

Iron Range OHV State Recreation Area

Master Plan Amendment

Site Access, Visitor Facilities, Noise Abatement, Trail Layout and Design



Iron Range OHV State Recreation Area

Master Plan Amendment

This plan amendment has been prepared as required by 2010 Minnesota Laws Chapter 86A.09, Subdivision 1.

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**Department of Natural Resources Final Approval of Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle
State Recreation Area Master Plan Amendment.**

Minnesota Statute, Section 86A.09, subd. 1, requires a master plan to be prepared for units of Minnesota's outdoor recreation system, including state recreation areas. The Laws of Minnesota for 1996, Chapter 407 established the Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle State Recreation Area and the Laws of Minnesota for 1999, Chapter 231 authorized the expansion of the site.

This master plan amendment has been reviewed by the DNR and the public. A public meeting was held at the Iron Range OHV State Recreation Area and comments have been incorporated into the amendment.

Erika Rf Rivers

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2/23/2018

Date

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Executive Summary

The following document amends the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan* (1998) and the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan Amendment for the Virginia Expansion* (2010), which guide the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to manage the Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle State Recreation Area (IROHVSRA).

The IROHVSRA provides recreational motorized trail riding for all-terrain vehicle (ATVs), off-highway motorcycle (OHMs) and off-road vehicle (ORVs) enthusiasts. Each type of off-highway vehicle user has specific needs that make a trip to the IROHVSRA enjoyable. The DNR provides a variety of trails for each motorized user group within the 3,900-acre site.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has rerouted US Highway 53 to accommodate mining. This reroute was not foreseen in previous planning efforts. The reroute provides an opportunity to add additional access points to the expansion site from the cities of Virginia and Eveleth. Other recommendations include trail development, fencing requirements, updated rules and regulations and changes to planned visitor facilities.

This plan amendment provides DNR staff guidance for managing the IROHVSRA in its entirety. The amendment addresses issues that have changed since the 1998 master plan and 2010 plan amendment. This amendment allows the DNR to adapt its management techniques for the IROHVRA to offer enhanced opportunities to OHV enthusiasts. Specific changes include:

1. Site access/fencing;
2. Amenities and facilities provided to visitors;
3. Noise abatement and sound testing;
4. Mileage of trails and user zones within the expansion site;
5. Non-motorized use; and
6. Adherence to state OHV rules and regulations.

System plan implementation

In 2015, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Trails Division completed the *Minnesota State Parks and Trails System Plan* to advance new approaches for managing DNR's state parks and state recreation areas, state trails, forest recreation areas and water recreation system. State parks and recreation areas were classified into three investment groups: Destination, Core and Rustic. The IROHVSRA was classified as part of the Core investment group.

Core investment group parks and state recreation areas offer close-to-home, basic, high-quality facilities that visitors have come to know and expect as well as areas that fill specific niches. The Core group was further defined into three

Core investment sites provide close-to-home, basic, high-quality facilities that visitors have come to know and expect. The adventure subgroup provides opportunities for specific outdoor activities.

subgroups: adventure, classic and gateway state parks and recreation areas. The IROHVSRA was placed into the “adventure” subgroup, offering opportunities for a specific niche of recreationists, the OHV enthusiast.

Introduction

The Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle State Recreation Area (IROHVSRA) is Minnesota's only (and one of the nation's first) state-managed off-highway vehicle recreation areas. Located in the Mesabi Iron Range of Minnesota, near the Quad cities of Eveleth, Gilbert, Mountain Iron and Virginia, the state recreation area is comprised of two parcels—the original 1,200-acre site and the 2,700-acre expansion site. With the exception of visitor and staff support facilities (e.g., the contact station, training center and OHV trails) within the existing site, the IROHVSRA is largely undeveloped, comprised of regenerative forests, mine tailings basins and stock piles left over from years of iron ore mining from the area. The IROHVSRA is managed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Parks and Trails Division.

The IROHVSRA attracts approximately 5,000 off-highway vehicle (OHV) enthusiasts per year. The IROHVSRA features approximately 36 miles of trail catering to all-terrain vehicles (ATV), off-highway motorcycles (OHM) and off-road vehicles (ORVs). The recreation area is connected via a Grant-in-Aid OHV trail (the Genoa Trail) to the cities of Gilbert and Eveleth, which provide food, fuel and lodging opportunities. The varying difficulty level of the trails and the connection to town services make the IROHVSRA the ideal location for OHV users of any skill level.

Legislative authorization and planning history

The IROHVSRA was constructed in response to *MS 85.013, subd. 12a*, which directs the Commissioner of Natural Resources to plan, design, construct and operate an OHV facility within St. Louis County. The original 1,200-acre site opened to public use in 2002. In 1999, the DNR was authorized to purchase an additional 2,704-acres (*ML 1999, C231, Sec. 99, subd. 4*), which is currently under development.

Pursuant to Minnesota Statue 86A.09, the DNR completed a master plan for the site in December, 1998. The DNR completed a master plan amendment for the expansion site in January, 2010. These two documents currently make up the guiding documents for managing the IROHVSRA. Planning for the IROHVSRA involved a collaboration between the DNR and a local area advisory committee (LAAC) made up of elected officials, business leaders and OHV enthusiasts. The legislation authorizing the LAAC expired in 2003 (*ML 2001 1st Special Session, C2, sec. 152, subd. 4*).

