



September 2002 Newsletter

Vegetation Management Objectives

In revising the Forest Plans, one challenge is to define long-term management direction that will create the vegetation diversity needed to sustain a diversity of wildlife, scenic quality, recreation, commercial, and other benefits. This requires an understanding of natural processes across the landscape over time and is expressed as **vegetation management objectives**.

Vegetation Management Objectives - describe the desired vegetation condition for landscape ecosystems across the Forests. These objectives are defined as qualitative and quantitative goals that are projected for 10 decades.

Forest managers measure diversity in terms of the amount of forest in different tree types and age classes, and the distribution of types and ages of forests across the landscape.

The Chippewa and Superior National Forests are utilizing information about landscape ecosystems in northern Minnesota as a basis for comparing past and current diversity of plant and animal species. Projections for different management scenarios described in the alternatives are considered for Forest Plan revision.

Vegetation management objectives define a goal for management activities and also help guide site-specific decisions in the future. Monitoring of the selected alternative will track how closely changes in the landscape are approaching the predetermined vegetation management objectives.

The suitability of timberlands is an important consideration in achieving vegetation objectives because timber harvest is an important, although not the only, method of achieving vegetation objectives.

The next page summarizes the vegetation management objectives for the alternatives being analyzed in the draft environmental impact statement, and the methods that each alternative will emphasize to achieve the objectives.

Suitability for timber – what is it?”

In Forest Planning, lands are often referred to as “suitable” or “not suitable” for timber production. Lands classified as suitable for timber are those lands where timber production is an objective and lands are regularly scheduled for harvest.

Bimonthly newsletters contain updates and background information about Forest Plan revision on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. Previous editions of the newsletter and related information is available on the revision web site: www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

Vegetation Management Objectives for Alternatives

The alternatives being analyzed for Forest Plan revision have unique long-term objectives for vegetation conditions, which are consistent with the theme of each alternative. A variety of tools are available to work toward these objectives, including timber harvest, planting, prescribed fire, and ecological succession.

The objective for Alternative A is to emphasize an early successional forest by following the management direction under the current Forest Plan. This would be attained primarily through even-age silvicultural methods. Areas of older forest would be developed through the application of standards and guidelines.

In Alternative B, the management direction emphasizes older forests with mixed conifer species by designating areas to be managed for older forests. The primary silvicultural methods would be partial cutting and uneven-age management, with some even-age management.

The objective for Alternative C is to replicate large-scale natural disturbances with an emphasis on early successional and young forests. This would be achieved primarily through even-age silvicultural methods. Areas of older forest would be developed through extended rotations and application of standards and guidelines.

The emphasis in Alternative D is on developing older forests through a two-phased process. Partial cutting would be used for restoration during the first and second decades of implementation. After the second decade, natural processes of ecological succession would be used along with limited partial cutting to encourage development of older forest types.

Alternative E emphasizes the development of a diverse forest providing both young and old forest settings that support diverse opportunities for Forest users. This would be attained primarily through even-age silvicultural methods with some uneven-age management. Areas of older forest would be developed under the direction of standards and guidelines.

Under management direction in Alternative F, the emphasis is on ecological processes that would bring vegetation within the range of natural variation for historic conditions. This would be attained through a mix of even-age and uneven-age silvicultural methods.

Alternative G emphasizes the development of a diverse forest of both old and young forest settings by allocating areas to be managed for young or for old forests. A mix of even-age and uneven-age silvicultural management would be used.



Proposed Direction for Managing Recreational Motorized Vehicle Use

Recreational motor vehicles (RMVs) include off-highway motorcycles, off-road vehicles, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and snowmobiles. Both of the National Forests in Minnesota currently provide some opportunities for RMV use. However, there are issues relating to this use that need to be addressed in Forest Plan revision.

There is debate about the level of RMV use that would provide an adequate range of recreational opportunities while not adversely affecting the environment. Forest Plan revision will determine the management direction for RMV use on roads and trails as well as cross-country

travel. Revision will also establish how much of each Forest would be available for each RMV use and where those uses would be allowed.

In determining appropriate RMV management, the Forests differentiate between “system” roads, which are included in the Forest road maintenance program, and “non-system” roads, which are not included in the road maintenance program.

System roads are classified by the level to which they are maintained. Usually, only high-clearance vehicles can navigate low standard system roads.

