

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON TRAIL USE CHANGES AT UNCAS DUNES SNA

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will conduct a public hearing in consideration of two potential trail use changes within Uncas Dunes Scientific and Natural Area (SNA). First, the DNR is proposing to officially allow horseback riding along the section of the Sherburne County Snowmobile Trail, #209, which crosses the northern unit of Uncas Dunes SNA and connects portions of a popular horse trail running between 237th Avenue Northwest and 253rd Avenue Northwest. The second proposed change would limit snowmobile use within Uncas Dunes SNA to Sherburne County Snowmobile Trail, #209. In addition, the DNR is proposing to modify the Uncas Dunes SNA designation order to more accurately describe the location of the proposed horseback and snowmobile trail and to remove language allowing use of vehicle trails within the SNA. The hearing will be held June 14, 2017, 7:30 – 8:30 pm, or until all testimony is taken, at the Lions Park Community Center located at 1104 Lions Park Drive, Elk River, MN, 55330.

The Uncas Dunes SNA, located within Sand Dunes State Forest in Sherburne County and covering 676 acres, was designated as a State Scientific and Natural Area in 1989 and expanded in 1997 to protect oak savanna, oak forest, and wetland and several rare plant and wildlife species supported by these habitats. Uncas Dunes SNA is open to the public for activities such as hiking, bird-watching, nature photography, snowshoeing, and hunting during the open season. Dogs are permitted, and snowmobiling is allowed along specified paths at this SNA. Information on resources and location of Uncas Dunes SNA can be found by choosing the SNA from an [alphabetical listing of all SNAs](#).

The Sand Dunes State Forest provides varied recreational opportunities for the public including horseback riding and snowmobiling. The proposed equestrian use change within the SNA is to recognize historical horseback use along Sherburne County Snowmobile Trail #209, and to allow continued equestrian use there by modifying the SNAs designation order that specifies what activities are allowed in the SNA. The proposed snowmobile use change is to bring snowmobile trail use occurring within the SNA into agreement with the [MN DNR interactive snowmobile](#)

[trail map](#). Uses occurring outside of Uncas Dunes SNA and within the surrounding state forest would not be impacted by these proposed changes.

At the hearing, a hearing official will record all testimony regarding the public use changes being proposed at this SNA. DNR staff will be present to answer questions on these matters. Written statements on this subject will also be accepted until June 21, 2017. Testimony may be emailed to sna.dnr@state.mn.us (Please put “Uncas Dunes SNA” in the subject line) or sent by U.S. mail to the Public Hearing Officer [Gina Bonsignore, c/o Scientific and Natural Areas Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 1200 Warner Road, St. Paul, MN 55106]. Please specify Uncas Dunes SNA in your comments.