

Glacier Project Scoping Package

Kawishiwi Ranger District Superior National Forest

I. Introduction

The purpose of the Glacier Project is to implement the Superior National Forest *Land and Resource Management Plan* (also called the Forest Plan). The Glacier Project proposed activities are intended to move the Glacier Project Area from its existing condition toward the desired conditions described in the Forest Plan. The proposed activities would manage forest vegetation composition, structure, and spatial patterns (including habitat de-fragmentation), and the transportation system associated with these activities.

Proposed activities include:

- Creating young forest with final harvests
- Improving stand structure and within-stand diversity with intermediate harvests
- Restoring stand conditions without harvest, such as:
 - Planting long-lived tree species to enhance scenery and aquatic habitat
 - Conducting prescribed burns to reduce the future risk of wildfire
- Managing the minimum road system needed for long-term vegetation management

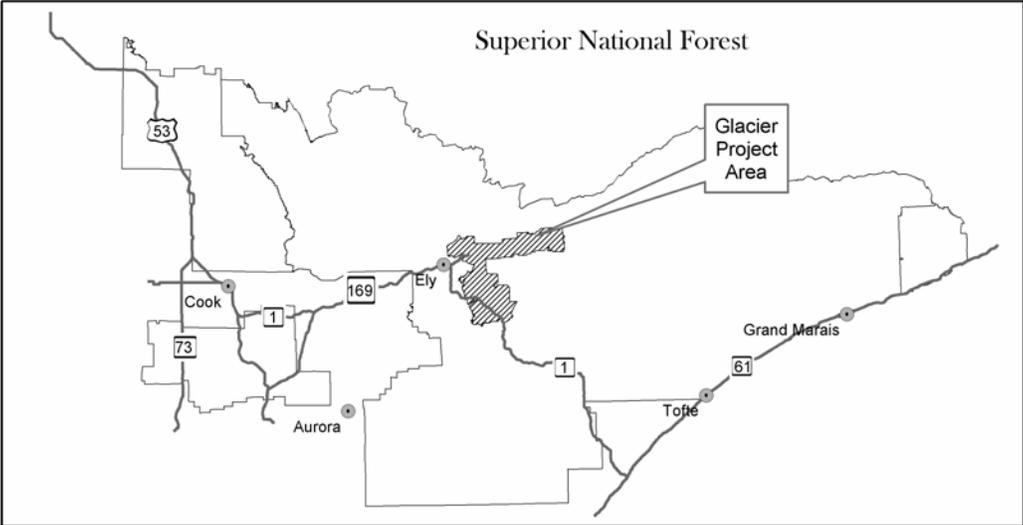
The locations of proposed activities are shown on Scoping Map 1, the large map attached to the back of this package. This scoping package, which explains the Proposed Action, was sent to the public, adjacent landowners, and others who have an interest in how this area is managed. The reasons for distributing the scoping package are to inform the public of the Proposed Action and to provide people with an opportunity to submit comments.

II. Project Location

The Glacier Project Area is located in Lake and St. Louis Counties. Activities would be located in portions of Townships 61, 62, and 63 North, and Ranges 9, 10, and 11 West, and are only proposed on National Forest System land. The Vicinity Map (Figure 1-1) on page 2 displays the general location of the Project Area.

The Project Area boundary encompasses about 90,000 acres of land with mixed ownership. Approximately 47,000 acres (52 percent) of the entire Project Area are on National Forest System land located on the Kawishiwi Ranger District of the Superior National Forest.

The Project Area is approximately 5 to 20 miles east of Ely in the vicinity of the Fernberg Road (County Road 118) and State Highway 1. Some of the larger lakes and rivers in or near the Project Area are Greenstone Lake, Triangle Lake, Farm Lake, Moose Lake, Fall Lake, and the Kawishiwi River. The Project Area is outside the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW); **actions are not proposed within the BWCAW.**



Glacier Project

Figure1 -1

Vicinity Map



Kawishiwi Ranger District
 Superior National Forest
 118 S. 4th Ave. E.
 Ely, Minnesota 55731
 (218) 365-7800

The USDA Forest Service uses the most current and complete data available. GIS data and product accuracy may vary. Using GIS products for purposes other than those for which they were intended may yield inaccurate or misleading results. The USDA Forest Service reserves the right to correct, update, modify or replace GIS products without notification.

III. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

An interdisciplinary team of natural resource specialists compared the existing resource conditions with Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions (called a “mid-level assessment”). In the mid-level assessments, resource specialists recommended possible opportunities and management actions to move the Project Area toward Forest Plan desired conditions. The recommendations identified a need to address the vegetation component in the Project Area. Kawishiwi District Ranger, Mark E. Van Every, chose to address forest vegetation management as the primary Purpose and Need and provided direction to the resource specialists to develop and document this Proposed Action for public review and comment.

Past land uses (including harvesting and exclusion of wildfire) influenced the vegetation composition and structure in the Project Area. Since the early 1900’s, fire suppression and a lack of vegetative management actions that address historical native communities have resulted in a high percentage of forest vegetation communities that are altered from their range of natural variability (RNV). RNV is the range of forest composition and stand structures that would occur across the landscape under the influence of natural conditions and processes, such as weather and fire.

The amount of aspen on National Forest System land is nearly three times more than what would have been predicted to occur under RNV. Overall, the Glacier Project Area has an over representation of aspen while jack pine, white pine, red pine, paper birch and spruce-fir forest types are considerably under-represented when compared to the relative amounts that would have occurred under the influence of RNV. The Project Area also has a much smaller percentage of land in the young age classes (1%) while there is currently two to three times the amount of upland forest in the 50-99 year age classes. The 100-149 year age class is also considerably under-represented in the Project Area as well as across the Forest.

