



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Superior  
National  
Forest

8901 Grand Ave. Place  
Duluth, MN 55808-1122  
Phone: (218) 626-4300  
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File Code: 1950

Date: January 13, 2014

Dear Interested Parties:

An environmental assessment (EA) for the Lake County Fiber Optic Project has been completed and is available for review and comment. The EA is available at [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects), navigate to the Lake County Fiber Optic project page or in hardcopy if requested.

The purpose of this project is to evaluate and consider approving a Special-Use Authorization to allow Lake County to install, operate, and maintain fiber optic cable, both buried and aerial on existing utility poles, which is intended to increase the rural broadband utility services in the area. The project is needed to address the lack of broadband service for rural and un-served establishments within all of Lake County and portions of St. Louis County. Installation is anticipated to provide fiber-optic network services including voice, video, and data to thousands of residents, subscribers and multiple businesses in the area. The proposed installation cannot be accomplished without the use of non-National Forest System (NFS) land since NFS land is located throughout the project area, including along the proposed installation locations.

I am interested in your comments regarding the proposed alternatives and analysis for this project. The decision-making process will be completed after comments on our preliminary work have been received. I believe there is sufficient information in the EA for you to understand the proposal, its alternatives, and what will happen with this project.

**How to submit comments:**

We will accept comments for 30 days following the date of publication of the legal notice in the Duluth News Tribune. Once the legal notice is published, it will be posted on the Forest Service website at [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects). To ensure I have the opportunity to consider your concerns before my decision on the project, it is critical they be raised at this time. This is the formal comment period and only those who provide specific written comments as defined at 36 CFR 218.2 during this comment period are eligible to object to the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 218 regulations. Please send comments to:

- Written comments to: Brenda Halter, Forest Supervisor, Subject: Lake County Fiber Optic Project, Superior National Forest, 8901 Grand Avenue Place, Duluth MN 55808.
- Oral comments must be provided during normal business hours via telephone. Elizabeth Schleif is the project contact and can be reached at (218) 626-4373.



- Send faxed comments to: Forest Supervisor, Subject: Lake County Fiber Optic Project, (218) 365-7563
- Send electronic mail comments to: [comments-eastern-superior@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-superior@fs.fed.us), Subject: Lake County Fiber Optic Project. Acceptable formats for electronic comments are: text (.txt), MSWord 6.0 or higher (.doc), portable document format (.pdf), or rich text format (.rtf).

All comments must include: (1) name and address of the individual or organization; (2) Title of the project (Lake County Fiber Optic Project); (3) Specific comments on the proposal, along with supporting reasoning that I should consider in reaching my decision; and (4) signature or other verification of identity on request. I ask that your comments be as specific as possible. Comments received in response to this letter, including the names and addresses of those who comment, are part of the public record and are available for public inspection.

If you wish to reference scientific literature in your comments, send a copy of the entire reference cited, and include your rationale as to how or why you feel it is pertinent to the Lake County Fiber Optic Project decision. This will allow me to fully evaluate your comments. If I do not receive a copy of the literature, I may not be able to utilize it for my decision.

**What Next:**

All comments received during the 30-day official comment period will be addressed by the interdisciplinary planning team. The team will update the effects analysis and consider other alternatives if necessary. When this work is complete, I will issue a Draft Decision Notice. After addressing any objections per 36 CFR 218, I will make a final decision on the project.

All commenters will be notified when the Draft Decision Notice is available. The Draft Decision Notice will be available on the Forest Service webpage at [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects). If you would like a hard-copy of the Draft Decision Notice, please let us know.

For further information, please contact Elizabeth Schleif, at (218) 626-4373 or via email at [eschleif@fs.fed.us](mailto:eschleif@fs.fed.us).

Sincerely,

*/s/ Brenda Halter*  
BRENDA HALTER  
Forest Supervisor

cc: Lake County (Jeff S. Roiland)  
Compass Consultants Inc. (JenniferUsgaard)  
Scott I Snelson  
Brian M Pentecost  
Kurt Steele