Proposed Management for Alternatives CNF = Chippewa National Forest SNF = Superior National Forest

ATV Use of FS Roads*	CNF low standard system roads	ATV use would be allowed in all alternatives.
	CNF non-system roads	ATV use would be prohibited under all alternatives except Alternative A.
	SNF low standard system roads	ATV use would be allowed under all alternatives.
	SNF non-system roads	ATV use would be allowed under all alternatives except alternative D.
ATV Cross-country use*	CNF	ATV use would be prohibited under Alternatives A, B, D, F and G. ATV use would be allowed under Alternatives C and E <u>only</u> for big game retrieval and trapping access.
	SNF	ATV use would be allowed under Alternative A. ATV use would be allowed under Alternatives C and E <u>only</u> for big game retrieval and trapping access. ATV use would be prohibited under Alternatives B, D, F, and G.
RMV Use of Trails	SNF & CNF	Trails would be closed to any RMV use unless posted open.
Snowmobile Cross-country use*	CNF	Cross-country use by snowmobiles would be prohibited under all alternatives.
	SNF	Cross-country use would be allowed under all alternatives except Alternative D.

*Some site-specific deviations would occur with implementation.

Selecting a Preferred Alternative

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires identification of a Preferred Alternative in a draft environmental impact statement (DEIS).

The purpose for identifying a Preferred Alternative is to help focus the environmental analysis, and help the public to respond to specific management issues.

The Preferred Alternative is the alternative, from the range of alternatives analyzed in the DEIS, that decision-makers feel best addresses the Purpose and Need for a project while considering the environmental effects and resource trade-offs.

The Regional Forester will identify a Preferred Alternative for Forest Plan Revision in the DEIS.

It is still unknown whether the DEIS will contain one or two Preferred Alternatives. The same preferred alternative could be selected for both the Chippewa and Superior National Forests or a different preferred alternative could be identified for each Forest.

One EIS and two individual Forest Plans will result from the revision process.

Where we are in the Revision Process

The combined Minnesota Forest leadership teams from the Chippewa and Superior National Forests reviewed a snapshot of the initial data for all alternatives in September and identified assumed advantages and disadvantages for each.

The leadership teams looked at initial benchmark information and modeling data for each of the seven alternatives. The leadership and planning teams will continue to interpret, and analyze this data to ensure accuracy and completeness.

The two Forests will share information developed, to-date, with the Regional Forester in October. In the coming months the Forests will continue to work closely with the Regional Forester who will ultimately make a decision on the Revised Plans after completion of the final EIS.

The planning team continues to work on the environmental effects analysis for the DEIS. Additional analysis will likely change some current assumptions.

The DEIS is planned for release early in 2003, and the final EIS and Record of Decision will be completed later in 2003 following the public comment period.

A Fond Adieuand Congratulations!

We bid a fond “Adieu” and “Congratulations” to Logan Lee, Supervisor on the Chippewa National Forest, as she moves to her new position as the Supervisor of the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Illinois. Logan has been Supervisor of the Chippewa National Forest since 1998. She will assume her new duties in late October 2002. An Acting Forest Supervisor will be appointed by the Regional Forester, Randy Moore.

“Congratulations”, also go to Tracy Beck, Forest Planner on the Chippewa National Forest. Tracy has accepted a new position as the District Ranger on the Blackduck Ranger District of the Chippewa National Forest. Tracy starts his new responsibilities in December 2002. While we are sorry to see Tracy leave the planning team, we are glad he will continue to be involved with Forest Plan revision as a member of the Chippewa Forest Leadership Team.



Last Month...

The planning team accomplished a major step forward with modeling runs for the alternatives. This information was shared in a joint meeting of the two Forest Leadership Teams. The planning team will continue analysis to evaluate and validate this information.

What's Coming?

- The *Wilderness Inventory and Evaluation*.
- The *Roads Analysis Process* for each Forest
- The *Social Assessment* for each Forest

Watch the Forest Plan revision web site over the coming month for announcements of these completed analyses. All of these reports will be available, on CD, upon request. Contact information will be posted in the announcement.

New on the Web-site:

- Riparian Management Fact Sheet
- Vegetation Management Objectives Fact Sheet
- Update on Proposed Management of Recreational Motor Vehicle Use

Fact sheets provide more detail on specific topics relevant to Forest Plan Revision. A series of fact sheets is currently posted on the web site.

For more information:

Chippewa National Forest web-site: www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

Specific questions concerning revision may be directed to:

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In order to request revision documents not available on the internet:

Please call (218)335-8681, ttruecker@fs.fed.us