The purpose of the Glacier Project is to maintain and promote native vegetation communities that are diverse, productive, healthy, and resilient by moving the vegetation component toward Landscape Ecosystem objectives described in the 2004 Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan p. 2-23, O-VG-1). There is a need to manage the amount, distribution and characteristics of vegetation so that it is more representative of the historical range of natural variability. (Forest Plan, D-VG-3, page 2-22) The associated transportation system (including gravel pits) needed for long-term vegetation management in the Project Area is also addressed.

While developing the Proposed Action, the interdisciplinary team collaborated with and reviewed data from the State of Minnesota, Lake and St. Louis Counties, and Tribal representatives. The primary reasons for collaboration were to try to design similar forest management activities that would occur across ownership boundaries. The interdisciplinary team also proposed road management activities that would meet the multiple needs of land owners and forest visitors.

A. Purpose and Need for Managing Vegetation

The need to manage toward Forest Plan vegetation desired conditions included addressing Forest Plan direction for Landscape Ecosystems, soil, wildlife habitat, scenery, fuels reduction, and aquatic habitat enhancement. This section provides a brief description of these resources along with vegetation management opportunities in the Glacier Project Area. The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists integrated the opportunities to develop a Proposed Action that contributes to the overall need to manage vegetation.

A.1. Landscape Ecosystem

Landscape ecosystems (LE) are ecological areas characterized by their dominant vegetation communities and patterns, which are a product of local climate, glacial topography, dominant soils, and natural processes, such as succession, fire, wind, insects, and disease. (Forest Plan p. 2-55) Vegetation composition, age class, tree species diversity, and management indicator habitat (MIH) objectives are specified for each Landscape Ecosystem on the Superior National Forest. (Forest Plan p. 2-55 to 2-78).

MIH represent the habitats used by a wide variety of native species, including management indicator species and a majority of Regional Forester Sensitive Species that are part of that habitat. Management indicator habitats provide a means of monitoring and evaluating the effects of actions on biotic resources, including specific species, communities, habitats and interrelationships among organisms. Managing for these objectives is a key component of providing for the full diversity of desired wildlife habitats.

The current vegetation component in the Glacier Project Area does not meet the Forest Plan desired conditions for species composition, age class, tree species diversity, and management indicator habitats for Landscape Ecosystems. The differences between the existing and desired conditions were used to develop the purpose and need for this Project. The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists addressed the following opportunities while developing the Proposed Action.

a. Vegetation Spatial Patterns/MIH 11 -13 (addresses forest habitat fragmentation; Forest Plan O-VG-19, O-VG-24, O-VG-25, O-VG-20)

- Restore landscape scale vegetation patterns for healthy ecosystems. (Forest Plan D-VG-7b and c)
- Promote mature forest patches and interior forest patches to meet species needs for well distributed habitats and ecosystem needs. (Forest Plan O-VG-17, O-VG-18)
- Continue to reduce edge and increase patch size where appropriate. (Forest Plan O-WL-35, O-VG-21)

b. Vegetation Composition & Age/MIH 1-9 (Forest Plan D-VG-3, D-WL-3e, O-VG-13, O-VG-14)

- Increase young jack pine, aspen, and red/white pine. (Forest Plan O-VG-2)
- Decrease mature and old aspen, jack pine, and mature spruce fir. Some areas need more old spruce fir forest. (Forest Plan O-VG-2)
- Increase young lowland black spruce/tamarack communities. (Forest Plan O-VG-16)
- Increase the acreage of jack pine forest. (Forest Plan O-VG-2, LE objectives)
- Favor long-lived and/or conifer species on nutrient sensitive soils (Ecological Land Types). (Forest Plan D-WS-3, O-WS-1, O-WS-9, O-WS-10)

c. Tree Species Diversity (Forest Plan, LE objectives)

- Maintain and increase, where possible, tree species diversity (for total percentage of trees, not total acres of forest type).

d. Forest Products (Forest Plan D-TM-1, O-TM-1, D-TR-1, O-TR-5)

- Maintain and enhance birch stands for collection of birch bark (improve bark quality, provide medicinal uses, etc.) and to maintain the birch forest type.
- Provide commercial wood for mills in northern Minnesota at a level that is sustainable over time.

A.2. Wildlife Habitat Management

The wildlife mid-level analysis displayed numerous vegetation management needs to address differences between the existing Project Area condition and Forest Plan direction. In brief, there is a need to address habitat needs for game species, management indicator species (specifically, goshawk and white pine), Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species (lynx and bald eagle), and Regional Forester Sensitive Species (RFSS). (Please note that the wolf is now considered an RFSS since the Fish and Wildlife Service delisted it from its threatened status in March 2007.) The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists addressed the following opportunities while developing the Proposed Action.

a. Game Species (Forest Plan D-WL-2, D-WL-3g, O-WL-39)

- Within the context of MIH objectives, provide young forest for moose and deer to browse, older forest for thermal cover and young jack pine for spruce grouse and introduce disturbance into non-forest lands for improved moose habitat.

b. Management Indicator Species: Goshawk and White Pine (Forest Plan D-WL-3e)

- Maintain and improve suitable goshawk habitat. (Forest Plan O-WL-31)
- Proactively plant white pine and manage existing white pine. (O-WL-32, O-WL-33)

c. Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species (TES): Lynx and Bald Eagle (Forest Plan O-WL-8, O-WL-4, O-WL-5, O-WL-6)

- Maintain lynx foraging and denning habitat, especially in the Bogberry, Omaday, and August Lake area. (O-WL-9, O-WL-10)
- Maintain and protect known bald eagle nest sites; promote future nest sites within known and potential eagle territories and habitat. (O-WL-16)

d. Regional Forester Sensitive Species (RFSS) (Forest Plan D-WL-3d, O-WL-18a and b)