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this plan amendment is to address future opportunities within the IROHVSRA and address direction in the master plan and 2010 Amendment that limit the scope of facilities and management the DNR can provide. Some of the proposed modifications may result in additional access routes into the

Grant-in-Aid is a cost sharing program between the DNR and local government units, which provides funding for OHV trail development and maintenance throughout Minnesota.



recreation area, changes to planned trail systems and operation adjustments for management within the recreation.

Specific changes to the master plan include:

1. Site access/fencing;
2. Amenities and facilities provided to visitors;
3. Noise abatement and sound testing;
4. Mileage of trails and user zones within the expansion site;
5. Non-motorized use; and
6. Adherence to state OHV rules and regulations.

Description of Changes

The proposed changes to the master plan will enhance visitor experience by providing additional opportunities for new trails within the IROHVSRA. The beneficiaries of these changes include ATV, OHM and ORV enthusiasts.

Site access/fencing

In September, 2017, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) rerouted US Highway 53 to accommodate mining beneath the former roadbed. The project included a 1,200-foot bridge across an abandoned iron ore mine, connecting the City of Virginia to points south. As part of the project, MnDOT constructed a mixed-use trail lane across the bridge trail creating connections to the Mesabi Regional Trail and the IROHVSRA.

Access to the expansion site will be provided through additional access points from the Cities of Eveleth and Virginia via the new MnDOT trail (see Figure 3). Access points will be similar to OHV access points found in state forests. A sign kiosk will provide information at each access point. The kiosk will inform visitors that they are entering a state recreation area, provide orientation, invasive species management rules, regulations and expectations for rider behavior. These access points will allow the IROHVSRA to become integrated into a larger network of trails (see Figure 4).

The additional access point(s) will be managed similar to a Grant in Aid or DNR unit OHV trail. Users using the access point(s) will be expected to possess appropriate safety certification, vehicle registration and follow all state, local and site-specific rules and regulations. Site access will not be “open,” rather access will only be permitted through authorized access areas during hours of operation. Anyone caught using the site outside hours of operation or without the required certification, registration or equipment will be subject to citation.

To ensure rules and regulations are being followed, the site may be patrolled by DNR conservation officers, county sheriff deputies and local police. In addition, the DNR may utilize trail volunteers to monitor trail conditions and visitor use as well as promote safe and ethical riding through example.

The DNR may consider additional access points to the IROHVSRA in the future if the additional points provide a benefit to the user and do not have adverse social or environmental effects. These additional access points will follow the same standards as outlined above.

Trail Connections

Northeastern Minnesota provides a variety of OHV opportunities on a variety of public, private and corporate-owned lands. These trails are managed by state and federal land managers or through Grant in Aid. The DNR is currently reviewing additional proposals that would link the IROHVSRA to this growing trail system. Through the additional accesses, trail users can use the IROHVSRA

as a launching point for multi-day excursions through northern Minnesota. Potential trail connections from the IROHVSRA can be found in Figure 4.

Although the IROHVSRA will provide a vital link in the greater trail system, users who decide to make the IROHVSRA their base must enter/exit the recreation area during normal hours of operation posted at the contact station. Currently, the Mesabi Trail warns users they run the risk of their vehicle being locked in the IROHVSRA parking lot overnight if they do not return during normal hours of operation. A same warning will be made available to OHV enthusiasts making the IROHVSRA a base for longer rides.

Fencing

IROHVSRA management experience has shown fencing should not be necessary around the entire perimeter of the expansion site. Fencing will be used in areas where trespass, safety or unlawful access poses an issue. Fencing, berms, vegetation or other natural material will be used to create barriers where needed.

Amenities and facilities provided to visitors

Primary DNR staff functions are to provide trail maintenance, visitor support and site management. Providing additional facilities such as a pro shop, a concession stand and overnight storage of visitors' equipment is no longer consistent with the current management strategies for the IROHVSRA. The DNR encourages visitors to use local businesses for their needs. Restaurants, gas stations, OHV service shops and lodging facilities are located throughout the Quad Cities area.

Camping is not provided within the Iron Range OHV State Recreation Area. Exceptions to the no camping regulation may be made by the Commissioner of Natural Resources under *MR 6100.2400* under a special use permit.

Noise abatement and sound testing

During the original master planning process, noise and dust were concerns of neighboring property owners. After 15 years of operation, no noise or dust complaints have been voiced. DNR has shifted from sound testing every OHV that enters the recreation area to testing only vehicles that have obvious exhaust modifications. The DNR will continue sound checks at the main entrance area and at other access points or along trails as needed. Decibel thresholds will remain accordance with State Statute and rules.

The DNR will use best management practices for noise buffers and sound berms. Some existing noise buffers and sound berms may become available for OHV trail. If a previously buffered area is opened to OHV use and noise complaints are received, the DNR may reinstate the buffer.

Examples of best management practices for noise concerns within the IROHVSRA include, but are not limited to:



Facilities such as the contact station and vehicle wash station at the original recreation site will remain.



IROHVSRA staff perform sound checks on vehicles entering the SRA to ensure that the OHV is within state limits.

- OHVs will not exceed state maximum noise standards as outlined in 1998 master plan;
- Sound buffers will remain in areas near residential dwellings;
- DNR staff will be trained to test noise levels of OHVs;
- OHVs will be subject to noise tests;
- OHVs that exceed state decibel standards will not be permitted.

Mileage of trails and user zones within the Expansion Site

The DNR intends to provide the maximum number of trail miles in the expansion site while providing for resource protection and an excellent visitor experience. The 2010 amendment directs that 75 miles of trail to be developed within the expansion site, including the one-mile connector, eight miles of core trail and 66 miles of vehicle-specific trails (DNR 2010, pg. 19). This amount of trail may or may not be appropriate for this site. The expansion site will contain an appropriate mileage of trail for resource protection and visitor experience.

