

Preface

Understanding the Forest Plan



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**Chequamegon-Nicolet
National Forests**



Preface

Understanding the Forest Plan

Purpose of the Forest Plan

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests' Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) was prepared in accordance with the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 as amended by the 1976 National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and other laws and associated regulations. This is a revision and combination of the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans released in 1986.

The Forest Plan provides guidance for all resource management activities on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. It establishes: forestwide multiple-use goals and implementing objectives; forestwide management requirements (known as Forestwide Standards and Guidelines); Management Area direction, including area-specific standards and guidelines, desired future conditions and management practices; identification of lands suited/not suited for timber management; monitoring and evaluation requirements, and recommendations to Congress for additional Wilderness.

Relationship of the Forest Plan to Other Documents

The planning process and analysis procedures used to develop the 2004 Forest Plan are described in Appendix B of the accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). Several alternatives were developed as the Forest Plans were revised, in accordance with NFMA and NEPA. The Forest Plan represents the Selected Alternative, a modification of Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative in DEIS) and is called the Selected Alternative in the FEIS. An extensive analysis of the alternatives is described in the FEIS. Site-specific project environmental analyses that implement the Forest Plan will be tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). That is, the broader analysis and conclusions from the Final EIS for the Selected Alternative can be used as a starting point for site-specific project planning. Each project's environmental effects analysis document will incorporate, by reference, the information found in the Final EIS without the need to repeat it.

A Reader's Guide to the Forest Plan

The Forest Plan is organized as follows:

- Preface
- Chapter 1: Forestwide Goals and Objectives
- Chapter 2: Forestwide Standards and Guidelines
- Chapter 3: Management Area Direction
- Chapter 4: Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy
- Appendices
- Maps

Chapter 1—Forestwide Goals and Objectives

Provides overall management direction for the Forest. **Goals** describe desired future conditions and are normally expressed in general terms. Forest Plan goals link broad agency goals as set forth in law, executive orders, regulations, agency directives, and the Resources Planning Act (RPA) program. Achievement of goals is not mandatory, and there is no established timeframe for accomplishment. **Objectives** are statements of measurable desired results intended to promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals. Objectives include, for the next planning decade (or longer): (1) desired resource conditions within the planning area; and (2) desired goods and services that the planning area is expected to produce.

Chapter 2—Forestwide Standards and Guidelines

Provides resource management direction and guidance that is applicable (for the most part) across the Forests. **Standards** are required courses of action or levels of attainment that promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals and objectives. Standards are developed when: (1) unacceptable impacts are expected (without the standard); (2) they are critical to Forest Plan objectives; and/or (3) laws or policies do not address a proposed course of action, or when they need further clarification. Standards are mandatory. A Forest Plan amendment is required if proposed management would deviate from an established standard. **Guidelines** are also required courses of action or levels of attainment that promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals and objectives, but they can be adjusted or modified if site-specific project conditions warrant a deviation. Guidelines are developed when: (1) professional expertise is needed to address resource management questions; (2) site conditions are variable; and (3) they contribute to the achievement of goals. A project-level analysis and a signed decision (by the responsible official) are required if proposed management activities would deviate from an established guideline.

Management direction in the Forest Service Directive System, including the Forest Service Manual (FSM), and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH) is part of forest plan management direction and is not repeated in the Forest Plan document. Management Direction also includes applicable laws, regulations and policies, although they are not necessarily restated in the plan. Appendix AA lists major relevant statutes and regulations.

Chapter 3—Management Area Direction

Provides direction that applies to individual Forest Management Areas (see Management Area Maps). The following items, together, comprise each management area prescription:

- Theme
- Landscape Description
 - ✓ Desired Future Condition
 - ✓ Landscape Composition and Structure
 - ✓ Site Level Composition and Structure
 - ✓ Disturbance Regime
- Management Area Standards and Guidelines

Chapter 4—Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Provides a strategy for answering three monitoring questions:

- Is Forest Plan direction being put into action?
- Is the direction included in the Plan effective?
- Were our assumptions valid when we prepared Forest Plan direction?

Based on monitoring activities answering those questions, amendments to the Forest Plan will be completed to adapt Plan direction to new information and changed conditions. Forest Plan goals and objectives are used to develop specific monitoring questions, which in turn, will be used to develop annual forestwide monitoring plans in the future.

Appendices

The following appendices are included with the Forest Plan:

- Appendix AA Relevant Federal and State Statutes, Regulations, Policy, Plans, and Agreements
- Appendix BB Guide for Reducing Open and Total Road Density
- Appendix CC Sites with Engineered Cover Containment Systems
- Appendix DD Selected Trout Streams
- Appendix EE Glossary of Terms
- Appendix FF Stocking Level Charts
- Appendix GG Product/Species Outputs for Five Decades
- Appendix HH High and Moderate Scenic Integrity Objective Areas
- Appendix II Management Indicator Species and Habitats

Maps

Maps for the Selected Alternative, as well as maps that provide information about other alternatives are included within a map packet. Management Area allocation in the Selected Alternative is displayed on identical maps, but at two scales and titled “Management Areas.” One smaller scale map is 11”x17”in size and the larger scale map is a set of three 30” x 40”maps that cover the Forests. An additional Selected Alternative map titled “Road Density” displays maximum open road density zones, and is included in the bound set of 11”x17” maps.

Management Area allocation in Alternatives 1-9 is displayed differently using two maps, both at the smaller scale. One map is called the “Vegetative Management Emphasis Map” and the other is titled, “Recreation Management Emphasis, Open Road Density, and Special Land Allocation Map.” The first displays locations of Management Area (MA) polygons that correlate with MAs 1 through 4, 8A, 8B, 8C, and 8D. The second map highlights locations of MAs 5, 5B, 6A, 6B, 8E, 8F, 8G and open road density zones.

An All-terrain Vehicle (ATV), Resource Suitability Map is also included in the Map Packet. This map is referenced in Forestwide Standards and Guidelines, and serves as a guide to managers in selecting locations for development of new ATV trails.

Finally, a Scenic Integrity Map is included, and is referenced within some Forestwide Standards and Guidelines. Roads, trails, and rivers with High and Moderate Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO) are shown as well as recreation sites and larger lakes.