- Manage for thermal cover for deer and moose (especially in the Garden Lake Deer Yard) and for foraging habitat for gray wolf prey species (deer, moose, and beaver). (D-WL-3c, O-WL-17)
- Maintain/improve juxtaposition of important habitats/habitat features for Regional Forester Sensitive Species; in particular: boreal owl, great gray owl, three-toed woodpecker, and olive-sided flycatcher. (Forest Plan O-WL-20, O-WL-21, O-WL-23, O-WL-24, O-WL-25)
- Improve habitat conditions for large-leaved sandwort, a Regional Forester Sensitive Species, along Spruce Road where the species is being degraded by non-native invasive species and encroaching vegetation. (O-WL-30)

A.3. Scenery Enhancement

In the High Scenic Integrity Objective areas such as Minnesota State Highway 1, Lake County Highways 16 and 18 (Fernberg Trail), Lake County Road 183 (Moose Lake Road), and the Tomahawk Snowmobile Trail, the Forest Plan desired condition (Forest Plan D-SC-1) is that the “scenic quality is protected or enhanced”. The interdisciplinary team integrated scenic management vegetation treatment opportunities in these areas while developing the Proposed Action. Examples include cutting balsam fir (a short-lived species) and planting pine (a long-lived species); and thinning or partial cutting followed by diversity planting.

A.4. Fuels Reduction

The Forest Plan states “Treat areas of highest fire risk based on Fire Regime and Condition Class to minimize effects of unwanted wildland fire” (O-ID-3). The Lake County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) coordinating committee identified areas within the Glacier Project that should be treated to reduce the risk of wildfire to protect life and property and to move the area back to the ecological condition associated with the historical natural fire regime. The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists integrated many of the CWPP proposals into the Proposed Action.

A.5. Aquatic Habitat Enhancement

Forest Plan direction (D-WS-6, O-WS-3, 4, and 5) generally encourages favoring long-lived tree species such as white pine and red pine to benefit both lake and stream riparian and aquatic habitat conditions. Riparian habitat surveys indicated there are some opportunities to enhance aquatic conditions in the Project Area by promoting recruitment, growth and longevity of long-lived trees species. The interdisciplinary team of resource specialists integrated many of these opportunities into the Proposed Action.

B. Purpose and Need for Managing the Transportation System

The Proposed Action addresses access for long-term vegetation management, access requests, road/trail encroachments, stream crossing rehabilitation, and use of gravel pits.

The existing road system does not meet current or future needs for long-term forest vegetation management. In some locations, the existing roads are not adequate to access areas where management activities are proposed. In other locations, there is an excess of roads. Some of these roads are no longer needed, or will not be needed for many years. Requests from other landowners for use of National Forest System land or roads to access non-federal land should be provided when deemed necessary. Encroachments have been identified where unauthorized access is occurring on National Forest System land. The number and size of gravel pits should be appropriate to maintain the road system.

The transportation system design needs to consider environmental, social and health concerns (Forest Plan, D-TS-1, D-TS-2, and O-TS-1). Road density as it relates to wildlife, and stream crossings as they relate to aquatic conditions, are some of the specific environmental concerns that the interdisciplinary team addressed while developing the Proposed Action.

The interdisciplinary team integrated the following opportunities and direction from the Forest Plan into the Glacier Project’s Proposed Action to address the transportation system needs.

1. Provide the minimum miles of existing or new classified roads that may be needed for long-term vegetation management. (Forest Plan D-TS-2, D-TS-3)
2. Reduce road density in the Project Area. (D-WL-5, O-WL-7, O-WL-11, O-WL-13)
3. Resolve known road/trail encroachments through decommissioning or placing roads or trails on the National Forest system or under special use authorization. (D-TS-4, D-TS-5, O-TS-6)
4. Respond to non-federal land owners’ requests for access across National Forest System land. (D-TS-5)
5. Determine which gravel pits to maintain and which gravel pits to rehabilitate. (D-MN-1)
6. Improve stream crossings on roads associated with the Proposed Action to enhance aquatic conditions. (Forest Plan D-WS-8, O-WS-2)

C. Purpose and Need as it relates to Forest Plan Management Area Direction

Section VI.C of this scoping package describes the Forest Plan Management Areas within the Glacier Project Area. Many of the Management Areas within the Project Area emphasize a large tree and old forest character. Many stands within these Management Areas have reached maturity and are not transitioning to long-lived species. The interdisciplinary team integrated the Management Area direction into the Proposed Action by including activities that increased species diversity and long-lived species.

IV. Proposed Action

A. Vegetation Management

The Proposed Action for vegetation management is summarized in Tables 1 and 2 and is displayed on Scoping Map 1 (the large map attached to this package). Acres and miles provided in the Proposed Action are estimates. Tables 1 and 2 include the primary proposed treatment acres. The summary in Table 1 emphasizes the outcome of the proposed vegetation management actions based on the resources addressed in the Purpose and Need. In Table 1, acres are counted more than once in some categories because treatments often benefit more than one resource. Secondary treatments such as preparing sites for reforestation along with the reforestation activities (i.e. planting, seeding, and natural) are shown in the list of specific stand treatments. In order to reduce the use of paper in this scoping document, the list of specific stands with all proposed treatments (Table 11) is available on request or on the SNF web site (www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior). The web site (Table 10) also includes a description of specific vegetation treatments, including codes and definitions.

Table 2 summarizes the primary treatments based on total acres in three treatment categories. The three categories that activities were grouped into are: creating young forest with harvest, improving stand conditions with harvest, and restoring stand conditions without harvest. Table 2 summarizes the total acres to be treated in the Proposed Action and acres are counted once. The three categories help to show the spatial outcome of the Proposed Action as shown on Scoping Map 1.

