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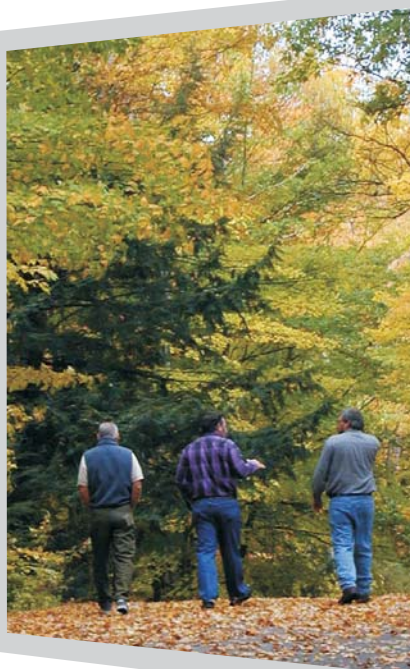
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests

Record of Decision

Final Environmental Impact Statement

*To accompany the 2004 Land and
Resource Management Plan*

A Century of Restoration



for a New Century of Generations

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Final Environmental Impact Statement



Record of Decision

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Price, Sawyer, Taylor, and Vilas Counties, Wisconsin**

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Preface

This Record of Decision (ROD) formally presents my decision to approve a modification of Alternative 5 as the Selected Alternative for the revised Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The ROD also explains my reasons for the changes made to the 1986 Plans.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests are ideal examples of forest restoration that followed broad scale timber harvesting of northern Wisconsin in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Early in the 20th century these lands were viewed as future sources of clean and plentiful water from the headwaters of many Wisconsin rivers as well as future sources of timber that could support local, state, and national demand for wood products. As the 20th century progressed, the northern federal forests were restored under the stewardship of the U.S. Forest Service, and the vitality of these forests caused people to view these lands as a rich source of outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, hiking, motorized sight-seeing, and off-road travel. As leisure time has increased for the nation's citizens, so has the value of forest recreation opportunities. Americans are also concerned for the overall ecological health of the nation's forests. These concerns are manifested in laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act, and the National Forest Management Act. These laws not only demonstrate the scope of the interest in forest health, but also in the continued perspective of managing these lands under the concept of multiple-use.

The ecological and socioeconomic condition of these Forests is not static, and neither is the public's vision of the highest and best use of these local natural resources. The intent of my decision is to support continued restoration of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests using the best science available, and to concurrently provide a wide array of sustainable goods and services. The specific elements of the management direction provided in the Forest Plan need to be, and will be, subject to periodic and timely change as new information comes to light and as the public demonstrates a desire for a changed focus in management. Amendments to the Forest Plan will be proposed when the need for change is evident; the response to this need will be developed in collaboration with the public.

My decision strikes a balance among competing interests, opinions and beliefs expressed by local governments and businesses, as well as local, regional, and national interest groups, scientists, and the general public. The process of developing a revised Forest Plan has been painstaking and lengthy. Nearly 10 years has passed since the Forests began the need for change in 1994. In 1996, the Notice of Intent to revise the 1986 Plans was published. Collaboration and consultation has occurred during the past seven years with local counties, Wisconsin state agencies, local Native American tribes, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Years of collaborative efforts with the general public provided information and insights into public values and needs. The results of this effort are, to a great degree, based on the outcomes of these years of interactions with you, and with your representative government agencies searching for balanced management direction and vision for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests.

I believe you and I have crafted a Forest Plan that is well balanced, in terms of the goods and services to be offered from these Forests during the next ten to fifteen years. I also believe this Plan provides a strong foundation for ecological and socioeconomic sustainability over the long-term. The work is not done, because it will take our efforts of monitoring, reviewing, and developing new information to ensure this Plan is current. Changing public needs and values will also play a role to ensure this Plan provides the goods and services that people want. Thank you for your support, participation, and patience throughout this process, and thank you in advance for your continued partnership in keeping the Forest Plan fresh and relevant into the future.

RANDY MOORE

Regional Forester

Eastern Region, USDA – Forest Service

