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National Forests

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Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests

Record of Decision

Final Environmental Impact Statement

*To accompany the 2004 Land and
Resource Management Plan*

A Century of Restoration



for a New Century of Generations

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Final Environmental Impact Statement



Record of Decision

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Preface

This Record of Decision (ROD) formally presents my decision to approve a modification of Alternative 5 as the Selected Alternative for the revised Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The ROD also explains my reasons for the changes made to the 1986 Plans.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests are ideal examples of forest restoration that followed broad scale timber harvesting of northern Wisconsin in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Early in the 20th century these lands were viewed as future sources of clean and plentiful water from the headwaters of many Wisconsin rivers as well as future sources of timber that could support local, state, and national demand for wood products. As the 20th century progressed, the northern federal forests were restored under the stewardship of the U.S. Forest Service, and the vitality of these forests caused people to view these lands as a rich source of outdoor recreational opportunities, such as hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, hiking, motorized sight-seeing, and off-road travel. As leisure time has increased for the nation's citizens, so has the value of forest recreation opportunities. Americans are also concerned for the overall ecological health of the nation's forests. These concerns are manifested in laws such as the Endangered Species Act, the Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act, and the National Forest Management Act. These laws not only demonstrate the scope of the interest in forest health, but also in the continued perspective of managing these lands under the concept of multiple-use.

The ecological and socioeconomic condition of these Forests is not static, and neither is the public's vision of the highest and best use of these local natural resources. The intent of my decision is to support continued restoration of the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests using the best science available, and to concurrently provide a wide array of sustainable goods and services. The specific elements of the management direction provided in the Forest Plan need to be, and will be, subject to periodic and timely change as new information comes to light and as the public demonstrates a desire for a changed focus in management. Amendments to the Forest Plan will be proposed when the need for change is evident; the response to this need will be developed in collaboration with the public.

My decision strikes a balance among competing interests, opinions and beliefs expressed by local governments and businesses, as well as local, regional, and national interest groups, scientists, and the general public. The process of developing a revised Forest Plan has been painstaking and lengthy. Nearly 10 years has passed since the Forests began the need for change in 1994. In 1996, the Notice of Intent to revise the 1986 Plans was published. Collaboration and consultation has occurred during the past seven years with local counties, Wisconsin state agencies, local Native American tribes, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Years of collaborative efforts with the general public provided information and insights into public values and needs. The results of this effort are, to a great degree, based on the outcomes of these years of interactions with you, and with your representative government agencies searching for balanced management direction and vision for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests.

I believe you and I have crafted a Forest Plan that is well balanced, in terms of the goods and services to be offered from these Forests during the next ten to fifteen years. I also believe this Plan provides a strong foundation for ecological and socioeconomic sustainability over the long-term. The work is not done, because it will take our efforts of monitoring, reviewing, and developing new information to ensure this Plan is current. Changing public needs and values will also play a role to ensure this Plan provides the goods and services that people want. Thank you for your support, participation, and patience throughout this process, and thank you in advance for your continued partnership in keeping the Forest Plan fresh and relevant into the future.

RANDY MOORE

Regional Forester

Eastern Region, USDA – Forest Service



Record of Decision

Introduction

The *2004 Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests Land and Resources Management Plan* (Forest Plan) is a 10- to 15-year strategy for managing National Forest resources. The strategy outlines environmentally sound management to produce goods and services in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits. The Forest Plan emphasizes general land management practices and prescriptions at varying intensities on different areas of the Forest. Management practices include such activities as road building and maintenance, stream restoration, timber harvesting, and campground rehabilitation. Management prescriptions refer to conditions of the land, such as ecological conditions or recreational characteristics. In these ways, multiple-use goals and objectives are achieved in a balanced, cost efficient and sustainable manner.

This revised Forest Plan replaces all previous resource management plans for these Forests, subject to existing rights, contracts, and specific direction for special areas such as wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, and national trails. The Forest Plan provides a fresh strategy for sound environmental management based on new information.

The Forest Plan may be amended or revised to respond to new information or management technologies, Congressional land designations, and changing needs and opportunities. Any action taken to amend or revise the Plan will include public involvement.

Six primary decisions are made within the Forest Plan:

1. Forest wide multiple-use goals and objectives.
2. Forest wide management requirements.
3. Management Area direction.
4. Lands suited/not suited for timber management.
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements.
6. Recommendations of Wilderness Study Areas to Congress.

All Goals and Objectives in the Forest Plan can be accomplished from physical, ecological, economical, and legal perspectives. The management practices and outputs proposed are projections the Forests will strive to accomplish. The Plan is implemented through site-specific projects, and annual budgets determine which and how many of such projects are planned and implemented during any given year.

The Forest Plan and accompanying Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are programmatic in nature, providing a long-range strategy for the Forests. Site-specific environmental consideration will occur for the project level implementation of this strategy, resulting in environmental analyses, environmental impact statements, categorical exclusions, and/or amendments or revisions of the Plan. Any resulting documents will be tiered to the FEIS for the revised Forest Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28.