Even-aged treatments such as clearcut with reserves, seed tree, partial cut 30, and shelterwood would create young forest in the 0-9 age class. The majority of trees would be removed; however, some trees would not be cut and would be left standing for wildlife, aquatic, scenery, and other resource purposes. Such treatments are proposed adjacent to more recent past harvests in order to create large patches of similar age classes. Un-even aged treatments such as partial cut 60 and variable thinning would improve stand conditions and maintain the existing age class of the stand. In these treatments, about thirty percent of a stand would be harvested. Creating young forest and improving stand conditions would result in commercial wood products.

Non-harvest restoration would create conditions for either pre-existing trees or trees proposed for planting to grow under improved conditions. This may include removing less desirable species, creating ground disturbance to enhance natural regeneration of long-lived tree species, creating conditions for existing desired trees to grow, and planting and/or seeding desired trees species to offset the natural succession of older stands to young spruce-fir stands. These treatments would not generally result in a commercial wood product.

A map displaying the age class distribution of stands (Scoping Map 2) and a map displaying the forest types (Scoping Map 3) can be found on the Superior National Forest web site (www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior). Depending on the content of public comments and further analysis by the interdisciplinary team, the team may recommend additional stands be proposed for treatments in management alternatives. All stands recommended for treatment would fit within the context of the Project's purpose and need, Forest Plan direction, and agency regulations.

Table 1. Proposed Action: Vegetation Management by Resource Needs		Acres
A.1.	Landscape Ecosystem Management	
a.	Improve vegetation spatial patterns (reduce forest habitat fragmentation)	3,223
b.	Increase upland young stands	5,591
	Increase lowland young stands	389
	Increase jack pine forest.	1,327
	Increase long-lived species (white pine and red pine)	134
c.	Improve tree species diversity within harvested areas	3,366
	Improve tree species diversity in non-harvest restoration areas	5,158
A.2.	Wildlife Habitat Management	
a.	Improve habitat conditions for moose and deer	4,800
	Improve habitat conditions for roughed and spruce grouse	5,500
b.	Increase amount and survival of white pine (MIS)	2,400
	Improve stand complexity for Northern Goshawk (MIS)	11,323
c.	Promote future nesting habitat for Bald Eagle (Federally Threatened Species)	2,400
d.	Improve habitat conditions for Large-leaved sandwort (RFSS)	16
A.3.	Scenery Enhancement	
	Manage areas of high scenic interest for long-lived species	6,609
A.4	Fuels Reduction	
	Treat fuels to reduce risk of unwanted wildfire	903
A.5.	Aquatic Habitat Enhancement	
	Enhance riparian habitat by underplanting long-lived tree species and/or releasing existing long-lived tree species adjacent to streams and lakes.	2,605

Table 2. Proposed Action: Vegetation Management Primary Treatments (Acres)		
Proposed Action Primary Treatment Category	Purpose and Need	Acres
Creating young forest with harvests <i>(Even-aged treatments)</i>	A.1.a.b.d A.2.a.d A.4	5,980
Improving stand conditions with harvests <i>(Uneven-aged treatments)</i>	A.1.c A.1.d A.2.b.c.d A.3 A.4 A.5	8,128
Restoring stand conditions without harvests <i>(Non-harvest restoration treatments)</i>	A.1.a A.2.b.c.d A.3 A.4 A.5	5,158
Total Acres Treated		19,266

B. Transportation System

The Transportation System Proposed Action is summarized in Table 3. The new system roads proposed are nearly all winter low maintenance level roads that would not be maintained or open for public motorized use, such as OHVs or ATVs. The proposed new road to Smitty's Resort on Snowbank, would however, continue to be open for public use.

Some temporary roads would also be needed for accessing stands to carry out management activities. Temporary roads would only be used for short periods of time and are not intended to become part of the forest transportation system. They would be closed after all primary and secondary management activities have been completed. Because temporary roads would only be used for short periods of time and would not be developed for public use, mileage estimates are not included in this scoping package, and potential locations are not shown on the scoping maps. However, the forthcoming environmental analysis document will discuss the effects on resources resulting from the use of temporary roads.

Sections of winter use trail would be added to the Forest trail system in the Glacier Project Area. The proposed trail sections are part of an existing larger winter trail system (Kawishiwi Triangle Trails) used mostly by mushers. The trails would be part of the Glacier Project because the existing unauthorized routes are needed to complete and acknowledge this system of winter trails. The trails are shown on Scoping Map 1.

One long-term winter special use road authorization (0.2 miles) would be issued to the State of Minnesota, Division of Forestry to access land for forest management. The road is shown on Scoping Map 1. The authorized road location is on an existing old winter route on National Forest System land.

The Fall Lake gravel pit would be rehabilitated because the pit is no longer used as a source of gravel. Rehabilitation would involve vegetation planting and recreational use enhancements. To best utilize the mineral material resources in the Snowbank Lake gravel pit, the road leading to "Smitty's on Snowbank Resort" would be relocated. This would result in the following changes to the Forest road system: removal of about 0.75 miles of an existing unclassified road, adding about 0.45 miles of unclassified road, and constructing about 0.3 miles of new road. Because the road segment removed is so short, it is not shown on the Scoping Map 1. The remaining gravel pits that currently exist in the Project Area would be maintained. Gravel pit locations are shown on Scoping Map 1.

Four stream crossings would be improved to assure soil stability, unimpeded flow, sediment transport, and/or fish passage. The locations of stream crossings that have been identified for improvement activities are shown on Scoping Map 1.

