

11. Social and Economic Stability

Forest Plan decisions contribute to economic sustainability by providing for a range of uses, values, products, and services. Economic benefits contributed to the region by National Forests include market and non-market opportunities such as timber volume, tourism, balsam boughs, sight seeing, historical facility access and fishing. Outdoor recreation, travel and tourism provide an important contribution to the area's economy. National Forest settings and activities that are tied to the aesthetic qualities and increased opportunities to experience wildlife, lakes and rivers, and undeveloped forested acres are an important draw to visitors.

The Forest is important to many people for a variety of opportunities, benefits, and values related to cultural, spiritual, and traditional practices. The Forest provides rare or unique benefits that may not be common on or available from other ownerships of public or private lands.

The Forest objectives include:

Contribute to social sustainability and vitality of local resident's way of life, cultural integrity and social cohesion.

Increase in accessibility to a diversity of people and members of underserved and low-income populations to the full range of uses, values, products, and services.

All aspects of use contribute to the Forest objective of local area social and economic vitality by promoting and/or protecting area cultural values, traditional employment, recreation opportunities, historical landscape features, and aesthetic qualities of the forest.

A. Commodity Resources and Non-commodity opportunities

Commodity resources are market driven resources such as timber, boughs, wildlife, fish, and game that can be bought and sold. (FEIS, Glossary-5). Timber harvest and products significantly contribute to the area economy. These contributions are discussed in the timber section of this report.

Non-commodities include but are not limited to personal benefits from recreational opportunities – such as the enjoyment of a hike, viewing scenery, camping with family, protection of cultural values, or traditional employment.

Effective land management recognizes the effects of forest changes on individuals and communities relative to commodity resources and non-commodity opportunities.

Key Points

- The Forest provides people opportunities to gain these benefits through forest access on roads; a variety of forest settings; recreational facilities, forest products, and tribal employment.

Monitoring Question

To what extent does the Forest provide commodity resources and non-commodity opportunities in an environmentally acceptable manner that contributes to the social and economic sustainability and diversity of local communities?

Results

National Visitor Use Monitoring

The National Visitor Use Monitoring Research provides National Forests information on forest visitors. Activities, demographics, spending, length of stay are components of an NVUM report. The information gathered from the NVUM research report in 2002 and 2007 is of value to indicate activities and infer subsequent benefits people are engaging in. Activities that recreation visitors have participated in have remained constant over time. Visitors to the Forest participate in a number of different activities as follows: (NVUM Surveys, 2002 & 2007)

The top ten visitor activities are:

- General/other – relaxing, hanging out, escaping noise and heat, etc
- Viewing wildlife, birds, fish, etc on NF
- Viewing natural features such as scenery, flowers, etc on NF
- Fishing – all types
- Hiking or walking
- Snowmobile travel
- Driving for pleasure on roads
- Resorts, cabins and other accommodations on NF system lands
- Cross-country skiing, snowshoeing
- Motorized water travel

Forest Access

Access to the forest via roads has decreased within the past five years. This decrease of approximately 188 miles due to better road inventory that identifies National Forest system roads and unauthorized roads and also to decommissioning some roads. These forest access opportunities continue to provide benefits such as enjoyment of the scenery, access to special areas as defined by a visitor, and family connections by groups using the roads for OHV riding. Decreases in road access may result in a reduction in personal benefits related to accessing particular sites for hunting and/or gathering opportunities. Other changes may result in somewhat less positive benefits dependant on the desire of individuals to access with motorized vehicles specific areas.

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) Acres

The Chippewa has become less developed through a reduction in roads, resulting in forest settings that may reflect less of a human presence. In these areas, the personal benefits include an increase in risk taking, self reliance, solitude, challenge, and remoteness. Conversely, benefits associated with security, comfort, socializing, easy access to areas have decreased.

Recreation Facilities

The amount of recreation facilities have not substantially decreased. However even the relatively small decrease in services through limiting site maintenance, facility closures (the

change in Nushka from a campground to a special use permit site), and fee increases may affect non-commodity benefits. For example, some people's enjoyment of a site may be negatively affected if the site is closed, more expensive, or not maintained as they are accustomed to. At the same time, given these same conditions, people may appreciate the reduction in costs to operate a site, a reduction in noise associated with site maintenance, and advantages of increased amenities that fee increases may bring.

