

Forest Roads Inventory Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Public Act 288?

PA 288, enacted in September 2016, opened most state forest roads in the northern Lower Peninsula to ORV use starting January 1, 2018. The law also allows for the cross-country retrieval of deer, bear and elk using ORVs and horses. The law also required the DNR to inventory and map all state forest roads in the Northern Lower Peninsula by the end of 2017 and inventory and map all state forest roads in the Upper Peninsula and southern Lower Peninsula by the end of 2018.

2. Why did the DNR open roads to ORVs?

PA 288 directs the department to inventory and map all state forest roads in the northern Lower Peninsula by the end of 2017 and in the Upper Peninsula and southern Lower Peninsula by the end of 2018. All roads throughout the state not closed by a Land Use Order of the Director are now open to ORV use in accordance with the law. These roads are open to Secretary of State licensed motor vehicles. Michigan offers countless opportunities for outdoor adventures through the availability and diversity of its public lands. Opening more forest roads to ORV enthusiasts lets people take full advantage of these recreational experiences.

3. Are any roads not open to ORVs?

Some state forest roads may be closed to ORV use by a Land Use Order of the Director. Reasons for closures include ensuring user safety, preventing user conflicts and protecting environmentally sensitive areas. Public input on the status of state forest roads is continuously accepted throughout the year. Updated maps indicating which roads are opened or closed to ORV's are published on April 1 each year. Proposed changes to the maps must be received by August 31 each year to be considered for inclusion on the next year's maps.

4. What are the criteria for closing roads to ORVs?

Roads might be closed for several reasons, including:

- Environmental and resource protection
- Dedicated natural area
- Visual quality objectives/scenic lookout areas
- Conflicts with adjacent property ownership
- Litter and dumping
- User safety
- Lack of legal access (easement needed)
- Road density
- Reduce user conflict
- Poor road conditions
- Administrative rule
- Land use order
- Deed restriction
- Management plan
- Temporary management access
- Military land restrictions
- Grouse Enhanced Management Areas

5. What is a forest road?

A road on DNR administered land under the management of the Department. By statute a forest road is defined as “a hard-surfaced road, gravel or dirt road, or other route capable of travel by a two-wheel drive, four-wheel conventional vehicle designed for road use. A forest road does not include a Street, County Road or Highway”.

6. What is the difference between a state forest road and a trail?

Trails are rights of way developed and designated for specific uses such as biking, hiking, snowmobiles, ORVs and horses. State forest roads are roads located on state land that are under the jurisdiction and management of the DNR and are open to conventional vehicles. In some cases, designated trails are located on state forest roads. For example, a designated motorcycle trail may run along a state forest road before it goes back into the forest as a single-track trail.

7. How do I know where I can ride?

Maps of roads open and closed to ORV use are published annually on the DNR website. In addition, signs are posted on roads closed to ORV use.

8. Can I see which roads are proposed open and closed to ORVs?

Online maps are available at Michigan.gov/ForestRoads in November of each year to show state forest roads that have a proposal to either change the ORV status (opened or closed to ORV use), close a road to conventional vehicles, or add or remove a road from the map as a result of more accurate data. Public comment on these proposals will be accepted in November of each year.

9. How can I participate in this process?

Public input on the state forest road inventory is continuously accepted. The best option for reviewing and commenting on state forest roads is the interactive web map found at www.michigan.gov/forestroads.

In addition, comments can also be emailed to:
DNR-RoadInventoryProject@Michigan.gov

Proposed changes to the road maps will be discussed at Natural Resources Commission (NRC) meetings in January and February each year. A final decision will be made by the DNR Director at the February NRC meeting.

In-person comments will be accepted at both NRC meetings.