Table 4 provides a more detailed summary of the National Forest System roads in the Project Area. Each National Forest System road is maintained at a level that meets the planned purpose and use of the road. The intended level of maintenance for a road is the Objective Maintenance Level (OML). OMLs are described using numbers 1 through 5, indicating increasing levels of use and maintenance. OML 1 roads have the lowest level of maintenance and are closed to passenger car vehicles. OML 5 roads have the highest level of maintenance and may be paved. Typically OML 3, 4, and 5 roads are all-season, constructed for year-round use. OML 1 and 2 roads can either be seasonal (constructed for dry weather use) or winter (without surfacing and used only during frozen ground conditions). Refer to the Forest Plan (pp. 2-43, 2-44, 2-49, and 2-50) for information on public use of roads.

The “unclassified” category includes roads on National Forest System land that are receiving motorized vehicle use, but have not previously been designated on the Forest road system. Unclassified roads needed for long-term vegetation management would be addressed in the Glacier analysis; that is, those roads would be proposed as additions to the Forest road system based on the Glacier Project analysis.

It is important to note that decisions on unclassified roads will be made in the upcoming Forest Travel Management Project and not as part of the Glacier Project’s proposed activities or analysis. The Forest Travel Management Project will apply to the entire Superior National Forest and will include the Project Area for the Glacier Project. As a result of the Forest Travel Management Project, unclassified roads would either be added to the road or trail system, or be decommissioned. Decommissioning roads involves stabilizing and restoring unneeded roads to a more natural condition. Information on the Forest Travel Management Project can be found in the future on the Superior National Forest web site (www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior) under Projects and Plans.

Proposed Action	Purpose and Need	
New System Roads	B.1	33.1 miles*
Reconstructing an OML2 to an OML3 (Madden Lake)	B.1	0.9 miles
Road to be Decommissioned	B.1.2	0.3 miles
New System Winter Trail	B.3	4.0 miles**
Special Use Winter Road Authorizations	B.3.4	0.2 miles
Gravel pits to maintain	B.5	6 pits
Gravel pit to decommission and rehabilitate	B.5	1 pit
Stream Crossing Improvements	B.6	4 crossings
* Includes new construction and reconstruction of existing roads proposed to be added to the system.		

** Does not include 0.8 miles of trail that is also proposed as a system winter road, which is listed in the new system road miles.

Road Type	Existing Miles	Proposed Change in Miles	Proposed Action Resulting Miles
OML 1	19.0	30.4	49.4
OML 2	27.5	1.2	28.7
OML 3	3.2	1.6	4.8
OML 4	5.5	0	5.5
OML 5	2.4	0	2.4
Unclassified	10.9	-0.8	10.1*
Special Use Authorizations	17.4	-1.0	16.4
Total	85.9	31.4	117.3

* Decisions on unclassified roads that are not needed for long term vegetation management will be made in the Forest Travel Management Plan analysis.

C. Forest Plan Operational Standards and Guidelines

Forest Plan operational standards and guidelines that would be implemented with the Proposed Actions are summarized in a separate document available on request and on the Superior National Forest web site. (www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior). The document includes the standards and guidelines that are routinely employed during harvesting, road work, and prescribed burning operations. The standards and guidelines in the document would be applicable to the Proposed Action and all action alternatives and would be required during implementation of the proposed management activities.

Operational standards and guidelines are outlined in silvicultural prescriptions, marking plans, cruise plans, and burn plans. Personnel adhere to these practices while designing the detailed treatment boundaries, administering timber sale contracts, conducting prescribed burns, and performing reforestation activities.

Additional specific implementation measures and monitoring will likely be included during alternative development and environmental analysis preparation.

V. Decisions to be Made

Mark E. Van Every, Kawishiwi District Ranger, is the Responsible Official for the Glacier Project. The decisions to be made include:

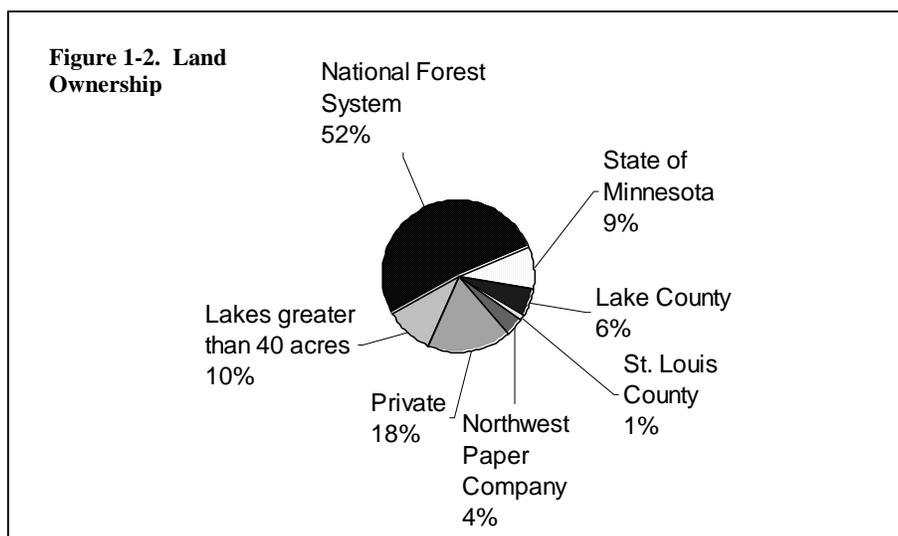
- Which actions, if any, will be approved?
- Will the Project have a significant impact that would lead to preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement?

A decision is expected in late 2007. Implementation would begin in 2008. Primary treatments would be started within five years of the Responsible Official's decision and likely take several years to complete.