Tribal employment and opportunities

A \$1.5M contract for preservation and stabilization of Rabideau CCC Camp was awarded to Earthworks Technology, Inc., a company owned by Red Lake Nation. Earthworks has subcontracted work to various local companies such as Mohler Movers, Widseth, Smith & Nolting, and local electricians, plumbers, septic engineers, and materials suppliers.

Also, restoration of the Camp facilities has and will continue to provide a location for the school district and other partners to provide non-commodity opportunities for education and job training to members of the local community.

The Forest has entered into multiple programmatic agreements with the Leech Lake Band utilizing the Cooperative Funds and Training Act (PL 94-148) to provide job training and work experience. Some of the programs with which the Forest has hosted Tribal members include Temporary Employment Program, Minnesota Family Investment Act, and Leech Lake Tribal College Internships. Use of this authority has been instrumental in exposing a variety of Tribal members to Forest Service operations and career opportunities.

The Forest has hosted meetings, trainings and workshops that provide awareness of funding, grant opportunities and authorities that would lead to improved economic development and employment opportunities for the Band. The Forest utilized Stevens fund grants to provide training and equipment to tribal firefighters for fuels reduction projects. Tribal Forest Protection Act training was provided to Division of Resource Management personnel to heighten interest and awareness in this authority. Computer training and training that transfers technology to the band has been offered to help increase the tribal capacity to work with the Forest.

Special Forest products

There are a number of Forest products that require a permit by the user. The majority of the permits issued are for Christmas trees, balsam boughs and tapping for maple syrup. Within the "other" group are permits for wild hay, walking sticks, transplants, and birch bark.

Table 11-1. Special Forest Products Summary

Fiscal Year	Total Dollars	Total # Permits	Christmas Tree tags	Balsam Boughs	Maple Tap	Other
2010	3,728.50	243	176	42	15	10
2009	4,569.00	260	181	59	12	8
2008	3,441.50	218	161	41	12	4
2007	3,355.00	222	169	35	10	8
2006	2,694.00	241	199	21	12	9
2005	3,907.95	307	246	41	12	13

Implications

Decommissioning roads, identifying roads that are unauthorized and closing them to motorized travel may result in changes to personal, non-commodity benefits. These changes may be positive or negative, dependant on an individual's perspective. Activities that people engage in may change over the long term to reflect access opportunities.

Recreational facilities on the Forest continue to provide a quality recreation experience. People may be displaced from Nushka to another one of the 21 campgrounds on the Forest. Health, safety and security standards continue to be met in the daily management of the recreation facilities.

The Forest continues to identify and increase employment and development opportunities for the tribal community.

New Issues

As the economy begins to slowly recover in the local and regional area, the non-commodity benefits gained from recreational experiences continue to be important to people. Participating in recreational activities that are free or are not expensive continue to be of value in providing for quality of life benefits.

An outcome of increasing gas prices is that there may be more people recreating on the Chippewa that live and travel from the local and regional area. As people visit an area often and become more familiar with the landscape and recreational opportunities, we may find demand for different opportunities changing. Increase local visitation also may open the way for increased community/agency/tribal collaboration with the Chippewa.

Recommendations

- With potential changes in demand for non-commodity benefits, continue to support the National Visitor Use Monitoring research. This research provides a one year snapshot every four years on recreational visitors to the Chippewa.
- Individuals, agencies, organizations and Tribes should continue to be our focus for partnership development, collaborative efforts, and volunteer opportunities to both monitor non-commodity goals and to provide an outlet for people to achieve these goals.
- Continue to provide recreational opportunities in a variety of forest settings and facilities so that people can continue to experience non-commodity benefits.

B. Areas and Species of Interest

Areas of interest to people are defined by the physical location that people have invested with meaning, value, and feelings because of their experiences. People develop emotional bonds to places, which are important to them for providing certain kinds of experiences they value.

Key Points

- The CNF has continued to provide a range of forest settings that have existing unique areas of interest to people. Collaborative planning on connected landscapes with common goals should continue to occur.

Monitoring Question

Are forest management activities maintaining the desired characteristics of the areas and species of interest (traditionally and culturally) as identified in research and/or by interested communities and individuals?

Results

Recreational Opportunity Spectrum Acres

Inventory has improved over the past five years, resulting in more accurate ROS classification information as applied to the CNF. Forest management changes have occurred through implementation of projects analyzed within the NEPA process and roads have been decommissioned and unauthorized roads have been closed. Forest Plan implementation through these projects may have resulted in changing the type of access and vegetation within unique areas.

In areas of limited access through road decommissioning, unique areas associated with limited human presence have somewhat expanded. People who consider areas of the forest to be special that have more mature trees while retaining some early succession forests will continue to see long term change that emphasizes that vegetation. People that value areas of the Chippewa that reflect more road access, more evidence of people, early successional forests, and evidence of natural resource management may have found diminishing areas.

Lands considered semi-primitive (motorized) are the “remote character” areas within the Roaded Natural designated areas. These areas were not formally identified within the Forest Plan, rather the intention is to implement the Goals and Objectives of identifying and analyzing opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities and forest settings.

The changes in the remote character or semi-primitive (motorized) ROS inventory indicate approximately a 10% reduction. This reduction is not due to on the changes in lake access or lake use, or trails on the Forest, rather, it is primarily a function of better data on the quantity and location of Forest Service system roads. The proximity to roads is one of the key criteria for determination of meeting semi-primitive qualifications. Reviewing the past five years, there have not been permanent roads built. There have been roads decommissioned; resulting in

approximately 1,500 contiguous acres of Forest Service system land that now meets the semi-primitive non-motorized ROS criteria.

Scenic Resources

The scenic resources of the Chippewa continue to be managed for the objectives of the Forest Plan in terms of striving to reach the scenic integrity objectives of an area. The scenic resources are tied to Forest Plan corridor and area defined scenic integrity objectives. Those objectives have not changed.

Identified historic properties

Evaluation of the eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places of structures within recreation residence tracts under special use permit has been completed. This has identified historic properties that require special management to maintain their historic character.

However, resort properties under special use permit have not yet been evaluated. FS cannot meet its responsibility to manage historic properties until they have been identified, nor can permittee requests for alterations be adequately addressed in a timely manner. It is recommended that National Register evaluation be completed at the earliest opportunity.

Regional Forester Sensitive Species

The Forest recently analyzed the listing of species included on the Regional Forester sensitive species list for adding and deletion of species. After consulting with the LLBO Division of Resource Management, the Forest recommended retention of two species that independent of consultation with the LLBO would have likely been removed.

Tribal input on Forest Management Plans and projects

The Forest planning teams and Line Officers routinely meet with Local Indian Councils and LLBO, Division of Resource Management personnel discussing land management plans and specific projects. These meetings are generally conducted before the project alternatives and prescriptions have been developed. The goals of these meetings are to effectively consult with the Leech Lake band on their interests over the natural resources and to minimize any adverse impacts to the Bands reserved Treaty Rights.

Implications

As the ROS changes, it has influence on the future designation of Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIOs) for corridors and areas. As an area becomes more semi-primitive, for example, the scenic integrity objective may indicate more of an emphasis on preservation and retention of a natural appearing landscape. Subsequently the SIOs should be reviewed as additional changes occur. Unique areas may change, based on scenic and aesthetic changes to the landscape.

Continuing to improve road, lake access, and trail inventory to be able to create the most accurate ROS inventory will be critical to the accuracy of the ROS data used in the next Forest Plan revision analysis. Good data is also important during project level analysis to implement the 2004 Forest Plan goals and objectives.

As forest management is applied, the ROS may change. For example, as an area becomes more semi-primitive with road closures, it is important to analyze: 1) appearance of naturalness as measured by harvesting results; 2) the existence of motorized or non-motorized trails; 3) the extent to which individuals perceive themselves removed from the sights and sounds of human activity; 4) the degree to which visitors are regulated and controlled as well as the level of information and services provided for visitor enjoyment. With these considerations, unique areas featuring personal benefits may decrease for some people while increasing for others.

Through consultation with the Band, the Forest is successful at achieving some of the Bands or Band member's requests for protecting resources.

New Issues

The opportunity to work across landscapes and ownerships has presented a somewhat different picture of a range of forest settings within and adjacent to the Forest boundary. Collaborative planning for defined common goals that includes the DNR, County, Tribal, and private landowners may change forest settings and thus special areas over a larger connected landscape.

Recommendations

- The ROS inventory should be reviewed with each proposed project to inform the analysis and final decision. The Forest Plan recognizes different ROS settings within large management areas. Project induced changes influence unique areas associated with a variety of ROS settings.
- All lands management planning should continue to be implemented and refined over the short term to integrate forest management practices to achieve common goals.

Additional information can be found in the project file and is available upon request.