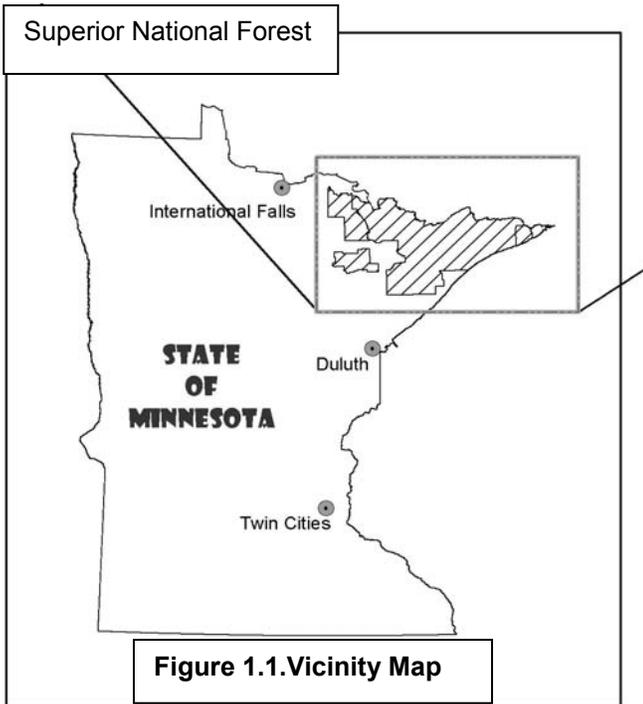


# I. INTRODUCTION

## Overview

The Superior National Forest (SNF), is located in northeastern Minnesota's arrowhead region (Figure 1- 1). This three-million-acre Forest is a rich and varied resource. The Forest provides pulpwood and sawtimber to the forest products industry. Visitors can find recreation opportunities year round, including travel in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. Over 445,000 acres or 695 square miles of the SNF is surface water. In addition, more than 1,300 miles of cold water streams and 950 miles of warm water streams flow within the boundaries of the Superior National Forest, providing abundant fish habitat. The northern forest community thrives with its pine, fir, and spruce trees and is home to numerous wildlife species including deer, moose, the gray wolf, bald eagle, and black bear. Northern Minnesota is also home to Canada lynx and is one of the last strongholds of the gray wolf in the lower 48 States.

This is the third Monitoring and Evaluation Report (M&E Report) compiled under the 2004 Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) that was approved on July 30<sup>th</sup> 2004. The National Forest Management Act planning regulations (36 CFR 219) specify that, "at intervals established in the Forest Plan, implementation shall be evaluated on a sample basis to determine how well objectives have been met and how closely management standards and guidelines have been applied. Based on this evaluation, a Forest interdisciplinary team (FIDT) shall recommend to the Forest Supervisor such changes in management direction, revisions, or amendments to the Forest Plan as are deemed necessary."



This M&E Report summarizes the results of monitoring Forest Plan implementation (including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness) from October 2006 through September 30<sup>th</sup> 2007.

The 2007 M&E Report framework utilizes the Forest Plan Monitoring Chapter (Chapter 4) as its foundation. The Monitoring Chapter outlined the following four-step approach to conduct monitoring and disclose findings;

1. Monitoring Chapter: Provides strategic monitoring direction.
2. The Monitoring Guide: Provides prescriptive monitoring framework.
3. The Annual Monitoring Schedule: Provides current year specific prescriptive direction.
4. Monitoring & Evaluation: Provides previous year findings and identifies applicable management recommendations.

The Monitoring Chapter of the Forest Plan was approved as part of the Record of Decision (ROD) in July 2004. The Monitoring Guide was developed by a FIDT and completed during the spring of 2005. The Annual Monitoring Schedule was finalized jointly by the FIDT and District Rangers and their staff in June of 2007. This M&E Report constitutes step 4.

The Annual M&E Report is prepared by the FIDT and incorporates information gathered from Forest Service specialists, partners, other agencies, private citizens, and non-profit organizations. This report is intended to be comprehensive, displaying monitoring conducted, evaluation, management recommendations, partnerships, and program highlights.

The M&E process enables the Forest Service to assess its effectiveness in moving toward stated management goals and desired conditions. The 2004 Forest Plan may be amended or revised to adapt to new information and changed conditions identified through M&E efforts. Through this adaptive management approach, the Forest Plan is kept current.

Additional details on selected resources are found in the Appendices. An Executive Summary that describes the Program Overview, Evaluation, and Management Recommendation sections is also available.

