

Chapter 1

Goals and Objectives



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**Chequamegon-Nicolet
National Forests**



Chapter 1

Forestwide Goals and Objectives

Introduction

Chapter 1 of this document provides Forestwide direction, in the form of goals and objectives, for managing the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. Chapters 2 and 3 provide standards and guidelines and Management Area prescriptions as a means of meeting goals and objectives.

Additional direction for the Forests is cited in Appendix AA, such as federal and state statutes and regulations, Forest Service policies, and agreements with other agencies or organizations.

In 1993, Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) that strives to increase the accountability of federal agencies by measuring progress toward and achievement of agency goals and objectives. This legislation, applicable to all federal agencies, requires the preparation of periodic strategic plans and annual performance plans, both of which are focused on outcomes and results.

In 2000, the Forest Service issued the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision) that states broad long-term goals for the Forest Service, and shares the agency's mission: "The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations." The goals and objectives in the revised forest plan are based on the stated mission of the Forest Service, and the goals shared within the GPRA Strategic Plan.

Forest goals are broad statements describing conditions the forests will strive to achieve. They are not amenable to direct measurement and there are no specific time frames for achieving them. In other words, goals describe the ends to be achieved rather than the means to these ends.

Forest objectives are time-specific statements of planned results or outcomes responding to established goals. Objectives generally are achieved by implementing projects or activities. Objectives shared below either have a stated timeframe for accomplishment or they will be accomplished during the life of the plan (10-15 years).

Managers will use forestwide goals and objectives as a means of measuring progress while implementing the revised land and resource management plan. Information gained from comparing actual implemented progress against these elements of the Forests' long-term vision, through monitoring and evaluation, will be used to determine future management needs and resources to be used in achieving the goals.

The 1982 Planning Regulations require that the Forest Plan establish objectives for the maintenance and improvement of habitat for management indicator species (36 CFR 219.19(a)). The revised Plan includes 11 Management Indicators (seven species and four communities). Of the seven species, five (gray wolf, bald eagle, American marten,

northern goshawk, and red-shouldered hawk) are either Regional Forester Sensitive Species or Federally listed Threatened or Endangered species. As such, Goal 1.1 and associated Objectives 1.1 a and b provide direction for the maintenance and improvement of their habitats. Goals 1.3 and 1.5 and the associated Objectives 1.3a, b, d, e, and g, as well as 1.5a provide direction for the improvement of habitat for the management indicator species, brook trout, along with a wide array of other aquatic species. Goal 1.4 and the associated Objectives 1.4a, e, f, and n provide direction for the improvement of habitat for Canada yew (a Management Indicator Species).

Restoration of three of the four Management Indicator Communities (Mature Northern Hardwood Interior Forest, Pine Barrens, and Mature Natural Red Pine and White Pine Forest) is directed by the objectives under Goal 1.4. These objectives emphasize the restoration of natural disturbance regimes, structural and compositional features, and other characteristics that are currently underrepresented on the Forest.

The remaining Management Indicator Community (Regenerating Aspen Forest) is not rare on the Forest but the high degree of public concern over the abundance of this forest type and the species associated with it warrant Management Indicator status. The Regenerating Aspen Forest community type is decreasing statewide and is projected to decrease slightly on the Forest under the first decade of implementation of this Forest Plan. However, the model used to project the coverage of Regenerating Aspen Forest did not incorporate estimates of the creation of this community type through natural processes (blowdown, fire, disease outbreak etc.) and, consequently, the projected decrease is likely to represent the maximum decrease that may result. Goal 1.4 calls for a wide range of diverse ecological conditions, which includes Regenerating Aspen Forest. The allocation to MA 1A, 1B, and 1C; the associated prescriptions; and the inclusion of a component of early successional forest types within other Management Areas provide for the maintenance of aspen communities on the Forests.

Goal 1 – Ensure Healthy and Sustainable Ecosystems

Goal 1.1 – Endangered, Threatened, and Sensitive Species

Conserve or restore populations of endangered, threatened, and sensitive species.

Objective 1.1a – Under the Endangered Species Act, implement established recovery or conservation strategies.

Objective 1.1b – Improve habitat conditions for Regional Forester Sensitive Species.

