

Senate Bill 326  
Report to the Environmental Quality Council

Senate Bill 326 passed during the 2015 legislative session (codified in §77-1-820, MCA), requires the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) to report to the Environmental Quality Council the following information associated with recreational use on state trust lands:

- a) existing road closures and restrictions on state lands;
- b) anticipated road closures and restrictions on state lands; and
- c) ongoing travel management planning on state lands or foreseeable travel management planning by the department or by the department in conjunction with federal agencies conducting travel management planning that may impact state lands.

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**Existing Road Closures and Restrictions**

Recreational motorized vehicle use is limited to federal, state & county roads, trails developed by the department for motorized use, and roads designated as open by the DNRC (§77-1-804 (6)(c)). Since the 2022 report, there have been no closures of recreational use roads that were previously designated as open by the Department.

The Department opened a road on Section 16, T10N R20E for access to the Big Snowy Mountains Wildlife Management Area acquired by Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 2022.

**Anticipated Road Closures and Restrictions**

In the fall of 2024, the DNRC anticipates the closure of one secondary unnamed route in the Seeley Lake area in Section 36, T17N R15W. The public will continue to have primary access on Cottonwood Lakes Road. The closure is proposed in conjunction with the Seeley Lake Ranger District to address resource damage to a classified forest parcel caused by motorized use.

**Travel Management Planning by the Department**

**State Forest Land Management:** Existing and proposed roads that are managed in accordance with State Forest Land Management Plan and associated Administrative Rules for Forest Management require the Department to plan transportation systems that minimize total road miles while considering both current and near-term forest management objectives. This is typically accomplished during project-level design and review and must consider numerous landscape, resource, and social values as directed in Administrative Rule (36.11.421). Transportation planning on blocked lands on the Stillwater, Coal, and Swan River state forests have been completed for a period of 50 years that adequately balances long-term objectives, resource protection, and public access.

**Travel Management Planning in conjunction with Federal Agencies**

**Bureau of Land Management (BLM)**

The DNRC is communicating with the BLM on all travel management plans that include state trust land.

- Lower Blackfoot Area - BLM travel management planning is taking place in the Lower Blackfoot area of the Missoula Field Office. The DNRC has been actively engaged throughout the process including discussion of trust land and fire protection program needs as well as public meeting attendance.
- Petrolia and Crooked Creek Areas - BLM expects to make travel planning decision regarding Petrolia and Crooked Creek areas. We expect to go over map alternatives with BLM in late 2024.

**Forest Service (FS)**

There has been no FS travel management planning activity impacting state trust land since the 2022 report. DNRC will engage on all projects that include state trust land.