**Monitoring and Evaluation Report Objectives**

The following is a list of the primary objectives of the M&E Report:

- Provide current progress in implementing Forest Plan direction, including reaching desired conditions and producing goods and services.
- Validate effectiveness of specific management practices.
- Share status/results of other agencies'/institutions' cooperative monitoring.
- Summarize available information on Management Indicator Species and Habitats.
- Summarize large scale or significant projects or programs.
- Provide an update on new applicable research and status of research needs.
- Identify and/or provide status of any needed Forest Plan amendments.
- Identify any needed changes to monitoring.
- Provide consistency in inventory and monitoring practices and methods.

**Minimum Legally Required Monitoring**

Minimum monitoring and evaluation requirements have been established through the NFMA at 36 CFR 219. Some requirements provide guidance for the development of a monitoring program, while others include specific compliance requirements. See Monitoring Chapter 4 in the 2004 Forest Plan for more thorough discussion of required monitoring items. Minimally legal required monitoring evaluated in the 2007 M&E Report and the pages they can be found are shown in Table 1. The remaining minimally legal required monitoring items will be evaluated during the 5<sup>th</sup> year (FY 2009) M&E Report.

<b>Table 1. Minimally Legal Monitoring Requirements Addressed in 2007 M&amp;E Report</b>	
<b>Monitoring Requirement</b>	<b>M&amp;E Report Section</b>
Lands are adequately restocked (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(i))	Timber. Page 35
Maximum opening from even even-aged management (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iii))	Timber. Page 36
Control of destructive insects and disease (3 36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iv))	Insects & Disease. pp 27-28
Population Trends of the seven Management Indicator Species in relation to habitat changes (36 CFR 219.19(a)(6))	Wildlife MIS-Aquatic. pp 48-50 Wildlife MIS-Terrestrial pp 53-59
Effects of off off-road vehicles (36 CFR 219.21)	RMV's. pp 88-89
Comparison of projected and actual outputs and services (36 CFR 219.12(k)(1))	Social & Economic. pp 80-81
Comparison of actual and estimated costs (36 CFR 219.12(k)(3))	Social & Economic. pp 80-81

## **Monitoring Progress of Forest wide Desired Conditions and Objectives**

Forest desired conditions are broad statements describing conditions the SNF will strive to achieve. Achievement of desired conditions is not mandatory, there are no specific time frames for achieving them, and they are not amenable to direct measurement. In other words, desired conditions describe the ends desired rather than the means to achieve these ends.

Forest objectives are statements of measurable results intended to promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals. Objectives generally are achieved by implementing projects or activities. Objectives either have a stated timeframe for accomplishment, or they will be accomplished during the life of the Plan (10-15 years).

## **Monitoring and Evaluation Report Format**

Each resource write-up in this report contains the following sections: (1) Summary Points (2) Monitoring Conducted; (3) Evaluation of Desired Conditions, Objectives, Standards and Guidelines; and (4) Management Considerations. How monitoring activities and evaluation for each resource respond to the pertinent Forest Plan Monitoring Questions and corresponding Monitoring Drivers are shown in *Section II Monitoring Questions and Drivers* beginning on page 4. A Monitoring Driver is the Forest Plan Desired Condition, Objective, Standard or Guideline that identifies the reason why the SNF monitors a particular resource (See Forest Plan Chapter 4, p. 4-7). Write-ups for each resource section are presented in the same order as portrayed in the Forest Plan. The following describes the sections:

**(1) Summary Points.** This section provides a brief overview of program highlights and key monitoring and evaluation findings.

**(2) Monitoring Conducted.** This section displays (a) applicable monitoring activity, practice or effect measured; (b) monitoring methods; (c) when monitoring occurred; and (d) where monitoring occurred.

**(3) Evaluation and Conclusions.** This section describes contributions towards Forest Plan desired conditions. Narrative, tables or graphs portray:

- Existing Conditions as of July 2004 when the ROD was signed for the Forest Plan,
- Decade 1 Forest Plan objectives and/or FEIS Desired Conditions, and
- Fiscal Year 2007 accomplishments.

Accomplishments are further delineated by those actually performed during this reporting period and those planned in project decisions but not yet implemented. This is intended to give the reader insight into the direction a particular resource is headed.

**(4) Management Considerations.** Specific management considerations for ongoing or future projects are identified.

Appendices A-I summarize management considerations, summary conclusions, partnerships, standards and guide achievement, vegetation objectives achievement, NNIS occurrence, achievement of sensitive plant species objectives, Regional Forest Sensitive Species and law enforcement statistics.

The report did not document any significant adverse changes to SNF resources during FY 2007 and subsequently changes in the Forest Plan are not expected.