Goal 1.2 – Ecological Communities of Special Concern

Protect ecological communities of special concern that represent the best examples of those found naturally within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests.

Objective 1.2 – Conserve special environmental, cultural, social, and/or scientific values in protected areas including Wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, research natural areas, special management areas and old growth areas.

Goal 1.3 – Aquatic Ecosystems

Provide for ecologically healthy streams, riparian areas, lakes, and wetlands, including a decline in the occurrence of exotics such as carp, zebra mussel, rusty crayfish, Eurasian milfoil, and purple loosestrife.

Objective 1.3a – Reduce the number of road and trail stream crossings. Reduce sedimentation and improve fish passage in existing road and trail stream crossings.

Objective 1.3b – Reduce, and strive to eliminate, off-road and off-trail motorized vehicle use within wetlands, meadows, or riparian areas.

Objective 1.3c – Restore large woody debris by annually treating some lakes with tree drops and/or cribs. Consult with the Native American Tribes when proposing this treatment on lakes where spear fishing occurs.

Objective 1.3d – Relocate some existing roads and trails out of Riparian Management Zones. Where relocation is not feasible, reconstruct road and trail segments as needed to minimize erosion, sedimentation, and hydrologic impacts.

Objective 1.3e—Improve or restore aquatic/riparian habitat in streams and lakes.

Objective 1.3f – Apply lime to lakes that have suffered unnatural pH changes to improve productivity or make pH suitable for native or desirable non-native aquatic species.

Objective 1.3g – Protect and restore coldwater stream communities by maintaining Class I, Class II, and segments of Class III trout streams and their tributaries in a free-flowing condition.

Objective 1.3h – Maintain and/or enhance the quantity and ecological health of wild rice beds.

Goal 1.4 – Terrestrial Ecosystems

Provide terrestrial ecosystems in healthy, diverse, and productive conditions that support the diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species, and have a high likelihood of supporting the viability of native and desired non-native vertebrates and vascular plants well distributed in their ranges within the planning area over time.

Objective 1.4a – Maintain or restore vegetative communities to their desired conditions described in Chapter 3 emphasizing MA's 2B, 4B, and 8C.

Objective 1.4b – Restore and/or emulate natural disturbance regimes in Pine Barrens.

Objective 1.4c – Restore and/or emulate natural disturbance regimes historically present within pine communities.

Objective 1.4d – Maintain existing dwarf bilberry (*Vaccinium cespitosum*) populations by discouraging encroachment of woody vegetation and overgrowth by grasses and forbs; and by retaining and expanding existing small openings where bilberry populations exist.

Objective 1.4e – Increase average vegetative patch size.

Objective 1.4f – Permit some early successional forests to succeed naturally toward late successional forest types, as well as meeting desired conditions within designated Old Growth areas (MA 8G).

Objective 1.4g – Annually treat non-roadside and roadside NNIS acres. Develop an NNIS strategy to guide amounts and locations of treatments.

Objective 1.4h – Increase use of prescribed fire as a management tool within fire-adapted Land Type Associations. Reintroduce fire as a disturbance process within RNAs where establishment record allows.

Objective 1.4i – When large disturbance events (over 100 acres) occur within forested areas, maintain a portion of damaged vegetation to provide additional site level structure and coarse woody debris.

Objective 1.4j – Increase the long-lived conifer component in transition zones between upland and lowland. This may include but is not limited to identifying existing patches of long-lived conifer as reserve areas, planting white pine or hemlock, or protecting desired conifer regeneration from deer browsing.

Objective 1.4k – Increase the quantity of boreal forest on the Ashland Lake-Modified Till Plan (LTA YA03) emphasizing mature and older age classes and large patch sizes.

Objective 1.4l – Maintain and enhance existing pockets of barrens and oak savanna habitat and restore characteristics described in the desired future condition for Management Area 8C. Treat these areas as inclusions within other Management Areas.

Objective 1.4m – Increase aspen clearcut average patch size toward 25 acres, excluding ruffed grouse management areas.

Objective 1.4n – Restore Canada Yew within Northern Hardwoods ecosystem in Management Area 2B where feasible.

Goal 1.5 – Wildlife and Fish Habitat

Conserve habitat capable of supporting viable populations of existing native and desired non-native species, and retain the integrity and function of key habitat areas.