The 2010 amendment also calls for “zones” that segregate ATV, OHM and ORV users. By intermingling the uses throughout the expansion site, more opportunities will be available for each type of OHV while providing a comparable amount of “seat time.” With having multiple uses in close vicinity, it is important to maintain the integrity of trails that allow for specific types of OHVs. For example, OHM users prefer a narrower trail, which may be less than 24” in width. To protect the integrity of the narrower trail, the trail head may include filters that do not allow wider than allowed OHVs on the trail. Filters may include natural objects such as trees or large boulders or man-made fencing or gates that prohibit the wider vehicles from entering and widening the trail. The DNR may use an outside design firm to make recommendations for optimum trail layout and design.

Trail Standards

The varying terrain of the IROHVSRA provides OHV enthusiasts a level of difficulty found in few other locations within Minnesota. Trails will be built to maximize user enjoyment within the IROHVSRA and will cater to trail enthusiasts of all skill levels. The DNR’s *Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines* OHV Tread Guidelines for Difficulty Levels (pg. 4.35) provides general guidelines for trail standards.

To reach their desired trail experience, users will utilize a network of core, or connecting, trails. The core trails will also provide access for maintenance and emergency vehicles where needed. Unlike a forest road, core trails may be narrower in areas, incorporate twists and turns and may include natural and constructed features. However riders will be able to pick their own line.

Trail Management Objectives

Trail Management Objects (TMOs) outline desired trail experiences for users. TMOs typically do not change over time and provide guidance for future



Trail users identify the difficulty of a trail through difficulty decals at the beginning of a trail. Green are easiest trails, blue are more difficult and black are most difficult.



The DNR’s Trail Planning, Design and Development Guidelines as well as NOHVCC’s Great Trails manual provide excellent resources to develop TMOs.

management of the IROHVSRA. They provide managers guidance for trail difficulty levels, user experience and maintenance schedules. TMOs ensure the area will keep its one-of-a-kind experience for OHV enthusiasts. The DNR will develop TMOs for the IROHVSRA as part of the trail development project for the expansion site.

Non-motorized use

The principal purpose of the Iron Range OHV State Recreation Area will remain entirely for motorized use. The 1998 master plan called for a mountain bike system on a leased parcel of land within the IROHVSRA. This lease has since expired with no development on the parcel. The DNR does not plan to construct any new non-motorized trails within the IROHVSRA, but does support the asphalt-surface Mesabi Trail, which crosses the IROHVSRA.

The Mesabi Trail is a non-motorized summer trail and winter snowmobile trail between Grand Rapids and Ely managed by the St. Louis & Lake Counties Railroad Authority.

Adherence to state OHV rules and regulations

Minnesota Statutes governing OHV use may be adapted to changing user trends and demands. The 1998 master plan introduced specific rules for the IROHVSRA that restrict the DNR's ability to adapt to amended statutes and may confuse visitors when rules and regulations differ from other areas of the state. Therefore, State Statute, rules and regulations will serve as the basis for regulations within the IROHVSRA. The DNR may enact more stringent rules and regulations specific to the IROHVSRA as necessary, but the rules and regulations are not outlined in this plan amendment.

Natural and Cultural Resources

During the original master planning effort and the 2010 master plan amendment for the expansion site, extensive natural and cultural resource review were conducted. This included the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS), which focused on occurrences of St. Lawrence Grapefern and Pale Moonwort within the existing site. These species were inventoried and protected by fencing.

Geology and mining

The IROHVSRA lies within the Mesabi Iron Range, one of three Minnesota iron ranges. Areas within the IROHVSRA were historically mined and the resulting stockpiles create features within the IROHVSRA not found in other areas of the state. Other areas within the IROHVSRA have not been mined and the enabling legislation does not preclude future mining within the IROHVSRA. The 1998 master plan and 2010 plan amendment address the potential mining within the IROHVSRA in further detail.

Natural resources

Because of past land uses, the vegetation and topography of the existing site has change substantially from pre-European settlement. Mining in the expansion site occurred in the southwestern portion. Overburden and lean ore

deposits were stockpiled on the western portion of the expansion site. The eastern portion of the expansion site are “mineral reserve lands on an unaltered landscape.”

The IROHVSRA contains several wetlands, streams and small lakes/ponds. Trail design and development will seek to avoid, minimize or replace wetland impacts consistent with wetland regulations. Wetlands will be delineated and any impacts will be subject to permit. This plan amendment should not impact wetlands or public waters within the existing site.

During the planning of the original site, the DNR discovered St. Lawrence Grapefern and Pale Moonwort, both state-listed species, in the site. The DNR completed an EIS in the areas where the species occurred. Additional information can be found in the 1998 master plan. A review of the National Heritage Information System (NHIS) database revealed no state-listed species within the expansion site. The proposed actions as described in this plan amendment do not impact any known listed species.

Cultural resources

During the planning for the original site, archeological and cultural investigations were conducted by DNR Cultural Resource Program staff in 1996. Additional reviews of the archeological resources within the expansion site were completed in 2014 and 2017. There were several identified historical features, including the tailing piles and a rail corridor. Additionally, several possible exploratory mine pits were located. It was determined the core trail development will not have an adverse effect of these resources. If cultural resources are identified during future trail layout, appropriate measures will be taken to protect those resources.



