USDA United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Huron-Manistee National Forests | 1755 South Mitchell St. Cadillac, MI 49601 231-775-2421 (voice) 231-775-5551 (fax) 231-775-3183 (TTY)

File Code: 1920, 2600
Date: August 23, 2011

Dear Stakeholder,

Enclosed you will find the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to the 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. This document was developed at the direction of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. In a ruling issued September 29, 2010, the appeals court found that the Forest Service had not adequately analyzed certain issues when the agency revised the 2006 Forest Plan. Specifically, the appeals court found that:

1. The Forest Service's estimates of snowmobile and cross-country visitors to the Forests were arbitrary,
2. The Forest Service did not coordinate its recreation planning with the State of Michigan, as required, to reduce duplication in recreation demands with respect to gun hunting and snowmobiling,
3. The Forest Service's reasons for keeping certain trails open to snowmobile use were arbitrary, and
4. The Forest Service violated the National Environmental Policy Act when it failed to consider closing Primitive and Semiprimitive Nonmotorized areas to gun hunting and snowmobile use.

On December 28, 2010, the Forest Service published a Notice of Intent to prepare this document in order to address these deficiencies. During a 45-day comment period, the Forest Service received 9,127 comments. Based on those comments, the Forest Service prepared 98 comment summary statements which were representative of the public's concerns. The agency then identified the three primary issues which the analysis would need to address. Initially 10 alternatives were developed to address these issues; however, six were dropped from further consideration for reasons which are described in Chapter 2 of the DSEIS.
Four alternatives were studied in more detailed analysis. They are:

Alternative 1: the No Action Alternative (the 2006 Forest Plan would remain unchanged);

Alternative 2: the proposed action (The Forest Service would ban firearm hunting and snowmobile use in some portion of the 13 existing Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Areas and the Primitive Area, subject to existing rights);

Alternative 3: change Management Area (MA) designation of the 14 affected areas to match the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum class inventory and;

Alternative 4: change MA designation of 11 of the 14 affected areas to Special Areas and manage to provide a less roaded recreation experience, change the designation of 2 of the affected areas to roaded natural, and maintain the current designation of the Primitive Area. (The preferred alternative.)

The effects of each of these alternatives are fully identified in Chapter 3 of the DSEIS. In addition, the Forest Service completed the enclosed Recreation Supply and Demand Analysis to address specific deficiencies identified by the court.

A Notice of Availability will be published in the Federal Register after this document has been distributed to the public. That Notice of Availability will begin a three-month comment period. The Forest Service will notify the public when the Notice of Availability is published through news releases, legal notices and Internet postings.

Send Comments to: Huron-Manistee National Forests
1755 South Mitchell Street
Cadillac, MI 49601
fax: 231–775–5551.

Send Electronic Comments to: comments-eastern-huron-manistee@fs.fed.us . Comments sent via e-mail should contain the subject line: "Forest Plan SEIS"

If you have questions regarding the DSEIS or the Recreation Supply and Demand Analysis, you may contact my public affairs officer, Kenneth Arbogast, at (231) 775-5023, Ext. 8726 or karbogast@fs.fed.us

Sincerely,

BARRY PAULSON
Forest Supervisor