Objective 1.5a – Retain potential nest trees by reserving super-canopy pines within one-half mile of lakes larger than 10 acres that sustain a fishery desired by ospreys.

Objective 1.5b – Cooperate with the Wisconsin DNR to establish a population and distribution of beaver across the forest that provides naturally occurring disturbances, through flooding and direct impacts on vegetation, important to ecosystem sustainability. Juxtapose this population and distribution on the landscape in a manner that avoids detrimental effects on roads, trails, and other critical resources such as cold-water fisheries and rare species.

Goal 1.6 – Air Quality

Forest ecosystems are not adversely affected by air pollution, and forest management activities are conducted to protect or maintain air quality.

Goal 1.7 – Soils

Provide desired physical, chemical, and biological soil processes and functions on the Forests to maintain and/or improve soil productivity.

Goal 2 – Provide Multiple Benefits for People within the Capability of Sustainable Ecosystems

Goal 2.1 – Recreation Opportunities

Maintain or enhance the diversity and quality of recreation experiences within acceptable limits of change to ecosystem stability and condition.

Objective 2.1a – Improve the quality of Semi-Primitive Non-motorized Areas by increasing the opportunity for quiet and remote experiences and by promoting activities that provide natural-appearing vegetation.

Objective 2.1b – Within each MA 6B area (polygon), generally complete the harvesting planned for the decade during a consecutive 3-year period.

Objective 2.1c – Reduce, and strive to eliminate, unacceptable changes in resource conditions due to off-road, off-trail motorized use.

Objective 2.1d – Construct up to 85 miles of ATV trails on the Nicolet National Forest.

Objective 2.1e – Construct up to 100 miles of ATV trails on the Chequamegon National Forest.

Objective 2.1f – On the Nicolet, in collaboration with local governments, provide opportunities to enhance existing town-designated ATV routes by designating specific existing classified roads.

Objective 2.1g – On the Chequamegon, designate and sign all classified roads as ATV routes except: 1) on roads where the Forest does not have the authority to designate as ATV routes; and 2) in instances where the local Ranger District identifies and closes specific routes for management issues such as safety, resource degradation, local government concerns, or recreation use conflict.

Objective 2.1h – Close and rehabilitate one ATV “intensive use area.”

Objective 2.1i – Provide well-maintained developed campgrounds that meet Forest Service guidelines.

Objective 2.1j – Inventory and manage remote campsites to minimize environmental impacts of recreation use.

Objective 2.1k – Close unsurfaced primitive access roads to some lakes to provide a more primitive recreation experience. Emphasize lakes with documented RFSS sites.

Objective 2.1l – If maintenance methods prove ineffective and monitoring confirms unsafe conditions or unacceptable resource damage, close and rehabilitate the existing 25-mile 4-wheel-drive off road vehicle trail. Then construct one replacement trail up to 25 miles in length elsewhere on the forest, providing an agreement with a non-Forest Service entity is developed to do trail condition monitoring and maintenance.

Goal 2.2 – Scenic Values

Maintain or enhance the quality of scenic resources to provide desired landscape character.

Goal 2.3 – Wilderness Opportunities

Provide opportunities for recreational, aesthetic, and educational experiences within Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas that are consistent with the values of those areas.

Objective 2.3 – If opportunities arise, and in cooperation with local governments, allow decommissioning of roads that divide Wilderness Areas or occur between Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas to improve the Wilderness experience.

Goal 2.4 – Heritage Resources

Manage cultural heritage to provide future generations an opportunity to appreciate and experience the Forests’ diversity of human history, American heritage, and the delicate ecological relationship between people and the land.

Objective 2.4a – Promote the annual scientific study of a selected heritage resource, primarily through public participation and institutional/governmental partnerships.

Objective 2.4b – Consult with tribal governments, institutions, and other interested parties to ensure the protection and preservation of areas, objects and records that are culturally important to them.

Objective 2.4c – Conduct heritage resource scientific studies to provide an improved understanding of human adaptation and influences on the landscape, and important information for NEPA analysis.

Objective 2.4d – Increase awareness and appreciation of our cultural heritage through Forest public education programs such as “Passport in Time,” university–sponsored archeology field schools, public presentations, etc.