Pale Moonwort

Interpretive Services

The IROHVSRA provides limited interpretive services to users. DNR staff may use interpretive methods to provide orientation, rules, regulations and expectations for rider behavior, and provide local and historical information of interest. The DNR also partners with OHV Trail Ambassadors to provide youth safety programs at the Training Center within the original site. The DNR may consider interpretive panels explaining the importance of the site to the area's mining past in the future.

Recreational Use and Visitor Services

Additional trails within the expansion site will provide increased recreational opportunities with new areas for users to explore. Although the overall amount of visitors may increase, users may actually encounter fewer trail users due to reduced density.

Potential future connections with surrounding trail systems will allow users to partake in multi-day excursions based out of the IROHVSRA. The existing site offers a desirable launching point with visitor services, trails, secure parking, a vehicle wash and local services.

The deletion of facilities language from the 1998 master plan should not have any impact on visitors. The proposed mountain bike area, concession stand, pro shop and overnight storage area have not been constructed and current user expectations do not include these facilities within the IROHVSRA.



Master Plan and Master Plan Amendment Text Revisions

This plan amendment affects the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan* (1998) with regards to two sections in the **Facility Design Plan** in **Chapter IV: Facility Design and Development Plan**:

- **Subsection 1, Topic 11. Motorcycle/ATV Storage.** Language associated with visitor equipment storage facilities will be removed.
- **Subsection 4. Facilities and Activity Areas.** DNR will not build or maintain non-motorized trails on the leased parcel of land.

This plan amendment affects the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan* (1998) with regards to three sections in the **Operations Element** in **Chapter IV: Facility Design and Development Plan**:

- **Subsection 1. General Management Policies & Operating Guidelines.** Language associated with a concessions area and a pro shop will be removed.
- **Subsection 1. General Management Policies & Operating Guidelines.** Minnesota State Statute, rules and laws will serve as a minimum for the rules and regulations of the IROHVSRA.
- **Subsection 8. Staff and Equipment Needs.** A pro shop operator is no longer required based on the changes in this amendment.

This plan amendment affects the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan* (1998) with regards to one section in the **Physical and Environmental Effects** in **Chapter V: Project Effects**:

- **Subsection 7. Noise, Dust & Odors.** To ensure the IROHVSRA will remain within Minnesota state noise standards, sound barriers will be used where necessary.

This plan amendment affects the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan Amendment for the Virginia Expansion* (2010) with regards to three sections in the **Facility Design Plan** of **Chapter 3. Facility Design & Development Plan**.

- **Subsection 1. Conceptual Development Plan.** Standards of core trails will be modified to remove specific standards.
- **Subsection 2. Vehicles Access & Site-Use Plans.** Access to the IROHVSRA may be permitted in locations other than the main entrance gate.
- **Subsection 4. Berms, Buffers, Fences and Boundaries.** The DNR may use alternative barriers including manmade, vegetative and other natural features to mark the boundaries of the IROHVSRA.

This plan amendment affects the *Iron Range Off-Highway Vehicle Recreation Area Master Plan Amendment for the Virginia Expansion* (2010) with regards to one section in **Chapter 5. Plan Implementation.**

- **Section A. Engineering Design & Construction.** The DNR will provide the maximum mileage of trail while providing protection for resources and an excellent visitor experience. No minimum number of miles has yet to be set.

Public Review

The DNR held a 30-day public review of the master plan amendment beginning November 30, 2017 and concluding January 2, 2018. In addition, the DNR held a public review meeting at the IROHVSRA Training Center the evening of December 15, 2017, attended by approximately 15 individuals. The DNR received a total of twelve comments during the public review period. The DNR responded the comments (below) and made several clarifications within the master plan amendment based on the comments.

Comment	DNR Response
Quit wasting tax payers dollars on ATV nightmares in MN. Make the users flip the entire bill for any trails, maintenance, law enforcement, and environmental damage.	Money for OHV trails, maintenance, enforcement and environmental damage is received from dedicated accounts for ATVs, OHMs and ORVs. Money in the dedicated accounts comes from registration fees OHV users pay as well as money from the unrefunded gas tax OHV users pay when purchasing gas for their OHV. OHV recreation is completely funded by users and no general fund tax dollars support OHV recreation.
I am very much in favor of the amendment to the master plan. I have been waiting for years to get this part of the park up and running and I can't wait to access the area and start working with the park staff to create trails in the area.	Thank you for your comment.
I support the proposed changes to the IROHVSRA master plan.	Thank you for your comment.
When the area was in the planning stage the DNR made it clear ALL users would have to check in at the Gilbert office. That was the agreement made with local officials. I was one of them. I would expect the DNR to honor their word and continue that policy. Thank you.	The DNR recognizes that during the original planning process for the expansion site, the main entrance was identified as the only entrance into the IROHVSRA. However, with the rerouting of US Highway 53 and the addition of a non-highway licensed vehicle lane across the bridge, it is no longer practical to have the only access point at the main entrance gate. The main entrance area will continue to be the only facility with parking and a contact station that will be consistently occupied. Other access points will be simple trail heads, used primarily for local access or for connection to other trail systems.