VI. Project Area Description

A. Land Ownership

Figure 1-2 shows land ownership in the Project Area. The Superior National Forest manages just over half of the land located within the Project Area.



B. Landscape Ecosystems

The Forest Plan used landscape ecosystems to outline management objectives for the forest vegetation composition and age class, tree species diversity and management indicator habitats on National Forest System land. Landscape ecosystems are large ecological areas derived from a combination of individual or groupings of native plant communities, ecological systems, and terrestrial ecological unit inventories. Each landscape ecosystem is characterized by its own dominant vegetation communities and patterns. These characteristics are products of local climate, glacial topography, dominant soils, and natural processes such as fire, wind, insects, and disease. Management in each landscape ecosystem will maintain or restore the Forest to conditions more representative of native plant communities and landscape scale patterns. These communities and patterns emulate natural disturbance and other ecological processes. Table 5 shows the acres of each landscape ecosystem in the Project Area, and the percentage of the Project Area in each landscape ecosystem.

Landscape Ecosystem	Acres in Glacier Area	% of Glacier Area	% of LE (Forest-wide) in Glacier Project Area
Jack Pine/Black Spruce LE	24,000	51	9
Dry-mesic Red and White Pine LE	14,000	30	8
Lowland Conifer within Jack Pine/Black Spruce LE and Dry-mesic Red and White Pine LE	4,600	10	4
Cedar, black ash, non-forest lowland, and upland not in a separate LE	4,400	9	n/a
Total Project National Forest System Acres	47,000	100	n/a

In developing the Proposed Action, the interdisciplinary team compared the existing condition in the Project Area to the Forest Plan desired forest-wide conditions. Data depicting how the Proposed Action would contribute to the landscape ecosystem objectives outlined in the Forest Plan are available on the Superior National Forest web site, and also by request. The Glacier Project's environmental analysis, which will occur after the public scoping period, will consider changes in age class and vegetation composition that would result from implementation of this Proposed Action. The environmental analysis will also consider changes occurring from other vegetation management projects on the Superior National Forest. Table 6 shows the acres of treatment that would occur in each landscape ecosystem.

Landscape Ecosystem	Total Acres Treated	Creating Young Stands with Harvests	Improving Stand Conditions with Harvests	Restoring Stand Conditions without Harvest
Jack Pine/Black Spruce	9,736	4,131	3,924	1,681
Dry-mesic Red and White Pine	8,688	1,460	4,204	3,024
Lowland Conifer within Jack Pine/Black Spruce LE and Dry-mesic Red and White Pine LE	602	389	0	213
Nonforest lowland and upland not in a separate LE	240	0	0	240
Total Acres Treated	19,266	5,980	8,128	5,158

*All acres shown are estimates based on stand acres. Actual acres treated to create young stands may be less than the totals shown above because final design of harvest units take into account legacy patches, reserves islands, and other mitigative factors.

C. Management Areas

The Forest Plan “zones” the Superior National Forest outside the BWCAW into ten management areas (MAs). Chapter 3 of the Forest Plan includes the desired conditions, objectives, standards, and guidelines for each MA. The Glacier Project Area includes six of these MAs. The emphasis for each MA in the Project Area is summarized below.

General Forest MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide a wide variety of goods, uses, and services. These include wood products, other commercial products, scenic quality, developed and dispersed recreation opportunities, and habitat for a diversity of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and fish. Numerous roads open to public travel provide access to resources and roaded recreation opportunities. Non-motorized recreation opportunities also occur. Compared to other Forest Plan management areas, the General Forest MA will have the most amount of young-forest and the largest sized timber harvest units. (Forest Plan, pp. 3-5 – 3-8)

General Forest - Longer Rotation MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide a wide variety of goods, uses, and services. These include wood products, other commercial products, scenic quality, developed and dispersed recreation opportunities, and habitat for a diversity of terrestrial and aquatic wildlife and fish species. Numerous roads that are open to public travel provide access to resources and roaded recreation opportunities. Non-motorized recreation opportunities also occur. (Forest Plan, pp. 3-9 – 3-12)

Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide a scenic landscape for recreational activities in natural-looking surroundings and also provides wildlife habitat to enhance recreational wildlife watching opportunities. (Forest Plan, pp. 3-13 – 3-15)

Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation MA emphasizes land and resource conditions that provide recreational opportunities in nearly primitive surroundings where motorized use is allowed. Most recreation use occurs on lakes, trails, portages, and low standard roads. Interaction among recreational users is low. Forest management enhances recreation and scenic objectives and may occasionally be noticeable to visitors. (Forest Plan, pp. 3-24 – 3-26)

Research Natural Areas MA focus on preserving and maintaining areas for ecological research, observation, genetic conservation, monitoring, and educational activities. The role of these areas in ecological research and monitoring is in providing unique or high quality representative native plant community types. (Forest Plan pp. 3-33 – 3-37)

Unique Biological Areas MA have outstanding biological and other special values. Although this management area preserves these values, these areas are primarily managed for interpretive purposes. The Harris Lake Natural National Landmark is located in the southern portion of the Project Area on the south side of Highway 1. (Forest Plan pp. 3-33 – 3-37)

Proposed management activities occur in four of these management areas: General Forest, General Forest – Longer Rotation, Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape, and Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation.

Table 7 shows the acres and percent of each Management Area in the Project Area on all ownerships. This provides an indication of the Management Area allocation; however, it is important to note that management activities are not proposed on non-National Forest System land.

Table 8 shows the acres of each Management Area that would be treated by each of the vegetation management techniques.

