo courtesy of State Parks Cultural Resource Program*

## Protecting Water Quality and Soil Productivity

**U** Install and maintain appropriate erosion control structures to protect water quality and soil productivity. See also appropriate erosion and water control guidelines in *Forest Road Construction and Maintenance: Alignment and Location and Drainage*.

## PUBLIC USE CONSIDERATIONS

### Recreational Traffic

**U** In areas that will receive a lot of traffic (pedestrian or vehicular), periodically inspect the facility to determine whether the cultural resource is being damaged by public use of the area. If so, special protective measures may be desirable.

**U** When operating within the riparian management zone, confine recreational off-highway vehicle use and other non-foot traffic to trails that are designed, constructed and maintained using guidelines for skid trails and forest roads. Refer also to appropriate guidelines in *Timber Harvesting: Skidding and Skid Trails* and *Forest Road Construction and Maintenance*.

### Public Education Opportunities

**U** Retain flagging, signs or other markings on cultural resource areas in cases where they might be appropriate long-term protection