

**DECISION MEMO**  
USDA FOREST SERVICE

**Highway W Gravel Pit Expansion**  
Lakewood-Laona Ranger District  
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest  
Oconto County, Wisconsin

**DECISION**

I have decided to implement Highway W Gravel Pit Expansion Project, as identified below, and on the attached map. This project is located in the Township 31 North, Range 16 East, Sections 7 and 18, Oconto County, Wisconsin.

**REASONS FOR THE DECISION**

***Proposed Action:***

The Forest Service proposes to authorize the expansion of the existing gravel pit source. The table below shows the estimated existing, proposed, and total gravel pit expansion acres.

Pit Name & ID number	Existing acres	Expansion acres	Total Developed acres
Highway W Pit	3.0	5.0	8.0

The existing pit acres would be expanded over the next 10 years up to the total developed acres. This project includes the removal of 5 acres of trees; the removal and stock piling of tree stumps and other organic material; and topsoil for future use in reclamation of these gravel sources. Raw sand and gravel would be excavated from the expansion acres and the pit floors for use as pit run, riprap, or crushed gravel and stockpiled for local road maintenance, timber sales, and other needs. After excavation and crushing operations are completed, reclamation and revegetation of excavated and disturbed area would be completed for safety, site stabilization of exposed soil, and storm water runoff control. The gravel pit site location and proposed pit expansion area are shown on the attached map.

**Design Features**

- Washing equipment before entering FS lands and when leaving infested areas will help reduce the spread of non-native invasive species
- Make sure all topsoil is saved and stockpiled on site to ensure an adequate restoration process can occur once the pit is ready for reclamation.
- Follow Wisconsin forestry best management practices (BMP's) for water quality: field manual for loggers, landowners, and land managers (Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 2010) for working in wetlands.

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- In the event that previously unreported cultural resources are encountered during ground disturbing activities, all work must immediately cease within 30 meters and Forest archaeological staff shall be notified.
- If human remains are encountered during ground-disturbing activities all work must immediately cease.
- Snowmobile trail will need to be temporarily closed and re-established when the pit is intermittently expanded over time.
- All commercial timber needs to be removed from the pit expansion area.

### ***Purpose and Need:***

Currently the supply of sand and gravel is running low. The desired condition is to keep a supply of these materials. The Lakewood-Laona District has identified a need to expand the gravel pit from the existing 3 acres of developed gravel source up to a total of 8 acres of developed gravel source over the next 10 years for the purpose of excavation of sand and gravel.

Sand and gravel are an important resource for the maintenance of National Forest infrastructure. Forest road maintenance is often accomplished in cooperation with local cooperators to maintain the local road infrastructure. Maintenance of the Forest road systems and trail systems are the primary uses of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest sand and gravel resource, but other uses such as rip-rap for aquatic habitat enhancement, erosion control, or sand and gravel material for recreation projects, and timber sale road spurs are additional potential uses.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet Land and Resource Management Plan (forest plan) of 2004 provides the following direction:

- Forest Plan Goal 2.6 provides for development of mineral material resources to help meet demand (page 1-6).
- Forest Plan Goal 3.1 provides for building and maintaining safe, efficient, and effective infrastructure that supports public and administrative uses of National Forest System lands (page 1-7).

### ***Rationale:***

The proposed project shall meet the requirements of the forest plan. The proposal shall comply fully with forest wide standards and guidelines, and the Management Area Direction, including that contained under Management Area number 2C, Uneven-aged Northern Hardwoods (See Chapter 1, page 1-4 and Chapter 3, pages 3-7, 3-9 through 3-11).

## REASONS FOR CATEGORICALLY EXCLUDING THE DECISION

**Category of Exclusion:** I have determined this action falls under the following category of action that is normally excluded from documentation in and Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to 36 CFR 220.6e (3):

*FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30, 32.2 (3): “Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.*

## FINDING OF NO RELATED EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

I find there are no extraordinary circumstances present that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. Specifically, the following circumstances were evaluated and found not related (FSH 1909.15 § 30.4): (Reference: Extraordinary Circumstance Checklist).

1. Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species. Biological resources were reviewed (Trapp 03/2020, Janke 01/2020). None of the above plants or wildlife present-no effect.
2. Floodplains, wetlands or municipal watersheds. The affected area is an upland site and does not lie within a municipal watershed, wetland or an area managed as a floodplain (Moris 01/2020).
3. Congressionally designated areas. This is not a wilderness or other congressionally designated site.
4. Inventoried roadless areas. The affected area does not lie within inventoried roadless.
5. Research Natural Areas. The affected area does not lie in or near a Research Natural Area (Janke 01/2020).
6. American Indian and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites: Local and affected Indian tribes were notified about this action. No concerns of religious or cultural sites were identified (Brown 9/2020).
7. Archeological sites, or historic properties or areas. The Forest Archeologist reviewed and completed a cultural resource inventory (Houlette 8/20). The location of the pit has been surveyed completely and no cultural sites or features were found.

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Based upon public, other agency, and internal scoping, the IDT did not identify any extraordinary circumstances potentially caused by this action. The interdisciplinary team surveyed the area for presence of extraordinary circumstances and found none (botanist, biologist, archeologist, water resources, and National Environmental Policy Act staff).

The public was notified of this action by scoping notices on January 8, 2020 and the CNNF posted the scoping on the forest website on the same day. The District did not receive any responses from these notices.

**COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS AND REGULATIONS**

I have considered relevant laws, regulations, and agency direction. I find my decision complies with the National Forest Management Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. I have considered direction in the FSM 1950 and FSH 1909.15 and find the analysis and my decision consistent with that direction.

FOREST PLAN CONSISTENCY (NATIONAL FOREST MANAGEMENT ACT). I have reviewed the direction in the forest plan. My decision addresses its goals and objectives and is consistent with all standards and guidelines relevant to this action. I have reviewed this action in accordance with Executive Order 12898 (consideration of environmental justice). I find scoping was adequate to inform low income and minority populations that may be affected by this action. No concerns of disproportionate health or environmental effects surfaced. Adverse effects of this action will be minor or not apparent. Therefore, I find my decision will not disproportionately create high and adverse health or environmental effects to low income or minority populations.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

My decision is not subject to a higher level of administrative review or objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218.4. For more information about this decision, contact Greg Knight, Project Leader, Medford Office, 850 N. 8<sup>th</sup>, Hwy 13, Medford, WI 54451 (Phone 715-748-4875).

**SIGNATURE AND DATE**

/s/ Mike Brown

Mike Brown  
District Ranger

October 20, 2020

Date

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## Highway W Gravel Pit Expansion

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for

Civil Rights 1400 Independence

Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

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