Goal 2.5 – Forest Commodities

Contribute toward satisfying demand for wood products and special forest products through environmentally responsible harvest on National Forest System lands.

Objective 2.5 – Ensure that harvest levels of special forest products are within sustainable levels.

Goal 2.6 – Mineral and Energy Resources

Contribute toward satisfying demand for mineral and energy resources through environmentally sound responsible development on National Forest System lands.

Objective 2.6 – Ensure that reclamation provisions and environmental protection measures of operating plans and surface use plans of operation are completed to standard in field operations.

Goal 2.7 – Wildlife and Fish Resource Use

Conserve habitat capable of supporting state population objectives for appropriate wildlife and fish species.

Objective 2.7 – Cooperate with the Wisconsin and Michigan Departments of Natural Resources on achieving desired wildlife and fish population goals through appropriate habitat management on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. Strive to maintain a deer herd in balance with its range and compatible with existing social, economic, and ecological conditions.

Goal 2.8 – Fire Management

Safely implement the Fire and Fuels Management Program within the Forest Service Protection area of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. Forest Plan implementation will take into consideration all aspects of the fire and fuels program to include, but not be limited to, fire suppression, urban interface, fuels reduction, aviation, community assistance, and ecological rehabilitation and restoration.

Objective 2.8a – The safety of employees and the public is the highest priority during any fire or fuels management incident.

Objective 2.8b – Expedite safe extinguishments of wildfires by the use of ground and/or air resources.

Objective 2.8c – Reduce hazardous fuels within communities at risk, in cooperation with local, federal, and State agencies.

Objective 2.8d – Apply fire management as part of natural ecological disturbance regime.

Goal 2.9 – Treaty Rights

Honor the U.S. Government trust responsibility and treaty obligations towards Indian tribes within a government to government relationship.

Objective 2.9 – Nothing in this plan or its implementation is intended to modify, abrogate, or otherwise adversely affect tribal reserved or treaty guaranteed rights applicable within the CNNF.

Goal 3 – Ensure Effective Public Service through Organizational Effectiveness

Goal 3.1 – Capital Infrastructure

Build and maintain safe, efficient, and effective infrastructure that supports public and administrative uses of National Forest System lands. Retain and progress toward the Forestwide average total road density goal of 3.0 miles per square mile established in 1986.

Objective 3.1 – Reduce average open and total road density on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. Use Appendix BB, “Guide for Reducing Open and Total Road Density” and Road Density Map in Map Packet to focus efforts.

Goal 3.2 – Landownership

Consolidate land ownership patterns to facilitate restoration, protection, and management.

Objective 3.2 – Convey, purchase or exchange lands where needed, and on a willing buyer and willing seller basis. High priority areas for acquisition include those lands, that:

- Protect Threatened, Endangered, or Regional Forester Sensitive species
- Consolidate federal ownership within Wilderness
- Increase in public ownership on lakes and rivers
- Provide unique ecological, scientific, heritage, or recreational qualities and
- Consolidate land ownership for efficient resource management purposes.

Goal 3.3 – Public and Organizational Relations

Cooperate with individuals and organizations, and local, state, tribal, and federal governments to promote ecosystem health and sustainability across landscapes.

Objective 3.3a – Consult with Tribes and intertribal agencies during decision-making processes. Consider effects of natural resource management decisions on the ability of tribes to exercise gathering rights. Site-specific project analyses address how project proposals protect or impact the ability of tribes to exercise gathering rights.

Objective 3.3b – Through partnerships, encourage, establish, and sustain a diverse and well-balanced range of recreational services and facilities on the Forests.

Objective 3.3c – Cooperatively work with federal, state, county agencies and other non-governmental organizations for control of non-native invasive species.

Objective 3.3d – Cooperatively work with federal, state, and county agencies and non-governmental organizations to integrate fire prevention programs and suppression resources. Cooperatively work across agencies and organizations to develop and implement hazardous fuels reduction projects that will reduce the risk of wildfire.

Objective 3.4e – Work collaboratively with other agencies and the public to protect and restore watersheds. Conduct assessments of all 5th level watersheds with more than 25% federal ownership.

Objective 3.3f: – Collaborate with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the collection and dissemination of information indicating the possible presence of Canada Lynx and Kirtland's Warbler.