Comment	DNR Response
<p>New Access Points: 1. How do you control activities from open access? 2. How will integrity of the site be maintained with open access? 3. What about insuring users are licensed OHV? 4. How will sound/invasive management be handled? i.e. Open Access-Not a good idea!</p>	<p>Activities will be controlled similar to a Grant in Aid or state forest unit trail access point. Users will be expected to possess the appropriate safety certification, vehicle registration and adhere to all applicable laws and regulations. Information regarding these necessities as well as best practices for invasive management and ethical/safe trail riding will be posted at each access point. The area may also be patrolled by recreation area staff, DNR conservation officers and local/county law enforcement to ensure all laws are being followed. In addition, the DNR may seek volunteer assistance to monitor trail conditions and activity and encourage safe riding. Currently, the staff do not occupy the IROHVSRA when open during the winter season and the DNR has not identified any issues during these periods. Page 3, Site access and fencing has been revised to reflect this comment.</p>
<p>Subsection 2. Access-Delete this change adding more access points. Gilbert should be the only access point. Non-motorized use-Put the energy into the Central Mesabi Mountain Bike Trail Development-The MN Discovery Center Trail-Since it is not being built here. Be sure to include OHM type trails-from novice to general skill level.</p>	<p>The main entrance site in the City of Gilbert will remain the main entrance to the IROHVSRA. It will be the only site where users can park, consistency see staff and have access to facilities. Other access points will be primarily used for local access and those wishing to use connecting trail systems. The Central Mesabi Mountain Bike Trail is a volunteer effort. The DNR supports outdoor recreation endeavors, but is not leading this effort. The DNR is currently working with an outside design firm to design trails for all user types (including OHMs) of all skill level within the expansion area.</p>
<p>I am an ORV user of the Park and have assisted with building of the core trails. All of the suggested amendments to the master plan are in-line with what users like myself would expect. Thank you for continuing the growth and development of the park.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
<p>I support all the changes proposed.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>
<p>I support all the amendment changes to the original OHV park.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p>

Comment	DNR Response
<p>How will the single track trails be protected if you do away with the zoning? That was one of the main reasons for the zoning to protect the single track.</p> <p>If this is a main staging area for the larger OHV system, will lights be added to the existing parking areas? Will riders be able to exit the parking area after hours? If camping isn't allowed, they need to be able to exit.</p>	<p>The master plan amendment has been updated to reflect this comment. Page 4 has been updated to address parking area access when closed. Page 5 has been updated to identify how the single track will be protected from larger vehicles.</p>
<p>When the DNR was planning for the site they gave their word that ALL users would be required to check in at the Gilbert office. That was the agreement with local officials. I can tell you that is true because I was one of those involved in promoting and planning the site. There was and still is reasons for that requirement. I would expect the DNR to keep their word and maintain that requirement.</p>	<p>The DNR recognizes that during the original planning process for the expansion site, the main entrance was identified as the only entrance into the IROHVSRA. However, with the rerouting of US Highway 53 and the addition of a non-highway licensed vehicle lane across the bridge, it is no longer practical to have the only access point at the main entrance gate. The main entrance area will continue to be the only facility with parking and a contact station that will be consistently occupied. Other access points will be simple trail heads, used primarily for local access or for connection to other trail systems.</p>
<p>As a property owner ten miles north of Grand Rapids and the fact that it is below zero, I figure I might as well waste my time writing my comments. The biggest problem with ATV'S is they never stay where they belong. We land owners post our property, the signs are ignored or taken down. As a lifelong Grouse, and upland hunter, I quit buying a license, and hunting 4 years ago because my neighbors and other ATV hunters have wiped out the population to the point where there will be any number of birds. I quit four years ago after walking, and hunting over 60 miles, and only seeing three birds and after talking to my neighbors who into the second week of the season were tied at 15 apiece. Look at the Grouse Classic in Grand Rapids this year, hunters with guides averaged less than a bird apiece. I have coffee with a retired C/O and author he can't find any birds either. Having lived up here over forty years, and having a</p>	<p>Thank you. Your comment has been noted. The IROHVSRA is open to big game hunting and is closed to OHVs during the firearms deer season. Grouse hunting is not permitted in the IROHVSRA.</p>

Comment	DNR Response
<p>hunnable Grouse population including Sharptails on my farm, you can't blame the lack game on bad springs or the cycle. The reason there are no Grouse is overharvest by so called hunters on ATV'S. The lowest number I have heard of being harvested is in the forty's and as high as the seventy's. I live close to the Taconite trail, which is supposed to be a walk in hunting area and posted against ATV'S. These trails are used by these folks like they own them. My neighbor and I walked these trails a few years ago for almost 8 hours, the damage was unbelievable, and we saw 1 Grouse. I live on a gravel road, two years a club decided to use it for their ride illegally of course, the dust raised by 60 vehicles was so thick they had to space themselves almost 100 yards apart. You people called these people outdoor enthusiasts, who want their little place to enjoy their sport, the biggest problem is they are everywhere. My C/O friend and I were discussing this several weeks ago, neither he or I can think of any place they are not using, or have not been. Now we are supposed to let them use our county roads so they can continue to shred the landscape, in the name of sport. Maybe you guys should talk the manufactures about how they advertise these things, people driving full speed with a cloud of dust about a quarter of a mile behind them, driving through streams, making mud holes in roads, and of course getting one to slide sideways. Well I have made my comments I'm sure to no avail because the money talks, my hunting has been destroyed, as most everybody's else's, so the modern day Hells Angels win.</p>	

