

CHAPTER 67
DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF RECREATION TRAILS ON
STATE FORESTS, PARKS, PRESERVES AND RECREATION AREAS

Chapter rescission date pursuant to Iowa Code section 17A.7: 6/18/30

571—67.1(456A,461A) Applicability. This chapter is applicable to all state-owned parks, recreation areas, forests and preserves under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources, except those areas under management by a local government entity.

[ARC 9234C, IAB 5/14/25, effective 6/18/25]

571—67.2(456A,461A) Definitions.

“*All-terrain vehicle*” means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 321I.1.

“*Area*” means any park, recreation area, forest, or preserve under the jurisdiction of the department of natural resources.

“*Department*” means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 461A.1(2).

“*Director*” means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 461A.1(3).

“*Division administrator*” means the division administrator of the department division responsible for managing the area in question.

“*Equestrian*” means a horse rider or a person who is horseback riding.

“*Horse*” means any equine animal, including horses, mules, burros, donkeys, and all llamas or alpaca-like animals.

“*Snowmobile*” means the same as defined in Iowa Code section 321G.1.

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571—67.3(456A,461A) Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to establish guidelines for developing and properly managing the use of recreation trails on state parks, recreation areas, forests and preserves.

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571—67.4(456A,461A) Establishment of trails. Establishment and designation of recreation trails shall not be undertaken until after a plan showing the basic design, location and designated use for any such trail has been prepared. The director shall approve all trail plans for areas, and trails shall follow only those routes designated on the plan.

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571—67.5(456A,461A) Designation of recreation trails. All trails shall be designated by the department. Designation shall include an assignment of the use or uses for which each trail is intended. Uses shall be classified as follows: foot traffic, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, bicycling and multiple-use trails. The intended uses of trails shall be described on signs at appropriate locations within the area, in informational brochures about the area, or on posted notice at the area’s headquarters.

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571—67.6(456A,461A) Guidelines for trail location. No new trail shall be designated or constructed:

1. On any slope where erosion will occur unless measures are taken to permanently control erosion. The measures may include but not be limited to water bars, steps, vegetative or crushed stone surfacing and terraces;

2. Through rare or sensitive plant communities, except for trails intended for interpretive purposes and designed for foot traffic only;

3. In locations where wildlife management practices are being carried out that would be negatively affected by trail activity;

4. To pass over archaeological sites or adversely affect known archaeological sites eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or known sites not yet evaluated;

5. Where past trail use has resulted in erosion or other environmental damage that would be exacerbated by continued trail use;

6. So as to allow travel through a river, stream or wetland or waterway except at designated crossings.
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571—67.7(456A,461A) Control of trail use.

67.7(1) Use of trails may be temporarily limited or suspended by the area manager when use or any natural event has created conditions that will cause the trail to degrade if further use is allowed. Guidelines may include but are not limited to the following considerations:

a. Precipitation events (e.g., rain, thaws, or flooding that, based on the soils and topography, would present a problem for resource protection or public safety if the trail were to remain open).

b. Special events (e.g., events that are large, involve concessionaires, or would otherwise require a special event permit as described in 571—subrule 61.7(16) and would interfere with the safety or enjoyment of other trail users).

c. Ecosystem management activities (e.g., scheduled harvests, timber stand improvement, planting, or controlled burns that would temporarily disrupt trail use).

d. Trail construction or repair.

e. Off-trail use (e.g., vehicle or animal use that has created damage off the actual trail that affects the trail and needs to be corrected).

f. Conflicts between trail users.

g. Trail damage/erosion (e.g., overuse, use at the wrong time, or unauthorized vehicle use).

67.7(2) The area manager shall limit or suspend use of a trail by posting signs at appropriate trailheads and by posting notices in conspicuous locations within the area.

67.7(3) Upon suspension or limitation of trail use, the area manager shall take prompt and reasonable steps to correct the conditions that led to suspension or limitation. When, in the area manager's judgment, such conditions have been corrected, normal use of the trail may resume.

67.7(4) No trail shall be permanently closed to public use without approval of the director. Recommendations for permanent closure shall be made to the division administrator by the area manager. The division administrator shall prepare a report documenting reasons for closure and provide the report and recommendation to the director. At the request of six or more persons, the director shall direct that a public informational meeting be held in the vicinity of the area to inform the public of the planned closure and to receive public comments. A summary of the public comments made at the meeting shall be presented to the natural resource commission for review. The commission may uphold or reverse the director's decision and shall consider both public comments and staff recommendations before taking action.

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571—67.8(456A,461A) Use of designated trails.

67.8(1) Bicyclists, equestrians and snowmobile operators shall use only trails officially designated and properly signed for such uses.

67.8(2) Unless otherwise prohibited by law, the use of motorized all-terrain vehicles shall be limited to roadways on all areas except as necessary to carry on authorized activities such as area management, agricultural activity, search and rescue operations and special events authorized by the department.

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These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code sections 455A.5, 456A.24 and 461A.35.

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