

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

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News Release

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Wildlife Federation Appeals Forest Service Decision to Close 2363 Miles of Roads

Poynette---Yesterday, the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, comprised of 161 hunting, fishing, trapping and forestry related organizations announced that it had filed a formal appeal of the US Forest Service to close 2363 miles of roads to vehicular use in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. The Federation's Board of Director's endorsed the appeal at its October meeting because of their great concern for the loss of hunting, fishing and trapping opportunities on the forest. The appeal will be decided by the Forest Service's Milwaukee-based Eastern Regional Director.

The appeal filed by the Federation expressed concern that the CNNF's Travel Management Program Decision:

1. Was based on an inadequate public involvement process that did not reach out to the great majority of Wisconsin hunters, anglers and trappers and did not notify the scores of thousands of forest users in central and southern Wisconsin about the massive number of road closures.
2. Used road closure maps that don't accurately show the actual location of the roads that are going to be closed.
3. Closed roads that are used by scores of thousands of hunter, anglers and trappers when the use of the roads, many of which have been open for decades, are not causing any environmental harm or user conflict.
4. Places the burden on individual citizens to petition for keeping individual roads open rather than the Forest Service assuming the responsibility to systematically reviewing the roads prior to their closure,
5. Fails to establish a process in which disabled hunters are allowed to use roads closed to the public.

“The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is critically important to Wisconsin hunters, anglers and trappers,” stated Ralph Fritsch (Kaukauna), Chair of the WWF’s Wildlife Committee. “The closure of 2363 miles of road in the forest will have major negative impact on bear, coyote, raccoon and fox hunters on the forest.

“The Service is requiring hunters, anglers and trappers to identify and petition for each individual road that they would like to be kept open,” stated Jerry Knuth (Plover), Chair of the WWF’s Forestry and Parks Committee. “This is not reasonable especially for hunting species that are free ranging and can cover great distances during a hunt.”

“The Service is closing these 2363 miles when they have not done an evaluation of whether keeping a road open will have any harmful effect on the forest and its resources or whether there is any user conflict in keeping the road open,” indicated George Meyer, WWF Executive Director. “The process is backward, those evaluations should be done before the road is closed to public recreational use.”

The Wisconsin Wildlife Federation is dedicated to conservation education and the advancement of sound conservation policies including sound management of natural resources and the retention and increase of public access for hunting, fishing and trapping in Wisconsin. The Federation is part of the National Wildlife Federation. For further information, contact George Meyer, Executive Director of the Federation at 608-516-5545.