



File Code: 1950-1/2310/7710

Date: June 23, 2009

Dear Interested Publics:

The Superior National Forest's Kawishiwi Ranger District has completed the environmental assessment (EA) for the Denley Road Project. The EA is available on the Superior National Forest web page at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forest/superior, select "Projects and Plans." If you would like a paper copy of the EA, please let us know.

The primary purpose of the proposed Denley Road Project is to improve the Denley Road (also called Forest Road 424 and the New Tomahawk Road) to meet critical design criteria for safe site distances, safe driving width and surface, adequate recovery zones and year-round hauling; pave the road; and transfer jurisdiction of the road to Lake and St. Louis Counties. The majority of road use is not related to administration of or use of National Forest System lands. Therefore, it is appropriate for the road to be managed by the counties. The counties support this action and we have collaborated with county engineers in the design of the road. The road would be reconstructed from an existing 20- to 22-foot wide gravel road, with 2-foot shoulders and 4-foot recovery zones, to a 24-foot wide (12-foot driving lanes) paved road with 6-foot shoulders (5-foot paved) and 9-foot recovery zones. Clearing would be increased by up to 15 feet on each side of the existing road corridor. The design speed would be increased from 35 to 40 miles per hour, and the design strength would be 10-ton axle limit. The alignment would remain the same except for two curves that may be straightened slightly near the west end of the road.

In addition to the Denley Road improvement, the Project would also:

- Relocate the Stony Spur Snowmobile and ATV trail in three locations where the improved Denley Road would encroach on the existing trail,
- Remove the Denley Impoundment and restore the natural water flow of Denley Creek; and
- Decommission two short sections of unauthorized roads.

The Denley Road Project is located approximately three miles east of Babbitt, MN (Lake and St. Louis Counties) in Township 60 North and Ranges 10, 11, and 12 West and extends 10.4 miles to Trunk Highway 1.

The Denley Road Project was first proposed in November 2002. Since that time, the USFS hired Short Elliott Hendrickson, an engineering consulting firm, to address potential effects of the project on water, wetlands, wildlife, cultural resources, and vegetation. The findings are disclosed in the EA.

This letter begins the official public comment period for the Denley Road Project. The EA contains the Project's purpose and need, the proposed action, the alternatives considered in detail, and the environmental effects of the alternatives analyzed in detail. There is sufficient information presented in the EA to understand the proposal, its alternatives, and what would happen under each of the alternatives.

In order to ensure I have the opportunity to address your concerns before my decision on the project, it is critical they be raised at this time. Your comments, regarding the proposed alternatives and analysis, will be extremely helpful in assisting me in finalizing the analysis and in making my decision.



How to submit comments:

Federal Regulations require your comments to be filed within 30 days after publication of the legal notice in the Ely Echo newspaper, published in Ely, MN. The publication date of the legal notice will be included on the web page. If the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday or Federal holiday, your comments will be accepted until the end of the next Federal working day. No comments will be accepted after the comment period ends.

Please send your comments to Kawishiwi District Ranger, Mark E. Van Every, Attn: Denley Road Project.

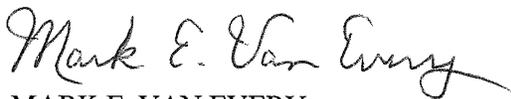
- Written comments may be mailed to 1391 Highway 169, Ely, MN 55731
- Oral comments can be provided during normal business hours via telephone (218) 365-2097 or in person. The project leader is Susan Duffy.
- Faxed comments may be sent to (218) 365-7605
- Email comments can be mailed to comments-eastern-superior-kawishiwi@fs.fed.us. Acceptable formats for electronic comments are: text (.txt), MSWord 6.0 or higher (.doc), portable document format (.pdf), or rich text format (.rtf). E-mail to:

All comments must include: (1) Name and address of the individual or organization; (2) Title of the proposed action (Denley Road Project); (3) Specific comments on the proposed action, along with supporting reasoning that I should consider in reaching my decision; and (4) signature or other verification of identity on request. Comments received in response to this letter, including the names and addresses of those who comment, are part of the public record for this action and are available for public inspection.

You must provide comments during this official 30-day comment period and include your name and address if you wish to be eligible to appeal this project (36 CFR 215.6). Information on appeal rights will be included in the decision notice. Those who submit comments during the 30-day comment period will be notified when the decision notice is available on the Superior National web page at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/superior. If you wish to receive a paper copy of the decision notice, please indicate this in your comments. If you do not submit comments at this time, you will be dropped from the Denley Project mailing list.

Thank you to those who have provided comments on this project in the past.

Sincerely,



MARK E. VAN EVERY
District Ranger