References

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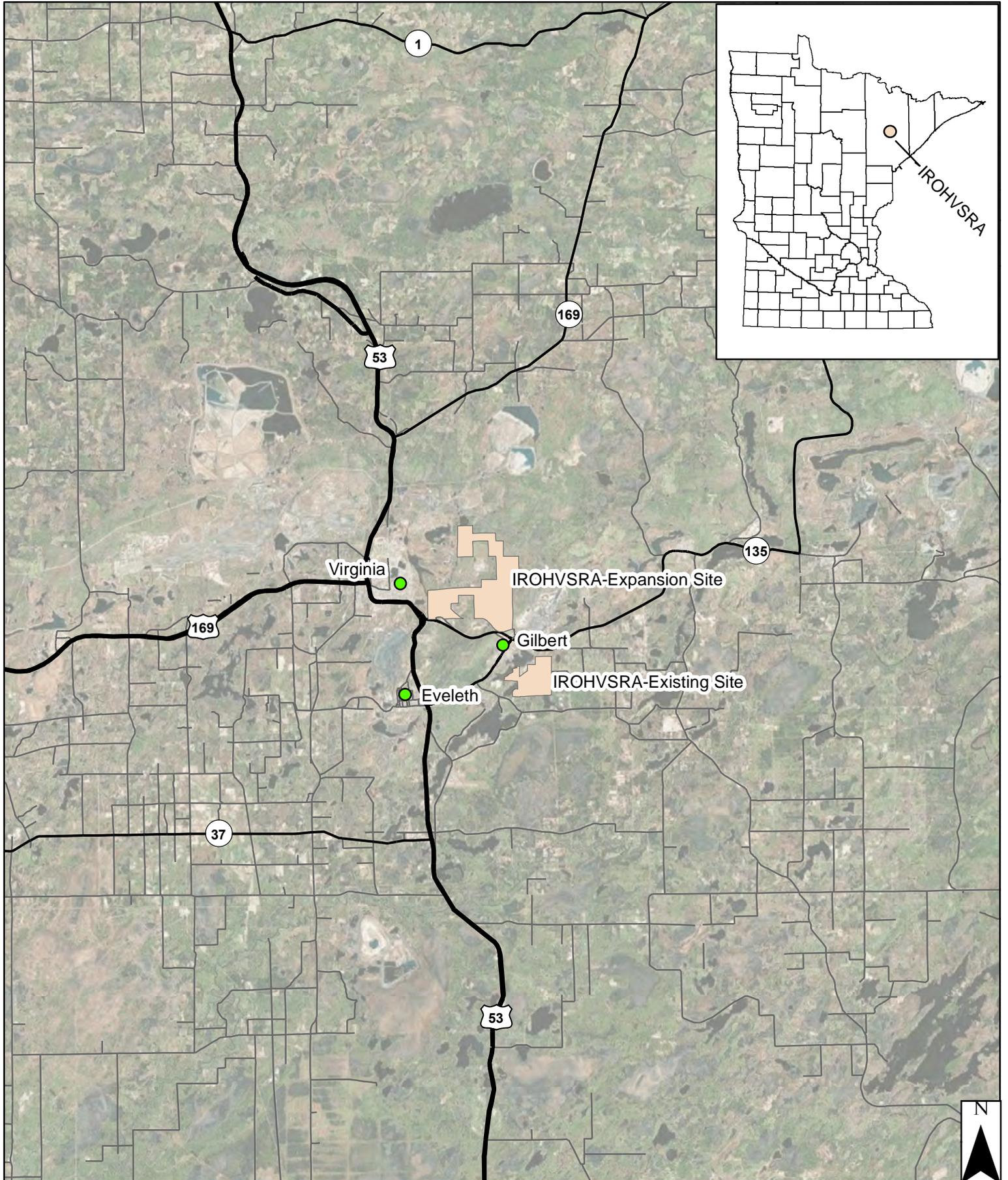


