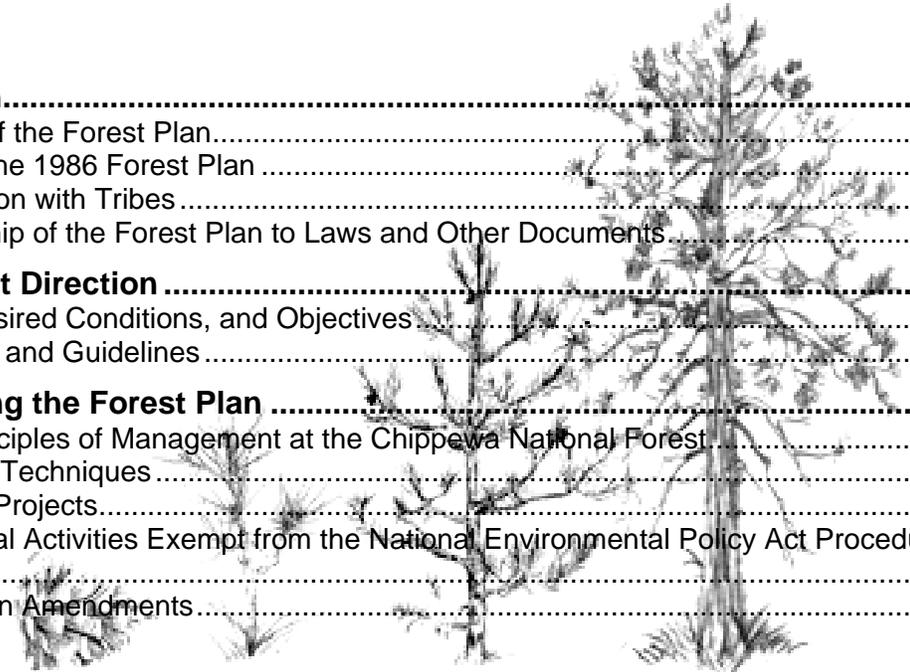


# Chapter 1 Introduction



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## INTRODUCTION

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The Chippewa National Forest is in north central Minnesota and was the first national forest established east of the Mississippi (Figure 1-1). The Forest boundary encompasses 1.6 million acres, of which over 666,000 acres are managed by the USDA Forest Service. Aspen, birch, pines, balsam fir and maples blanket the uplands. Water is abundant, with over 1,300 lakes, 923 miles of rivers and streams, and 400,000 acres of wetlands. Here you can find recreation opportunities year round, including camping, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, skiing, hunting, and fishing. The Forest also provides pulpwood and sawtimber to the forest products industry.

The Chippewa National Forest is located at the crossroads of Minnesota's three major ecosystems: the aspen, birch, spruce-fir and pines of the boreal forest; the maple-basswood hardwood forests; and the prairie is just west of the Forest. The Forest is half water, and the lakes and numerous wetlands are at the headwaters of the Mississippi and Hudson Bay drainages. The wildlife and plant species of the Chippewa are as diverse as these habitats, and the Forest is known for its abundant eagle population.

### Purpose of the Forest Plan

The Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities for the Chippewa National Forest. It describes desired resource conditions, resource management practices, levels of resource production and management, and the availability of suitable land for resource management. (Forest plans are also referred to as "land and resource management plans".)

The purpose of the Forest Plan is to provide management direction to ensure that ecosystems are capable of providing a sustainable flow of beneficial goods and services to the public. More specifically it establishes:

- How the Forest should look if the Forest Plan is successfully implemented (Goals and Desired

Conditions)

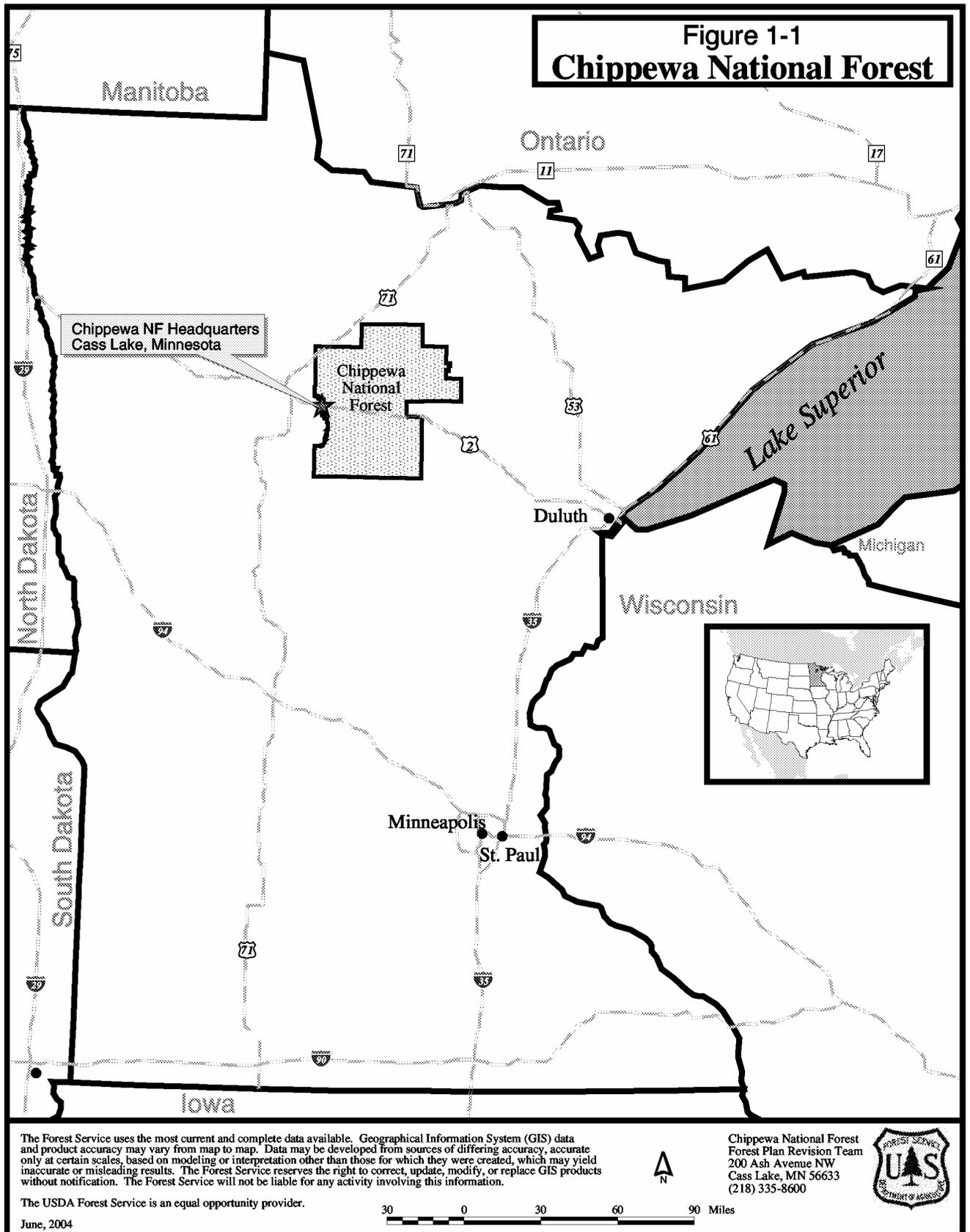
- Measurable, planned results that contribute to reaching the desired conditions (Objectives)
- Required action or resource status designed to meet the desired conditions and objectives (Standards)
- Preferable action used to reach desired conditions and objectives (Guidelines)
- Management Direction that is applicable Forest-wide
- Management direction that is applicable only to specific management areas
- Management direction that is applicable only to specific landscape ecosystems
- Monitoring and evaluation requirements
- Designation of land as suitable or not suitable for timber production and other resource management activities

Land use determinations, standards, and guidelines constitute a statement of the Plan's management direction; however, the actual outputs, services, and rates of implementation are dependant on annual budgets from Congress.

### Revising the 1986 Forest Plan

A Forest Plan for the Chippewa National Forest was issued in 1986. The National Forest Management Act regulations require that Forest Plans be revised every 10 to 15 years (36 CFR 219.10). In order to meet that requirement, the Chippewa National Forest teamed up with the Superior National Forest to revise their 1986 Forest Plans together. This revised Forest Plan is a result of that revision process.

The Chippewa and Superior National Forests did a joint environmental analysis and issued a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) together. However, there are two separate revised Forest Plans, one for each Forest.



The Forest Plan is based on the alternative that the Regional Forester selected in the *Record of Decision for Forest Plan Revision (2004)*. The Selected Alternative is described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS (Section 2.4.5) and in the Record of Decision.

The revised Plan is a result of extensive analysis and considerations addressed in the accompanying FEIS. The FEIS refers to or describes the planning process and the analysis procedures used to develop the revised Plan. The FEIS also describes other alternatives for the Forest Plan considered in the planning process.

The final revised Forest Plan completely replaces the 1986 Forest Plan.

### **Forest Plan Revision in the Future**

The Forest Supervisor is required to review conditions of the land at least every five years to determine if the Forest Plan needs to be revised. If monitoring and evaluation indicate that immediate changes are needed and these needed changes cannot be handled by amendment, then it would be necessary to revise the Plan.

### **Forest Service Planning Rules**

The 2004 Forest Plan revision process was conducted under the 1982 version of the Forest Service planning rules as stated in CFR §219. However, the Forest Service is developing a new set of planning rules that are not adopted yet. Subsequent revisions or amendments to the Plan will be developed under applicable planning rules.

## **Consultation with Tribes**

Beginning in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the government of the United States made treaties with the Ojibwe that created reservations and ceded areas of land in northern Minnesota to the federal government. The treaties also preserved the right of the Ojibwe bands to hunt, fish, and gather within the treaty area. This guarantee is important in the context of natural resource management. The Chippewa National Forest has a role in maintaining these rights because it is an office of the federal government responsible for natural resource management on land subject to these treaties.

To ensure the rights of sovereign Tribal governments are fully respected, the President has directed agencies to operate within a government-to-government relationship; to consult with Tribal governments prior to taking actions affecting resources in which Tribal governments may have an interest; to assess the impact of plans, projects, and programs to assure that Tribal governments' rights and interests are considered; and, to remove any procedural impediments to working directly and effectively with Tribal governments.

The Forest Service has been involved in government-to-government consultation throughout the process of preparing the revised Forest Plan. Government-to-government consultation between the federal government and federally recognized American Indian Tribal governments acknowledges the sovereign status of these tribes. The Forest Service generally goes above and beyond consultation normally carried out during a public scoping process under the National Environmental Policy Act.

Government-to-government consultation is ongoing between the Forest Service and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe who were signatory to the Treaty of 1855. The Band has reservation lands within the boundary of the Chippewa National Forest, and has treaty right interests throughout the Forest. This consultation supports Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000), which recognizes the sovereignty of federally recognized American Indian tribes and the special government-to-government relationship between the United States and American Indian tribes.

## **Relationship of the Forest Plan to Laws and Other Documents**

### **Organic Administration Act**

The Organic Administration Act authorized the creation of what is now the National Forest System. The law established forest reserves “to improve and protect the forests within the boundaries, or for the purpose of securing favorable water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens of the United States...”

## Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act

In this Act, Congress again affirmed the application of sustainability to the broad range of resources over which the Forest Service has responsibility. This Act confirms the authority to manage the national forests “for outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish purposes.”

## National Forest Management Act

The National Forest Management Act requires that National Forest System land be managed for a variety of uses on a sustained basis to ensure in perpetuity a continued supply of goods and services to the American people. The Act regulations also establish analytical and procedural requirements for developing, revising, and amending forest plans. The Forest Plan embodies the provisions of the National Forest Management Act and regulations on forest plan implementation.

## National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act ensures that environmental information is made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and before action is taken. This disclosure helps public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences and take actions to protect, restore, and enhance the environment. Essential to this process are accurate scientific analyses, expert agency input, and public involvement, all of which have been part of the revision process. The revised Forest Plan has been analyzed and the potential effects have been disclosed in the accompanying EIS. The Act may also require environmental analysis and disclosure for some site-specific actions implemented under the Plan.

## Endangered Species Act

One of the purposes of the Endangered Species Act is to provide a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered species and threatened species depend may be conserved. The Act requires Federal agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Minnesota Sustainable Forest Resources Act

In 1995, the Minnesota Legislature passed the Sustainable Forest Resources Act to ensure the sustainable management, use, and protection of the State's forest resources to achieve the State's economic, environmental, and social goals. The Act encourages collaboration, education, research, monitoring, and information management to emphasize the learning and coordination that is needed to sustain forests. The Act also established the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC). The Council helps develop and implement initiatives from the Sustainable Forest Resources Act. The Council also advises the Governor and federal, State, and local governments on sustainable forest resource policies and practices. While not legally subject to Minnesota statute, both the Chippewa and Superior National Forests actively participate with the Council in developing and implementing the voluntary forest management and landscape guidelines. The Forests also coordinated with the Council to develop objectives for landscape ecosystems and will use, as a minimum, the Council's Voluntary Site-level Guidelines for forest management.

## Minnesota Forest Resources Council Voluntary Site-level Guidelines

The Forest Service will implement the MFRC management guidelines when managing forest resources on the National Forest. These measures are described in *Sustaining Minnesota Forest Resources: Voluntary site-level Management Guidelines*.

Standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan are intended to provide equal or greater protection to the resources addressed by the MFRC guidelines. Some of the Forest Plan standards and guidelines may:

- Provide direction or guidance not provided in the MFRC guidelines
- Give additional explanation or detail on how to implement the MFRC guidelines
- Provide direction that modifies the MFRC guidelines or
- Have an approach that differs from the MFRC guidelines in order to achieve compliance with law, regulation, or policy

Individual MFRC guidelines will be implemented as guidelines for management on NFS land, unless they

are restated as standards in the Forest Plan. In general, however, MFRC guidelines are not restated in the Forest Plan.

Forest Plan standards and guidelines take precedence over the MFRC guidelines in any situation where management direction from these two sources appears to conflict.

**Forest Service Directives**

Management direction in the Forest Service Directive System, including the Forest Service Manual (FSM) and the Forest Service Handbook (FSH), is part of forest plan management direction and is not repeated in the Forest Plan. Management direction also includes applicable laws, regulations and policies, although they may not be restated in the Forest Plan.

Direction for managing National Forest System land comes from a variety of levels. National and regional direction includes laws, executive orders, regulations, and Forest Service policy. Figure 1-2 illustrates the hierarchy of management direction beginning with

national and regional direction at the highest level and ending with site-specific, project-level direction when the Forest Plan is implemented.

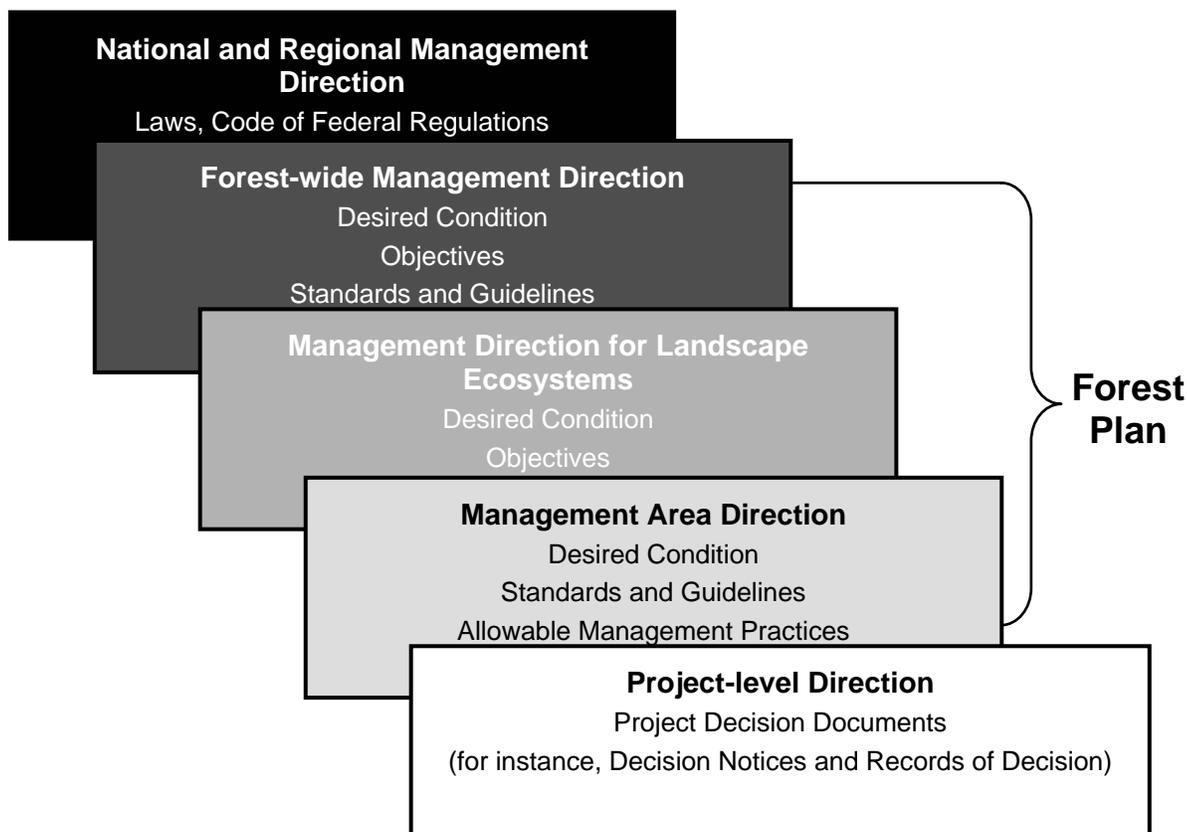
**Chippewa NF Fire Management Plan**

The *Fire Management Plan* provides information necessary to implement management direction for wildland and prescribed fire found in the Forest Plan. The *Fire Management Plan* provides an overview of the fire management programs on the Forest and serves as a reference document of operational procedures for Forest personnel. The Forest Plan does not repeat the information in the *Fire Plan*.

**Wild and Scenic Rivers Act**

For the segments of rivers that have been determined to be eligible for consideration as National Wild, Scenic, or Recreational Rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the Forest Service is required to provide for the protection of the river values. The Forest Plan addresses resource protection, development of land and facilities, public use, and

**Figure 1-2. Hierarchy of management direction for national forests**



other management practices necessary or desirable to maintain the eligibility of the river segments.

### **Forest Service Memorandum of Understanding with Tribes**

At this time (May 2004) there are Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) existing (Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe and the Chippewa NF). This MOU is a written

plan between the Forest Service and other parties for carrying out their separate activities in a coordinated and mutually beneficial manner and for documenting a framework for cooperation. The MOU speaks to cooperation and forming management partnerships between the Forest and Band. The Forest Plan directs implementation of the MOU by providing goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines on consultation and interaction between the Forest and the Band.

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## **MANAGEMENT DIRECTION**

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Management direction is guidance for managing resources and uses on National Forest System land. This direction has been developed for resources (for instance, wildlife and vegetation) on a Forest-wide basis and for management areas. Chapter 2 contains management direction that applies Forest-wide, and more specific direction for management areas is in Chapter 3.

Goals, desired conditions, and objectives often form the purpose and need for site-specific projects. Not every project will further each goal and objective, but those goals and objectives that are prescriptive in nature and apply to the project are not optional.

Some management direction refers to existing conditions. Existing conditions are the conditions found at the time of Forest Plan revision unless otherwise noted in the resource-specific or management area-specific direction.

### **Goals, Desired Conditions, and Objectives**

Goals and desired conditions are broad statements that describe the situation that the Forest Service will strive to achieve. They are generally timeless and not measurable. Goals and desired conditions describe the ends to be achieved, rather than the means of doing so. They are a narrative description of the state of the land and resources expected when objectives and their associated standards and guides are fully met.

Goals and desired conditions are not absolutes. Their primary purpose is to be considered when planning management activities. Efforts will be made to move

resources toward desired conditions or maintain the current condition (if the current condition is the desired condition).

In many cases, there will be short-term impediments to reaching desired conditions, such as the current state of the resource, but the long-term aim would be to reach the desired conditions. Some areas on the landscape may be far from the desired condition, while other parts may be in the desired condition or have a greater likelihood of reaching it sooner.

Goals are broad statements of the Forest's overall purpose, while desired conditions describe what the Forest should look like in the future.

Objectives are measurable steps taken within a specified timeframe to move towards a desired condition. Objectives are generally achieved by implementing a site-level project or activity. However, objectives are not 'targets'. Targets for outputs are dependent upon budgets and may or may not reflect Forest Plan emphasis areas.

Forest-wide objectives have been developed for resources, such as water (see Chapter 2). Specific objectives were also developed for each landscape ecosystem (see Chapter 2) and for some management areas (see Chapter 3).

### **Standards and Guidelines**

Standards and guidelines are the specific technical direction for managing resources. They provide another link in moving toward the desired conditions.

Standards and guidelines apply Forest-wide to National Forest System land, unless more specific management area direction is found in Chapter 3 of the Plan.

Only measures that are specific to the Chippewa National Forest are included in the standards and guidelines. Laws, regulations, and policies that apply to the entire National Forest System are not reiterated in the standards and guidelines. In addition, desired conditions and objectives that have a prescriptive component are not repeated in the standards and guidelines.

Standards are required limits to activities. These limitations help the Forest to reach the desired

conditions and objectives. Standards also ensure compliance with laws, regulations, executive orders, and policy direction. Deviations from standards must be analyzed and documented in Forest Plan amendments.

Guidelines are preferable limits to management actions that may be followed to achieve desired conditions. Guidelines are generally expected to be carried out. They help the Forest to reach the desired conditions and objectives in a way that permits operational flexibility to respond to variations over time. Deviations from guidelines must be analyzed during project-level analysis and documented in a project decision document, but these deviations do not require a Forest Plan amendment.

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## IMPLEMENTING THE FOREST PLAN

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The revised Forest Plan provides a framework and context that guides the Chippewa National Forest's day-to-day resource management operations (Figure 1-3). It is a strategic, programmatic document and does not make project-level decisions.

The National Forest Management Act requires that “permits, contracts and other instruments for use and occupancy” of National Forest System lands be “consistent” with the Forest Plan (16 U.S.C. 1640(i)). In the context of a Revised Plan, the National Forest Management Act specifically conditions this requirement in three ways:

1. These documents must be revised only “when necessary;”
2. These documents must be revised as “soon as practicable;”
3. Any revisions are “subject to valid existing rights.”

### Basic Principles of Management at the Chippewa National Forest

A set of fundamental principles guides management at the Chippewa National Forest. Direction in the Forest Plan adds to and qualifies these basic principles.

#### Principle 1

The Forest Service will follow laws and regulations as well as policies in Forest Service Manuals and Handbooks that relate to managing National Forest System land. In addition, numerous treaties and trust responsibilities, laws, regulations, and policies govern the use and protection of forest resources that may be of Tribal interest or covered under Tribal reserved rights. The Plan is designed to supplement, not replace, direction from these sources.

#### Principle 2

The Forest Service will coordinate management activities with the appropriate local, State, or Tribal governments as well as with other federal agencies.

#### Principle 3

The Forest Service will actively consult with Tribal governments and collaborate with interested organizations, groups, and individuals.

#### Principle 4

The Forest Service will manage the Chippewa National Forest for multiple uses. The Chippewa National Forest is open for any legal public activity or

management action, unless specially restricted in law, policy, or the Forest Plan. While allowed, such activities and actions may require administrative review and authorization before they are implemented.

## Tools and Techniques

The Forest will reach its desired conditions for vegetation through natural ecological processes and by using a diverse range of management tools and techniques.

To the extent practical, timber management will be used to emulate naturally occurring disturbances (fire and windstorms for instance). These management practices will include both even-aged and uneven-aged techniques. Clearcutting will continue to be used on the Forest when it is the optimal method to meet the objectives and requirements of the Forest Plan. The Forest will also use shelterwood, group selection, and individual tree selection and other harvest methods to create or maintain multi-aged and uneven-aged stands.

Prescribed fire will be used alone or with silvicultural treatments to mimic the effects of natural fire. Management-ignited fire will help maintain, enhance, and restore natural ecological processes on the Forest. Minimum Impact Management Tactics will generally be used in wildland fire suppression and prescribed fire application to reduce adverse fire suppression effects.

The Forest will promote re-growth of harvested or other disturbed forests with a variety of regeneration practices. This includes regenerating forests through tree planting, seeding, and natural regeneration. Some areas will naturally change through forest succession.

The Forest will also reach its desired conditions for human uses by using a diverse range of management tools and techniques. Environmentally sustainable management practices will provide commodity and non-commodity resources to contribute to the social and economic stability of local communities. Management practices to achieve this include prescribed fire, timber harvest, and traditional gathering activities.

The Forest will provide recreation opportunities in a multiple-use setting by using management tools such

as the Scenery Management System and the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.

Ecological functions of watersheds and riparian areas will be enhanced or restored through techniques such as reconstructing or improving road and trail crossings, decommissioning unneeded roads, or using silvicultural treatments or fire to enhance shade, coarse woody debris recruitment, or bank stability in riparian areas.

The Forest may create new roads and trails if needed for site-level projects or to respond to increased demand. The majority of these roads will be OML 1 and temporary. They will be closed to public motorized use.

## Site-level Projects

“Implementing the Forest Plan” means developing and implementing site-level forest management projects in order to reach the desired conditions established in the Forest Plan (Figure 1-3).

Project-level compliance with the National Forest Management Act is primarily concerned with consistency with the Plan and the Act’s regulations.

Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act involves the correct environmental analysis process for a specific proposal, proper documentation, and public disclosure of effects in an environmental assessment, environmental impact statement, or categorical exclusion. An analysis file or project file is available for public review.

Environmental analysis of site-level projects will use as its basis the data and evaluations in the Forest Plan and the FEIS for the Forest Plan.

The following are some examples of project-level decisions that may require additional environmental analyses and disclosure as the revised Forest Plan is carried out:

- Timber harvest
- Wildlife improvement and restoration projects
- Prescribed burn projects
- Watershed improvement projects
- Trail or road construction

## Operational Activities Exempt from the National Environmental Policy Act Procedures

Resource inventories, action plans, and schedules do not require additional environmental analysis and disclosure at the project level.

The following are some examples of operational activities that do not constitute site-specific decisions and therefore are exempt from National Environmental Policy Act procedures:

- Developing five-year wildlife action plans
- Developing fire-situation reports
- Scheduling maintenance for developed recreation sites
- Preparing land ownership adjustment plans

## Budgets

Annual Forest budget proposals are based on the activities and actions required to achieve the desired conditions and objectives of the Forest Plan. Forest budgets are approved on an annual basis by Congress.

The National Forest System appropriation from Congress provides funds for stewardship and management of all 192 million acres of federal land and the natural ecosystems on that land across the country. These appropriated funds are key for translating the desired conditions and objectives stated in the Forest Plan to on-the-ground results.

Upon receipt of the final budget, the Forest annually prepares an implementation budget. This budget is a result of program development, annual work planning, and monitoring processes. These processes supplement the Forest Plan and make the annual adjustments and changes needed to reflect current priorities within the overall management direction contained in the Plan. Therefore, the funding distribution between program components and the intensity or level of activities in those programs is a reflection of the Plan as well as the will of Congress. The final determining factor in carrying out the intent of the Forest Plan is the level of funding, which dictates the rate of implementation of the Plan.

## Forest Plan Amendments

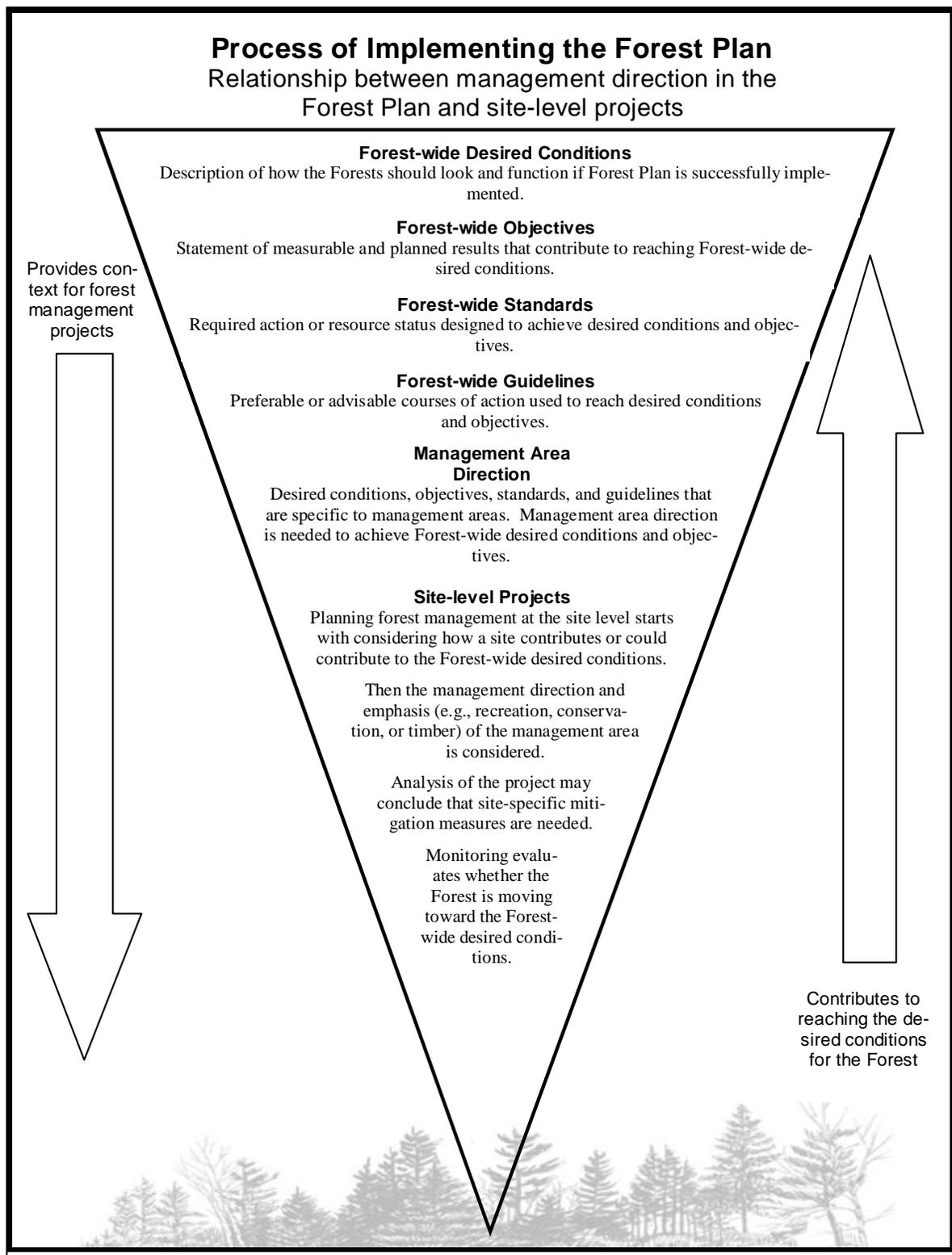
Most proposed activities will be consistent with direction in the Forest Plan. When proposed management actions are found to be inconsistent with Plan direction or site-specific analysis shows an error in the Plan, the Plan or the proposal must be adjusted according to the analysis. Adjusting the Plan would require an amendment.

The need to amend management direction may result from:

- Changes in physical, biological, social, or economic conditions
- Recommendations of an interdisciplinary team based on the results of monitoring and evaluation
- Determination by the Forest Supervisor that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperative agreements, or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but not consistent with elements of the Forest Plan management direction
- Errors in planning found during implementation. Conflicts may be identified between different sections of management direction, for instance there could be discrepancies in the selected alternative map and the narrative description of the selected alternative. The Forest Plan does not prioritize management direction, therefore a discrepancy would need to be resolved by determining the management intent using a variety of information, such as the planning record, FEIS, and the revised Forest Plan.

The Forest Supervisor will determine whether proposed changes to the Forest Plan are significant or non-significant as defined by the National Forest Management Act.

**Figure 1-3. Process of implementing the Forest Plan: relationship between management direction in the Forest Plan and site-level projects**



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