Management Area	MA Acres in Project Area	Percent of Glacier Project Area
General Forest	36,700	41
General Forest - Longer Rotation	10,900	12
Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation	13,800	15
Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape	26,900	30
Research Natural Areas	640	1
Unique Biological Areas	650	1

Management Area	Creating Young Stands with Harvests	Improving Stand Conditions with Harvests	Restoring Stand Conditions without Harvest	Total MA Treated
General Forest	3,892	3,011	1,114	8,017
General Forest - Longer Rotation	166	1,061	439	1,666
Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation	476	2,911	876	4,263
Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape	1,446	1,147	2,727	5,320
Total Treatment Type	5,980	8,130	5,156	19,266

*All acres shown are estimates based on stand acres. Actual acres treated to create young stands may be less than the totals shown above because final design of harvest units take into account legacy patches, reserves islands, and other mitigative factors.

D. Other Management Considerations: Roadless Area Conservation Rule and Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless Areas

2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule and 2005 State Petitioning Rule

The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) Final EIS was published in November 2000, and the Final Rule was published in the Federal Register on January 12, 2001. The 13 areas on the Superior National Forest included in the RACR FEIS were the roadless areas analyzed during the 1986 Forest Plan analysis. See Appendix C of the 2004 Forest Plan Revision FEIS for detailed information on the RACR.

In May 2005, the US Department of Agriculture announced the *Special Areas; State Petitions for Inventoried Roadless Area Management; Roadless Area Conservation National Advisory Committee; Final Rule and Notice*. This 2005 State Petitioning Rule replaced the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule described above. The 2005 State Petitioning Rule applied to 30 areas on the Superior National Forest which were inventoried as roadless areas during the Forest Plan revision. Minnesota Governor Pawlenty did not file a petition under this rule which means that the Secretary of Agriculture is not re-evaluating the Management Area designations assigned to Forest Plan inventoried roadless areas as a result of the 2004 Forest Plan Revision FEIS and Record of Decision. (See below for more information on Forest Plan inventoried roadless areas.)

In late September 2006, a court ruling in California overturned the 2005 State Petitioning Rule and re-instated the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This recent court ruling does not impact this proposal because there are no timber harvest or road construction activities planned within a RACR area. The Wood Lake and South Kawishiwi River Roadless Conservation Rule Areas (RACR) are within the Glacier Project Area. No timber harvest or road construction activities are proposed within these areas. No activities are proposed in South Kawishiwi River RACR. Activities allowed under the RACR, non-harvest restoration release and under planting, are proposed within the Wood Lake RACR. These activities are proposed to address the portions of the purpose and need to improve tree species diversity.

Forest Plan Inventoried Roadless Areas

The Forest Plan revision process, completed in 2004, required an up-to-date inventory to address roadless area management issues. During the Superior National Forest plan revision, all national forests were required to evaluate those previously inventoried roadless areas (Roadless Area Conservation Rule), and other lands, which remain essentially roadless/undeveloped, and had not been designated for wilderness.

Areas that met the FSH inventory criteria were evaluated and considered for wilderness study recommendation (FSH 1909.12). The Forest Plan Revision Record of Decision (pages 17 and 18) described why the areas were not recommended for wilderness study and consequently all the inventoried areas were allocated to other Management Areas. The Forest Plan Revision FEIS analysis is in the section 3.7 Special Designations, pages 3.7-1 – 3.7-13. Appendix C of the Forest Plan Revision FEIS, displays the Forest Plan Roadless Area Inventory and Evaluation.

Information on inventoried roadless areas is important because of the relatively high level of interest expressed by the public about potential effects to roadless areas from proposed road and timber harvest activities. Table 9 lists the roadless areas associated with the Glacier Project and their corresponding Management Area allocation. The kinds of activities in the Proposed Action are also listed.

Table 9. Roadless Area Conservation Rule (RACR) and Forest Plan Roadless Inventory Areas: Proposed Action Activities

Area	Type of Roadless Area	Forest Plan Management Area	Proposed Action Activities
Wood Lake	RACR and Forest Plan Roadless Inventory	Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape	Non-harvest restoration release and under planting.
South Kawishiwi River	RACR and Forest Plan Roadless Inventory	Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape	None
Greenstone Lake East	Forest Plan Roadless Inventory	Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation	Partial cut 60, variable thinning, winter road construction, Non-harvest restoration release and under planting.
Greenstone Lake West	Forest Plan Roadless Inventory	Semi-Primitive Motorized Recreation	Partial cut 60, winter road construction, Non-harvest restoration release and under planting.

Public Information/Interpretation

Public educational opportunities may be developed to interpret aspects of vegetation management in the Glacier Project Area. The interpretation would be an extension of educational exhibits planned for the new Kawishiwi Ranger District office. Themes could be based on the main topics related to vegetation management (landscape ecosystems, wildlife habitat, scenery, aquatics, and fuels). For example, an interpretative display could be placed in the previously burned areas near Flash Lake to discuss the role of fire and associated ecological change. Wildlife viewing and information on wildlife habitat management could also be interpreted through interpretive displays or self-guided tours.

VII. Treatments

Scoping Map 1 depicts Proposed Action primary stand treatments, as summarized in three categories: creating young forest, improving stand conditions and restoring stand conditions. Table 11, which provides a list of all of the Proposed Action’s stand treatments, is available on the Forest website (www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior) and on request by calling the Kawishiwi Ranger District (218-365-7600). Table 10, Treatment Codes and Definitions, is also available on the web or upon request. The table provides codes and complete definitions of treatments. A key part of the preliminary prescription is whether or not the stand age would change. Nuances of the prescription could change during implementation. For example, a clearcut with reserves could change to a partial cut 30 if further field reviews indicate that is best for the stand.

