



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

**CHEQUAMEGON-NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST**

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The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is in the process of preparing to conduct an Environment Assessment to address treatment options on approximately 8,000 acres of plantation white spruce. These trees are currently dead or dying from an outbreak of insects, diseases, and environmental factors.

This complicated interaction of factors is called "spruce decline" and, based on opinion from Forest Health Protection experts at Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry, "the conditions occurring on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in the 8,000 plus acres of affected spruce meet the epidemic standard defined by the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003." As a result, this Environmental Assessment will be prepared under the authority of that Act.

We are seeking your comments on this proposal. **There will be a public meeting on October 27, 2004 at the Woodruff Town Hall, in Woodruff, Wisconsin from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.** The town hall is a fully accessible facility located north on State Highway 51, one block north of the intersection of Highways 47 and 51 on the east side of the road. The building is not visible from the highway. A sign will be posted at the entrance to the town hall.

The purpose of this informational meeting will be to provide a more detailed overview of the proposal, ask questions of Forest specialists, view informational maps, and submit written comments that will assist us in determining the level of public support for this project.

The proposal to prepare an Environmental Assessment identifies four needs for action based on goals in the Chequamegon-Nicolet Forest Plan, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, the National Forest Management Act, and the Forest Service Chief's direction on sustainable forests:

1. Healthy Forest Restoration – There is a need to regenerate affected sites to a healthy and sustainable mix of forest trees.
2. Salvage – A considerable volume of wood is available to salvage that contributes towards satisfying the demand for wood products.
3. Restore Spruce Grouse Habitat – Spruce Grouse is a species of viability concern on the Forest and is listed on the Regional Forester's Sensitive Species list. Spruce decline is reducing key spruce grouse habitat to levels that are substantially below those predicted in the Forest Plan.
4. Hazardous Fuels Reduction – Spruce Mortality has created hazardous fuels adjacent to residential and developed lakeshore areas.

To address these needs, the following actions will be considered in the proposal:



1. Treating approximately 2,000 acres of white spruce stands to regenerate them to a species composition not susceptible to spruce decline through site preparation and planting. An additional 4,000 acres would be managed to for natural regeneration.
2. Salvage harvesting of approximately 6,000 acres of dead spruce to recover wood products that would otherwise be quickly lost.
3. Restoring spruce grouse habitat on up to 1,000 acres by regenerating them to a short-needed conifer species.
4. Addressing fuel reduction in approximately 900 acres through the use of salvage harvest and the appropriate treatment to the remaining slash to meet fuel management objectives.

Although we are still in the early stages, a preliminary list of issues has been identified through a pre-proposal assessment. Determination of which issues will be significant has not yet been made, but will be decided upon the completion of public scoping and the initial interdisciplinary analysis.

Salvage harvest to treat these stands:

1. May reduce woody debris retention and availability, as well as snag habitat for black-backed woodpeckers;
2. May increase the introduction and establishment of Non-Native Invasive Species;
3. May detrimentally impact soils and sensitive plants; and
4. May disturb historic, cultural or American Indian religious sites.

A comment form is enclosed if you are unable to attend this meeting. Comments are welcome throughout the analysis process, but they would be most useful if submitted to us by **November 15, 2004**.

Electronic comment in acceptable formats [plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf) or Word (.doc)] may also be submitted to: [comments-eastern-chequamegon-nicolet@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-chequamegon-nicolet@fs.fed.us).

Names and addresses of those who comment will be considered part of the public record on this proposal and will be available for public inspection. All input received during project planning is a matter of public record and as such may be provided to interested parties upon request; names and addresses of participants cannot be kept confidential.

We look forward to your comments and involvement in this project.

Sincerely,

ANNE F. ARCHIE  
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure