

# Chapter 1 – Understanding the Forest Plan

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### Purpose of the Forest Plan

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The 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan (2006 Forest Plan) provides strategic guidance for resource management activities on the Ottawa National Forest (the Ottawa). This direction applies to the National Forest System land only under Forest Service management. It establishes: Forestwide multiple-use goals and implementation objectives; Forestwide management requirements (known as Forestwide standards and guidelines); management area direction, including area-specific standards and guidelines, desired conditions and management practices; identification of lands suited/not suited for timber management and monitoring and evaluation requirements.

The 2006 Forest Plan provides management direction to ensure that ecosystems are capable of providing a sustainable flow of goods and services to the public. More specifically, it establishes:

- How the Ottawa will look if the 2006 Forest Plan is successfully implemented (goals);
- Measurable, planned results that contribute to reaching the desired conditions (objectives);
- Required actions designed to meet the desired conditions and objectives (standards);
- Preferable actions used to reach desired conditions and objectives (guidelines);
- Management direction that applies only to specific management areas;
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements; and,
- Designation of land as suited or not suited for timber production and other resource management activities.

Land use determinations, standards and guidelines constitute the 2006 Forest Plan's management direction; however, the actual outputs, services and rates of implementation are dependent on annual budgets from Congress.

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### Revising the 1986 Forest Plan

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The Ottawa began its formal revision process with the publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) on September 18, 2003. The revision process began with the 1986 Forest Plan and much of the management direction and format found there was carried over to the 2006 Forest Plan during the revision process. Direction contained in the 1986 Forest Plan and also addressed by Forest Service national directives are not repeated in the 2006 Forest Plan. Also, in an effort to make the 2006 Forest Plan more strategically focused, additional attention was given to describing desired forest conditions as opposed to product levels or procedural details.

Following the NOI, in response to public and management issues, an Interdisciplinary (ID) Team of resource specialists developed and analyzed four alternatives for management of the Ottawa. Alternative 3 was identified as the preferred alternative. The Proposed Forest Plan and Draft

Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) were made available for public review and comment in March, 2005.

The 2006 Forest Plan is based on modifications to the preferred alternative (Alternative 3-Modified) in response to public comment received on the Proposed Forest Plan and DEIS.

The Ottawa will complete regular monitoring and evaluation reports to determine if the 2006 Forest Plan provides effective resource management direction. Amendments to the 2006 Forest Plan can be made if warranted.

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## Relationship of the 2006 Forest Plan to Other Documents

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During Forest Plan revision, the Ottawa has been guided by the following laws and policies. This list is not all inclusive, but meant to provide an overview of some of the significant laws, policy, direction, and guiding documents that were used by ID Team during Forest Plan revision.

<b>1897 Organic Administration Act</b>	This Act authorized the creation of what is now the National Forest System (NFS). The law established forest reserves to improve and protect the forests within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States.
<b>1960 Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act</b>	In this Act, Congress again affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources which the Forest Service has responsibility. This Act confirms the authority to manage the national forests for outdoor recreation, timber, watershed and wildlife and fish purposes.
<b>1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act</b>	For the segments of rivers that have been designated or determined to be eligible for consideration as national wild, scenic or recreational rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Forest Service is required to provide for the protection of the river values. The 2006 Forest Plan addresses resource protection, development of land and facilities, public use and other management practices necessary or desirable to maintain the eligibility of the river segments.
<b>1973 National Environmental Policy Act</b>	This Act ensures that environmental information is made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and action is taken. This disclosure helps public officials make decisions that are based on an understanding of environmental and social consequences so that actions are taken to protect, restore, and enhance the environment. Essential to this process are accurate scientific analyses, expert agency input and public involvement – all of which have been part of this Forest Plan revision process. The 2006 Forest Plan has been analyzed and the potential effects have been disclosed in the accompanying FEIS.
<b>1973 Endangered Species Act</b>	One of the purposes of this Act is to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved. It requires federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species in consultation with the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service.

<b>1976 National Forest Management Act</b>	This Act requires that NFS lands be managed for a variety of uses on a sustained basis to ensure in perpetuity a continued supply of goods and services to the American people. The Act also established analytical and procedural requirements for developing, revising and amending Forest Plans.
<b>1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act</b>	This Act provides a process for museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items; human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony -- to lineal descendants, and culturally affiliated Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations.
<b>2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act</b>	This Act provides for new tools to be used to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire to communities, improve the commercial value of forest biomass, protect wetlands, gather information on insect and disease infestation, and restore our nation's forests.
<b>2005 USDA Forest Service Travel Management Rule</b>	This Rule (70 Federal Register 68264), dated November 9, 2005 (36 CFR Parts 212, 261 and 295) revised regulations regarding travel management on National Forest System lands to clarify policy related to motor vehicle use, including off-highway vehicles. The Travel Management Rule requires the Forest Service to designate a system of roads, trails and/or areas as open for motorized use, and prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated systems, except for over-the-snow vehicles.
<b>Forest Service Directives</b>	Management direction in the Forest Service Directive System, including the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH), is part of the 2006 Forest Plan management direction and is not repeated.
<b>Other Direction</b>	Management direction also includes applicable laws, regulations and policies, although they are not restated in the 2006 Forest Plan. Direction for managing NFS land comes from a variety of levels. National and regional direction includes laws, executive orders, regulations and Forest Service policy.
<b>Forest Service Treaty Obligations and Other Laws and Regulations of Tribal Importance</b>	<p><b>Forest Service Memorandum of Understanding with Tribes.</b> This document outlines the relationships of sovereign and federally recognized tribes of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians and of the Forest Service. The agreement establishes consistent standards by which the Forest Service and the Tribe interact across NFS lands within areas ceded in the treaties of 1836, 1837 and 1842. National Forests in the ceded territory include the Chequamegon-Nicolet in Wisconsin, the Ottawa and Hiawatha in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and the northern part of the Huron-Manistee in Lower Michigan.</p> <p><b>American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.</b> Protects and preserves for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions.</p> <p><b>1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act as amended 1988.</b> Provides protection of archaeological resources and sites, which are on public lands and Indian lands.</p>

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**Forest Service Treaty Obligations and Other Laws and Regulations of Tribal Importance**

**1966 Natural Historic Preservation Act as amended 1980 and 1992.** Established a program for preservation of historic properties throughout the nation. The National Register of Historic Places established regulations for the maintenance and expansion of this list are found at 36 CFR 60. This Act required the establishment of regulations to provide for curation of historical properties, the regulations are at 36 CFR 79. Further protection for archaeological resources is in 36 CFR 296.

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**Forest Service Treaty Obligations and Other Laws and Regulations of Tribal Importance**

**36 CFR 79.2.** Authority pursuant to section 101(a)(7)(A) of NHPA to ensure prehistoric and historic artifacts and associated records are cared for in approved facilities; and that exchange of items should be exchanged to suitable institutions (e.g., universities) subject to consent of applicable tribal governments.

**36 CFR 296.1.** Establishment of uniform definitions, standards and procedures to be followed by all federal land managers in providing protection, applicable permit authorizations and confidentiality of information pertaining to archaeological resources on public lands and Indian lands of the United States per regulations pursuant to the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1996.

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## The Forest

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### *Introduction and Brief History*

The Ottawa encompasses about one million acres within the western end of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The Ottawa is characterized by landscapes shaped by glaciers, which have provided a variety of landforms from hilly glacial moraine to outwash sand plains. Rock outcrops, hills and ranges from past geologic events have contributed to the ecological and scenic features of the Ottawa.

The Ottawa was largely created through the reforestation, financial assistance, and employment programs of the federal government during the Great Depression. The Ottawa was completely cut over between 1870 and 1920, followed by large, catastrophic wildfires. In 1929, there were extensive tracts of tax-delinquent land in each of the Lake States. The Forest Service acquired many of these clearcut, burned, and barren lands in cooperation with the states. With the advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), large forest nurseries were developed and pine plantations were established. Establishment of the CCC and location of many camps in the region vastly increased the rate of reforestation by providing essential labor, developing substantial forest nurseries and controlling wildfire. The result was to greatly accelerate renewal of the forest resource on what had been unproductive land.

Native Americans have used the lands that make up the Ottawa for thousands of years and treaties ensure their continued use. Treaty rights are exercised by Native American tribal members in various ways, such as hunting, fishing, cultural practices and gathering of forest

products. The Forest Service recognizes treaty rights as a matter of national policy and more locally on the Ottawa through a “Memorandum of Understanding” with sovereign and federally recognized tribes of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.

## ***The Ottawa Today***

The Ottawa has a remote solitude that is unique and unexpected for the Upper Midwest. Located a day’s drive away from Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago and other large, metropolitan areas, the Ottawa is a frequent destination for people craving a natural and peaceful experience. The overall population density in Michigan is 175 people per square mile, while the area encompassing the Ottawa is 25 or fewer people per square mile. The visitor gets an immediate perception of wildness/remoteness when entering the Ottawa and will experience miles of beautiful roadways with continuous natural scenery. Outstanding scenic beauty abounds in the Ottawa’s steep to level terrain, rock outcrops and ledges. Most spectacular is the northern hardwoods autumn color display.

The Ottawa is composed of predominantly northern hardwood tree species with associated plants and animals. Mixed stands of early successional (aspen/birch), and lowland and upland conifer trees are also common. Much of the forest cover is less than 100 years old and is rapidly maturing. More information about the Ottawa’s resources is provided in the following sections.

## ***Programs, Activities and Uses***

### **Providing Recreation Opportunities**

Visitors to the Ottawa are often surprised at the multitude and variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities on the Forest. The Ottawa offers a wide spectrum of camping experiences, hiking and other trails, and Scenic Byways. Hunting is also a major recreational activity on the Ottawa, with habitat for deer, black bear, and grouse.

The Ottawa provides a wide variety of canoeing, kayaking, and boating experiences along with high quality warm and cold water fishing opportunities. The Ottawa encompasses over 500 lakes, 2000 miles of fishable streams including 300 miles of designated and over 175 miles of study National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and access to Lake Superior at Black River Harbor. Restoring and maintaining water flow is a focus of forest management activities.

Portions of the Ottawa receive over 200 inches of snow annually. Referred to as “Big Snow Country,” the Ottawa attracts winter sports enthusiasts who enjoy alpine and nordic skiing, snowmobiling, dog-sledding, and ice fishing for several months of the year. There are over 450 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and numerous cross-country ski trails.

For those people seeking a more remote experience, the Ottawa is home to three unique and very different wildernesses. As the Ottawa’s appeal as a recreation destination has grown, forest managers are challenged to balance increased demand with protection of natural resources, conflicts between motorized and non-motorized use, and the need to maintain trails and recreational facilities.

## Providing Habitat for Wildlife, Plants, and Fish

The Ottawa land base lies in the transition between the northern boreal forests and eastern deciduous forests. A great diversity of species are supported in this environment, such as gray wolf, bald eagle, loon, bobcat, fisher, various species of trout, lake sturgeon, unique aquatic species, many kinds of ferns and flowering plants, etc. Some species are common; others are relatively rare and/or exist on the “edge” of their most southerly or northerly ranges. In recent years, new “non-native invasive species” such as glossy buckthorn, purple loosestrife, rusty crayfish and Eurasian watermilfoil, have appeared on the Ottawa, creating new management challenges.

## Forest Health, Restoration, and Use

Restoration of forest health occurs through the interplay of natural processes and management practices of forest managers. The Ottawa’s recovery from the turn-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century logging era is a function of this. Ninety percent of the Ottawa is forested. Factors that shape the Ottawa’s forest health programs include:

- a) the federal requirement to contribute to the viability of plant and animal species known to exist on the Ottawa;
- b) a strong local and regional economic demand for forest products;
- c) natural successional patterns of forest vegetation related to soils, seed sources, climate and other factors;
- d) numerous “overstocked”, dense forests in the aftermath of the logging era;
- e) demand for cultural and traditional products of the forest;
- f) increasing scientific knowledge about forested ecosystem function, structure and processes in the forests of the Upper Peninsula;
- g) fire management.

The Ottawa’s timber management program is the primary tool for restoring and providing a diverse range of sustainable habitats for many species, supporting forest restoration and health, and providing for traditional and cultural uses and wood fiber.

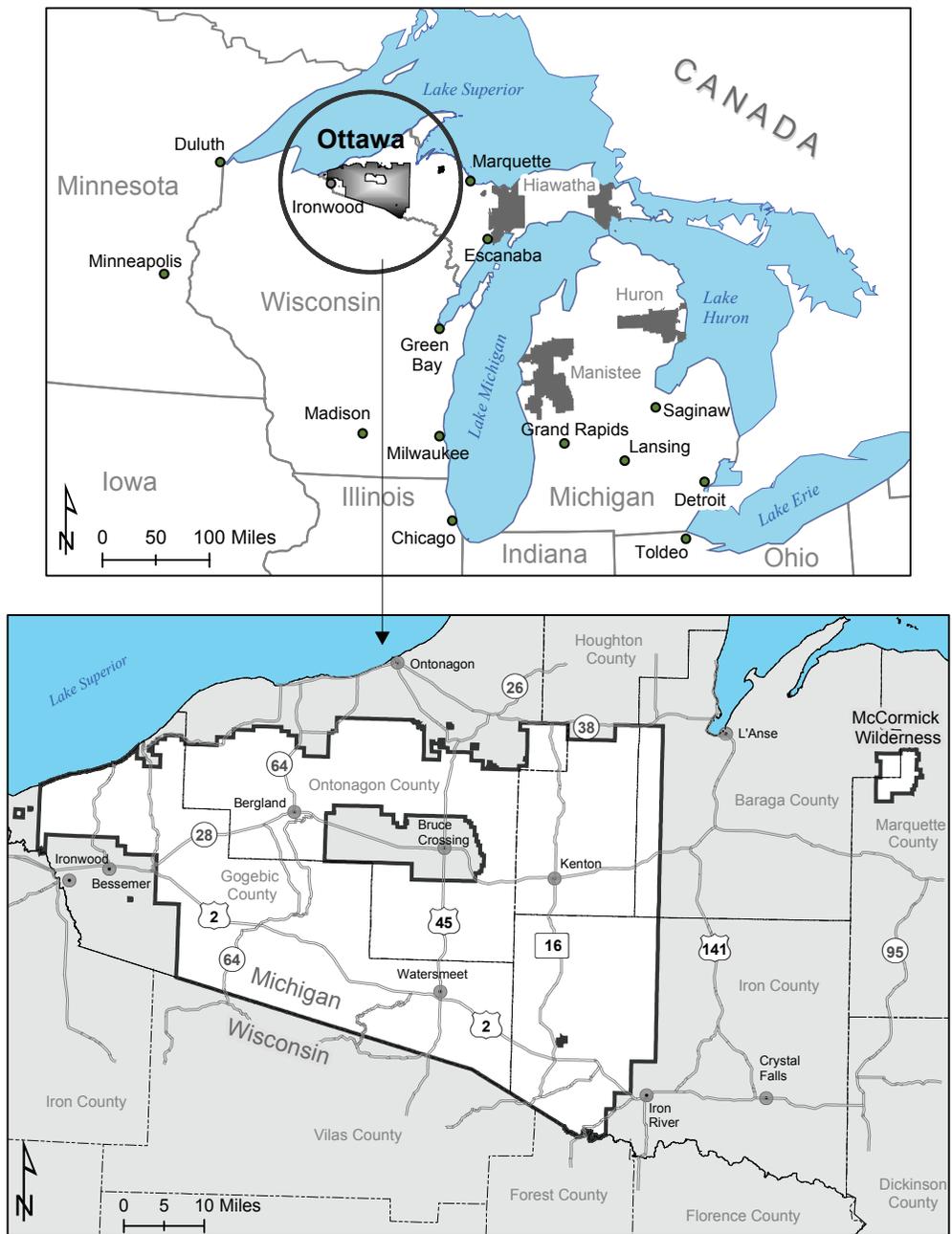
## Transportation System

The transportation system on the Ottawa provides access to the forest for visitors and communities for a diverse mix of uses. The federal government has jurisdiction of and manages approximately 60 percent of the land within the administrative boundary of the Ottawa. Because the Ottawa is managed for multiple uses, such as fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and timber products, most resources benefit from variety in road densities and standards. Since the Ottawa’s road system is already in place, the Ottawa is focusing efforts on maintenance and reconstruction to provide an adequate and affordable transportation system.

## **The Future**

In addition to the programs and challenges cited above, changing public values, increased need for goods and services and shrinking budgets create a challenging environment. An important goal is to maintain the unique and remote characteristics of the Ottawa National Forest that make it such a special place. Together with support and input from the public, local and state governments, Native American tribes, and other groups, the Ottawa can be managed in a sustainable manner that will contribute to the needs of the present and future generations.

Figure 1-1. Location Map, Ottawa National Forest



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## Implementing the 2006 Forest Plan

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The 2006 Forest Plan provides a framework and context that guides the Ottawa's day-to-day resource management operations. It is a strategic, programmatic document and does not make project-level decisions.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires that resource plans and permits, contracts and other instruments issued for the use and occupancy of NFS land be consistent with the Forest Plan (16 USC 1640(i)).

All outstanding and future contracts, cooperative agreements and other instruments for use and occupancy will be brought into conformance with the 2006 Forest Plan as soon as practical.

### ***Basic Management Principles***

A set of fundamental principles guides management on the Ottawa. Direction in the 2006 Forest Plan adds to and qualifies these basic principles.

<b>Principle 1</b>	The Forest Service will follow pertinent laws and regulations as well as policies in Forest Service Manuals that relate to managing National Forest System lands. In addition, numerous treaties and trust responsibilities, laws, regulations, and policies govern the use and protection of forest resources that may be of tribal interest or covered under tribal reserved rights. The 2006 Forest Plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources.
<b>Principle 2</b>	The Forest Service will coordinate management activities with the appropriate local or state governments as well as with other federal agencies.
<b>Principle 3</b>	The Forest Service will actively consult with tribal governments and collaborate with interested organizations, groups, and individuals.
<b>Principle 4</b>	The Forest Service will manage the Ottawa National Forest for multiple uses. The Ottawa is open for any legal public activity or management action, unless specially restricted in law, policy, or the 2006 Forest Plan. While allowed, such activities and actions may require administrative review and authorization before they are implemented.

### ***Tools and Techniques***

The Ottawa will reach its desired conditions for vegetation through natural ecological processes and by using a diverse range of management tools and techniques.

To the extent practical, timber management will seek to restore ecological structure, function, and processes (e.g., northern hardwood forest types), and will emulate naturally occurring disturbances (e.g., fire and windstorms). These management practices will include both even-aged and uneven-aged techniques, and harvesting methods that will create or maintain multi-aged and uneven-aged stands.

Prescribed fire will be used alone or with silvicultural treatments to mimic the effects of natural fire. Management-ignited fire and lightning-caused fire will help maintain, enhance and restore natural ecological processes.

The Ottawa will promote re-growth of harvested or other disturbed forests with a variety of regeneration practices. This includes tree planting, seeding and natural regeneration. Some areas will naturally change through succession.

The Ottawa will use environmentally sustainable management practices to provide commodity and non-commodity resources that contribute to the social and economic viability of local communities.

The Ottawa will provide recreation opportunities in a multiple-use setting by continuing to implement the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (refer to Appendix B of this document).

Ecological functions of watersheds and riparian areas will be enhanced or restored through improving road and trail crossings, decommissioning unneeded roads, and other appropriate activities. Silvicultural treatments or fire may be used to enhance shade, coarse woody debris recruitment or bank stability in riparian areas.

The Ottawa may create new roads and trails if needed or to respond to increased demand. The majority of these roads will be objective maintenance level (OML) 1 roads and/or temporary roads. They will generally be closed to vehicle use when they are no longer needed.

Working together with other land owners and interested groups, the Ottawa will develop a system of designated OHV trails and road routes consistent with the Travel Management Rule (USDA Forest Service 2005o). The majority of designations will be on existing objective maintenance level (OML) 1, 2 and/or 3 roads where conflicts with other user needs and resource protection issues are minimal.

### ***Site-Level Projects***

Implementing the 2006 Forest Plan means developing and implementing site-level forest management projects in order to reach the desired conditions established in the 2006 Forest Plan.

Project-level compliance with NFMA is primarily concerned with consistency with the 2006 Forest Plan and NFMA regulations.

Compliance with the NEPA involves the appropriate environmental analysis process for the specific proposal, proper documentation, and public disclosure of effects published in an environmental assessment, environmental impact statement, or in a categorical exclusion. When necessary, the Ottawa will perform environmental analysis on site-level projects and activities. An analysis file or project file is available for public review, but it is not always necessary to document the analysis in the form of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. In instances where an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is not needed, a decision memo may be prepared in accordance with NEPA procedures addressing categorical exclusions.

Resource inventories, action plans and schedules generally do not require additional environmental analysis and disclosure at the project level.

## **Budgets**

In great part, the ability to implement the 2006 Forest Plan (e.g., maintain roads, provide for timber products, provide for recreation opportunities, etc.) is tied to the amount of funding the Ottawa receives as part of the Forest Service national and Eastern Region budgets. In addition, the size of some of the programs and production levels are linked to the estimated need or demand for products and services for a particular year.

The Ottawa's budget is the product of a two-year process mostly carried out at the national level, culminating in an appropriation act developed by the Congress and signed by the President. The size and focus of the entire Forest Service budget is based on national priorities, and is broken down into specific program areas (e.g., recreation, timber) called "budget line items". Through the Eastern Region Office, the Ottawa receives a mixture of funds in different budget line items.

Upon receipt of its final budget, the Ottawa annually prepares an implementation budget. This budget is a result of program development, annual work planning, and monitoring processes. These processes supplement the 2006 Forest Plan and make the annual adjustments and changes needed to reflect current priorities within the overall management direction contained in the 2006 Forest Plan.

## **Forest Plan Amendments**

Most proposed activities will be consistent with direction in the 2006 Forest Plan. When site-specific management actions are found to be inconsistent with 2006 Forest Plan direction, either the 2006 Forest Plan itself or the proposal must be adjusted according to the analysis. Adjusting the 2006 Forest Plan requires an amendment. The need to amend management direction may result from:

- Changes in physical, biological, social or economic conditions;
- Recommendations based on the results of monitoring and evaluation;
- Determination by the Forest Supervisor that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but not consistent with elements of the 2006 Forest Plan management direction;
- Errors in planning found during implementation. Conflicts may be identified between different sections of management direction (e.g., there could be discrepancies in the preferred alternative map and the narrative description of the preferred alternative). The 2006 Forest Plan does not prioritize management direction; therefore a discrepancy would need to be resolved by determining the management intent using a variety of information, such as the planning record, FEIS and the 2006 Forest Plan. Minor technical errors may be corrected via errata and may not require a Forest Plan amendment.

The Forest Supervisor will determine whether proposed changes to the 2006 Forest Plan are significant or non-significant.