VIII. Summary of the Environmental Analysis Process

The Glacier Project interdisciplinary team of resource specialists will prepare the environmental analysis for the Glacier Project using the following steps. The team includes a wildlife biologist, silviculturist, recreation specialist, soil scientist, engineer, and others.

- Step 1:** District resource specialists gathered existing condition information from on-the-ground field surveys, aerial photographs, and consultations with other resource specialists. The existing information was then compared with the desired conditions identified in the Forest Plan. Each resource specialist identified needs and opportunities to move the area towards the desired conditions. This is documented in “mid-level” assessments for each resource area.
- Step 2:** The District Ranger identified the purpose and need for the project based on the mid-level assessments. The interdisciplinary team developed and the District Ranger approved a Proposed Action that would meet the purpose and need. The purpose and need and Proposed Action are included in the scoping documents so interested parties can become familiar with the project and provide meaningful comments on the project.
- Step 3:** The scoping package, which explains the Proposed Action, is sent to the public, adjacent landowners, and others who have an interest in how the Project Area is managed. The purpose of the scoping package is to inform the public and to provide an opportunity for them to submit comments on the proposal.
- Step 4:** The interdisciplinary team will evaluate the comments received on the scoping package and identify significant environmental issues to study in the environmental analysis document. The significant issues will be used to develop management alternatives to the Proposed Action and to disclose the effects of the actions of each alternative if it were chosen for implementation. This analysis will be compiled in a document that will be available for public review. This review will provide the official comment period required by the National Environmental Policy Act and Forest Service procedures.
- Step 5:** Comments received during the official comment period will be addressed in the environmental analysis document. When the environmental analysis document has been completed, the District Ranger will select an alternative to implement. He will document his decision in a formal decision document. The completed environmental analysis and decision document will be distributed to interested parties.
- Step 6:** Interested parties who submitted comments during the official comment period will have 45 days to appeal the project. If no appeals are received, the project may be implemented as soon as five days after the 45-day appeal period ends. If the project is appealed, the appeal process will be followed.

IX. How to Comment on the Glacier Project Proposed Action

Scoping comments will be used to determine significant issues associated with the Project, to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and to refine the analysis of effects. An issue is a point of debate, dispute, or disagreement with the anticipated effects of a Proposed Action. Significant issues will be used to develop management alternatives that will be analyzed in the environmental analysis document. Significant issues are not the same as significant effects. Non-significant issues are those that are outside the scope of the project, already decided by law, regulation, or Forest Plan, irrelevant to the decision being made, or are conjectural and not supported by scientific factual evidence.

Scoping comments will also be used to determine the scope of analysis in the environmental document. Scoping comments are most useful if they refer to a specific action or activity rather than general management direction for the Superior National Forest. Specific project information can be found in the Glacier Project Proposed Action scoping documents.

Please consider the following questions when reviewing proposed activities and submitting comments:

1. Does the Proposed Action move the Project Area toward vegetation desired conditions and objectives described in the Forest Plan?
2. Are there other actions the agency should consider taking to move the Project Area toward vegetation desired conditions and objectives described in the Forest Plan?
3. Is there anything about this area that you believe the Forest Service should consider that might affect activities proposed for the Project Area or the analysis of the Proposed Action?

Please submit scoping comments by June 25, 2007. A comment sheet is provided on page 19. The sender is responsible to ensure their comments are received in a timely manner. Please note that if a response is not received from you, your name will be removed from the Glacier mailing list.

- All comments received (including names and addresses) will become part of the project file and will be available for public inspection, if requested. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered.
- Submit comments by writing, faxing, emailing, or calling. Be sure to include the title of the project (Glacier Project).
- People who submit scoping comments will remain on the mailing list to receive paper copies of the next analysis document prepared for the Glacier Project. However, in the interest of reducing paper, you can elect to receive a post card notification (rather than a paper copy) when the next analysis document is available on the Superior National Forest web site. When you submit your comment, simply indicate that you wish to receive a post card notification.
- If you are interested in attending a public meeting/field trip, please provide an email address or phone number so we can contact you when an event is scheduled.
- Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), Word (.doc), or any software supported by Microsoft applications.
- Send **electronic comments** to: comments-eastern-superior-kawishiwi@fs.fed.us
- Send **FAX** comments to: (218) 365-7605
- **Oral** comments may be provided at the Kawishiwi Ranger Station, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday
- Send **written** comments to: **Mark E. Van Every, District Ranger**
ATTN: Glacier Project
Kawishiwi Ranger Station
118 S. 4th Ave. East
Ely, MN 55731

**Glacier Project
Public Scoping Comment Sheet
Kawishiwi Ranger District - Superior National Forest**

SCOPING COMMENTS DUE ON OR BY: June 25, 2007.

All scoping comments will become part of the public record for this Project.

Name: _____

Address: _____

May we call you if there is a need to clarify your scoping comments? ___ No ___ Yes

Phone Number: _____

Scoping Comments about the Glacier Project (attach additional pages if needed):

- Printed copies of the Glacier Project's next environmental analysis document will be sent to everyone who submits a scoping comment. However, in the interest of saving paper, a post card notification can be sent to you when the analysis document is posted on the Superior National Forest web site. If you prefer to receive a postcard rather than a printed copy of the document, place a check mark on this line: _____
- Do you wish to be notified of future public meetings? If so, please provide a phone number or email address below.

Return to:

Mark E. Van Every, District Ranger, ATTN: Glacier Project, Kawishiwi Ranger Station, 118 S. 4th Ave. East, Ely, MN, 55731. Or fold, tape, and add a stamp to the back of this pre-addressed sheet, and mail.

From:

Place
Postage
Here

Mark Van Every, District Ranger
Attn: Glacier Project
Kawishiwi Ranger District
Superior National Forest
118 S. 4th Ave. E.
Ely, MN 55731