Figure 1:
Location of Iron Range OHV SRA

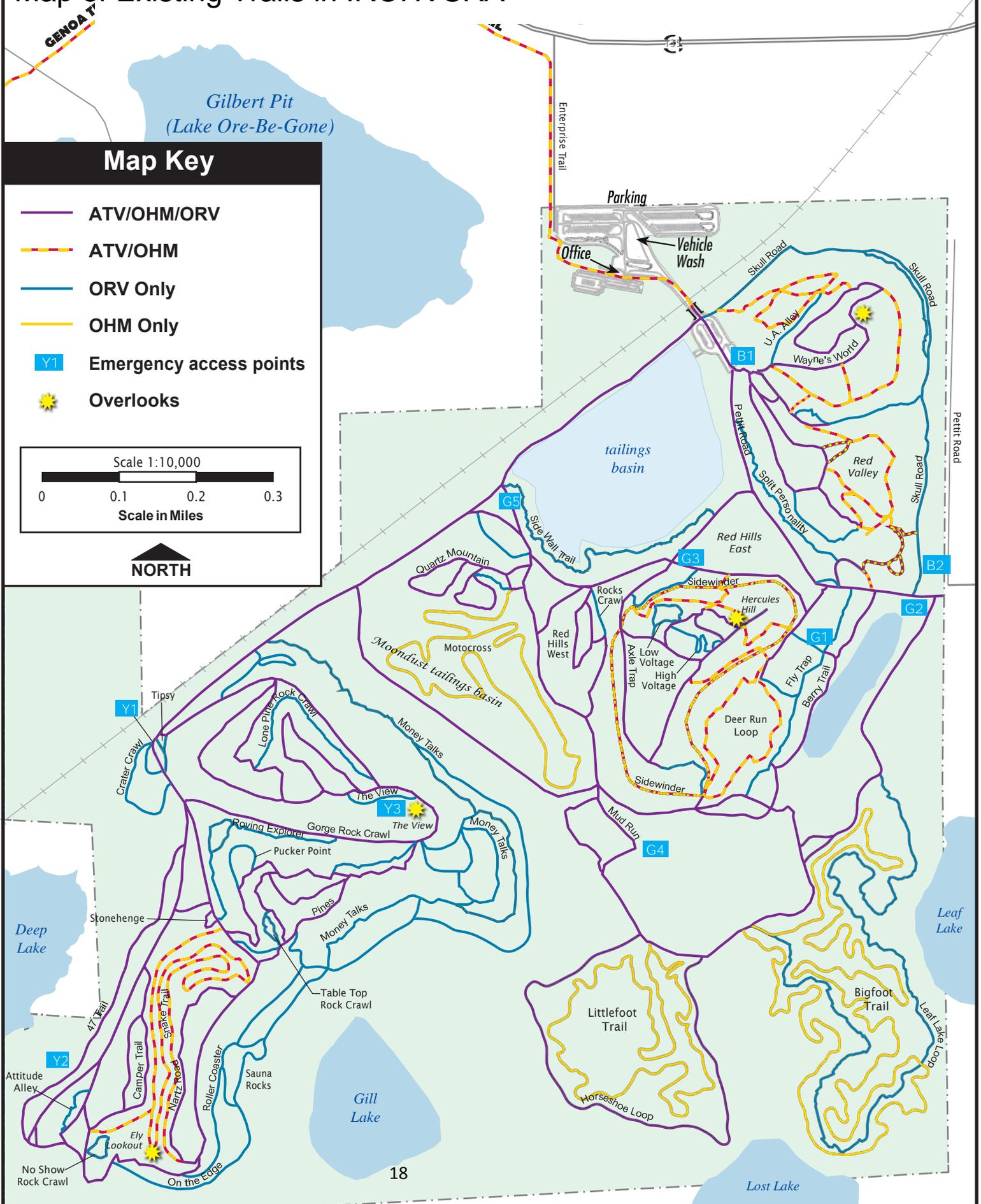
Legend

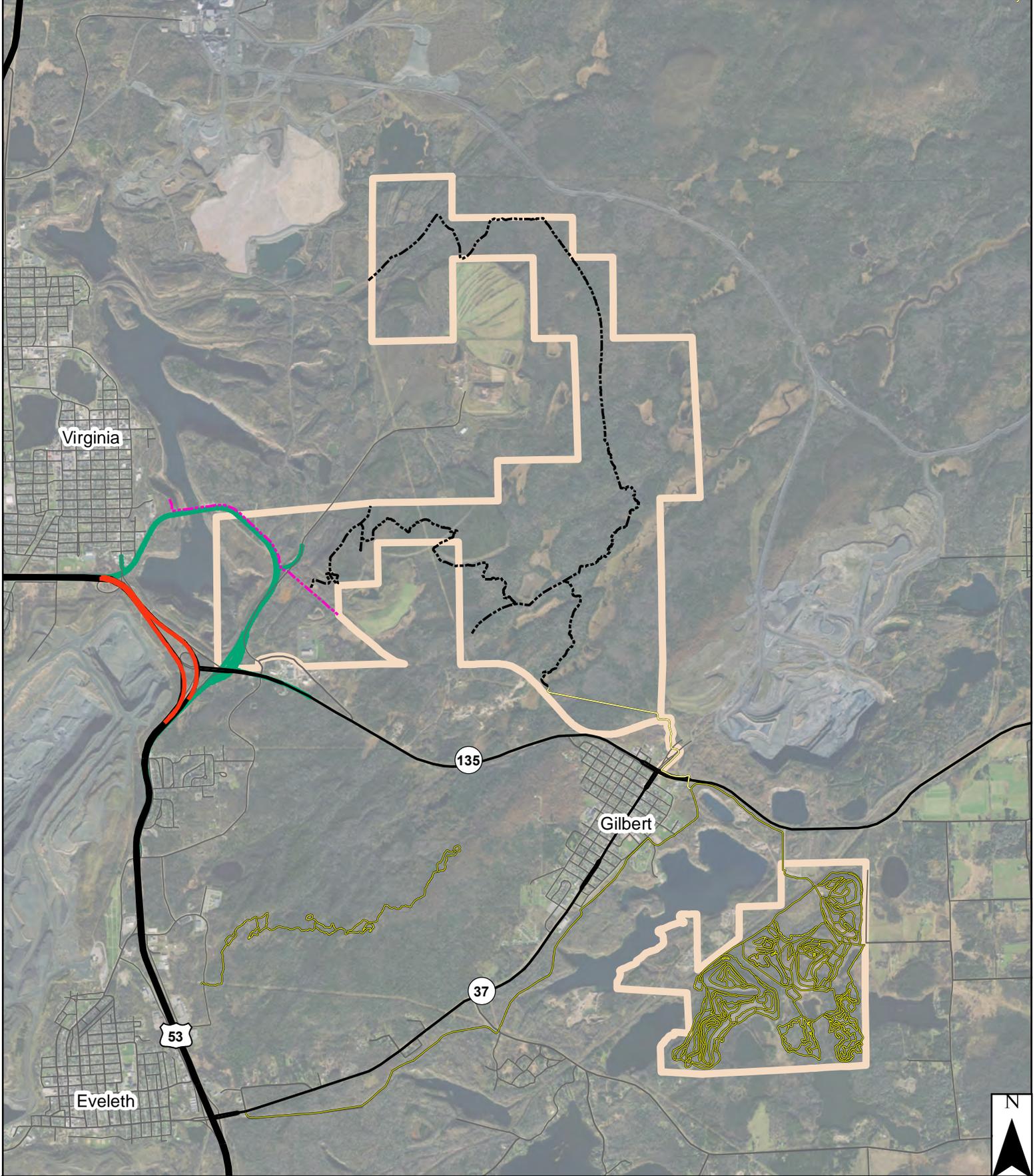
-  Iron Range OHV SRA
-  U.S. Trunk Highway
-  MN Trunk Highway
-  County Highway
-  Cities

17

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

Figure 2:
Map of Existing Trails in IROHVSRA

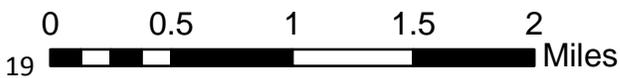


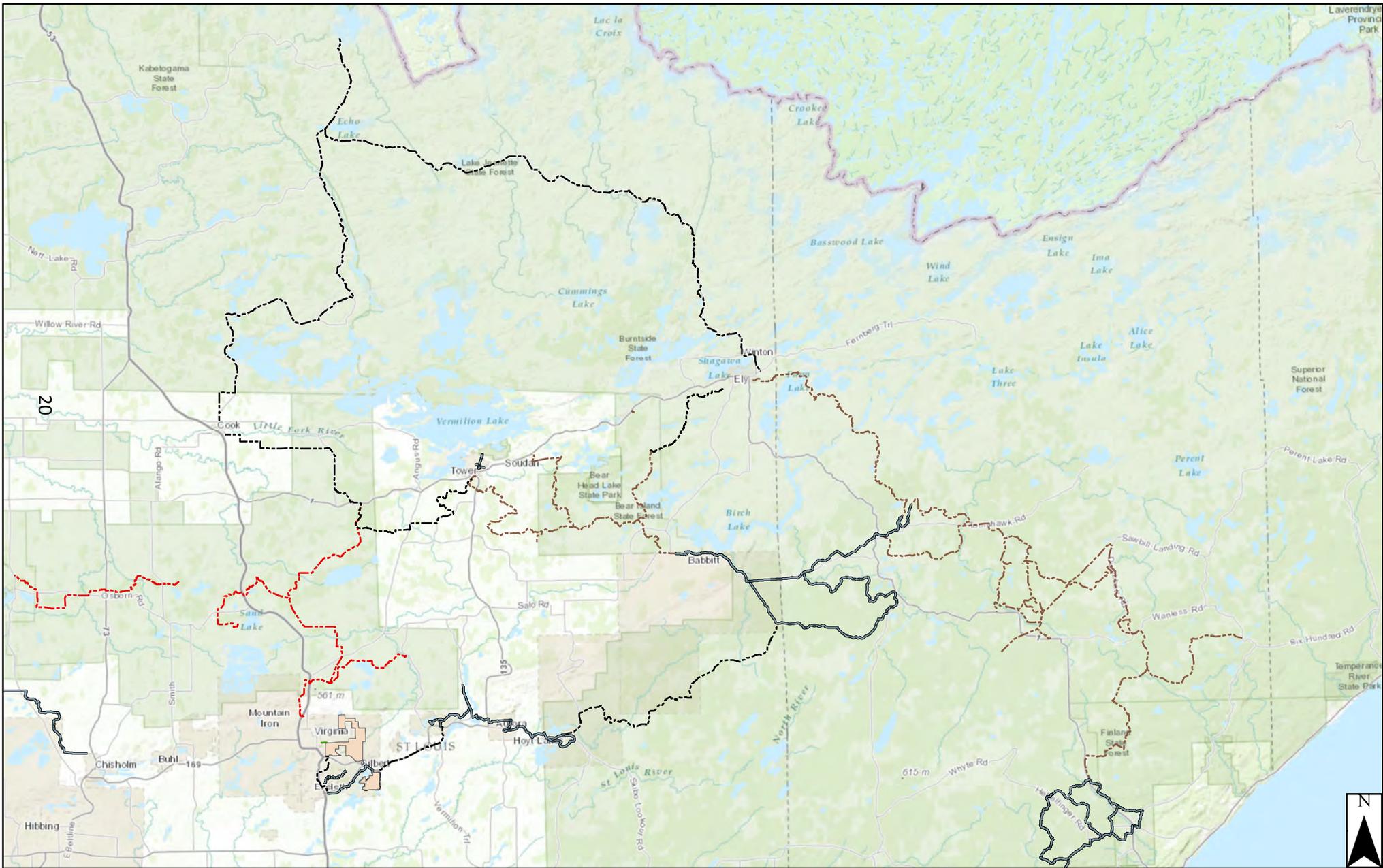


Legend

- Old Hwy 53
- U.S. Trunk Highway
- MN Trunk Highway
- County Highway
- Local Roads
- - - Mesabi Trail/ATV Bridge Crossing
- US Hwy 53 Reroute
- - - Proposed Expansion Site Core Trails
- Existing OHV Trail
- Iron Range OHV SRA

Figure 3:
US Highway 53 Reroute and Connector Trail





Legend

- Iron Range OHV SRA
- Current OHV Trail
- Future ATV Trail-Route Known
- Proposed Prospector ATV Trail
- MnDOT Mesabi/ATV Trail
- Future ATV Trail-Route Unknown

Figure 4:
 Current and Future OHV Connections
 to the Iron Range OHV SRA and
 Surrounding Area