The Forests

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests are lands of sylvan beauty. They are a sea of green punctuated by islands of blue lakes and rivers. Eagles and hawks ride air thermals over the landscape, deer wander through clearings along the edges of deeper forests and wolves glide almost invisibly in forest cover. Loons haunt us with their wails of the wild places, and if we listen carefully we hear the deep bass drumming of ruffed grouse and the sweet melodies of warblers singing from their nesting grounds. Whether these sights and sounds occur in our absence or are the source of pleasure during our sojourns in the forest, they serve as a sense of timeless security.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet Forests are sources of living and renewing natural resources. They help meet our need for wild places and provide essential forest products, contributing to social and economic well being in forest-related communities, near and far. Forest products such as fish, berries, maple syrup, grouse, herbs, lumber/pulp, mushrooms, deer, fir boughs, and birch bark are far more than simple economic elements, although they often serve effectively in that role. For example, fish from the forest area are important to local economies, because they provide opportunities for hiring fishing guides, selling boats and fishing equipment, renting cabins and motel/hotel rooms, and supporting eating establishments that feed the throngs of people who enjoy sport fishing. At the same time, the individual joy and the social bonding associated with fishing with friends and family extend beyond economics. Timber products are another good example of the far-reaching effects of forest products. Lumber and pulp are more than the source of employment for fallers, truckers, paper mill workers, and furniture makers. They also set the foundation for a sense of belonging within the social and economic fabric of forest-related communities. Raw products themselves, when transformed into secondary or tertiary products, become that beloved old rocker that grandpa sat in, the wooden railing along the cabin porch where the family gathers every year, or the paper on which the daily news arrives.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests are a collection of interrelated biological systems that contribute to local, State, regional, national, and global scales of healthy and sustainable ecosystems. Some areas of the Forests are early successional forests – young, simply structured systems where aspen are the most common tree species and where ruffed grouse, white-tailed deer, and chestnut-sided warblers thrive. In contrast, largely contiguous mid- to late-successional northern hardwood forests characterize other sections of the Forests, where older and larger sugar maple, hemlock, yellow birch, basswood, and white ash predominate. These are the forests where least flycatchers, northern goshawks, and black-throated blue warblers make their home. There are a wide variety of non-forested and aquatic ecosystems that mix throughout the Forest. The relative sizes of these forest systems, their relative positions on the landscape, and their interconnectedness all contribute to a landscape pattern that defines the Forests' contribution to ecosystem sustainability at various scales. The Forests are unique land bases in Wisconsin because of their large contiguous parcels. This uniqueness contributes ecosystem components that other lands cannot provide at this time.

The Forests are lands intrinsically connected to native peoples who live their traditions through forest products and maintain spiritual bonds to the land and water, trees and wildlife. The beauty and peace offered by the Forests also contribute to the economic well being of communities by drawing tourists into the area. The results of vegetation management on these national lands provide settings that tourists enjoy and return to year after year. The same forest management also contributes to restoration of ecological land patterns and structure and the long-term sustainability of forest products. All these

aspects are integral to a holistic view of the Forests and define our management responsibility for such important resources.

A Vision of the Future

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests will be managed to support the relationship between people and the forest. As the Forests continue to mature they will further contribute to the public's enjoyment as well as to the socio-economic stability of human communities by providing a setting that retains a sense of place for people. The maturing forest will contribute to restoration of sustainable aquatic and terrestrial ecological health and will offer diverse forest products.

A wide variety of recreational opportunities will be provided on the Forests. The Forests will continue to offer a natural setting with road access to many areas. Developed camping sites will remain similar to the present, although some sites may be restored and some campgrounds may add additional sites. Cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, horseback riding, mountain biking, boating, hiking, fishing and hunting, motorized sightseeing, and all-terrain vehicle riding will be supported. A consistent policy for all-terrain vehicle opportunities will limit use to roads and trails (ending off-trail and off road access) and will better protect other resource values. More trails will be made available, and road routes will become available on the east side of the Forests.

Managing semi-primitive areas for a more remote setting will enhance recreational experiences. Additional Wilderness designations would provide more opportunities for experiencing solitude within the Forests.

The transportation system on the Forests will continue the reduction of total road density and move further toward the continued goal of three miles per square mile of total road. The Chequamegon is approaching that total density now, while there is still much work to do on the Nicolet. Open road density will be managed to provide quiet hunting or hiking opportunities while still providing thousands of miles of roaded access.

Forest products will continue to be made available in support of economic stability and will be offered in an environmentally sound manner. Native peoples will continue traditional uses of forest resources. Prescriptions and methodologies for timber harvesting will contribute to an increased restoration of important components of healthy ecological systems across the broader landscape. Special forest products will be available for personal and commercial use. Some products will be monitored more thoroughly to determine sustainable harvest levels over the long-term.

Forest species and the pattern of forested ecosystems across the landscape will include larger patches of interior mature mixed northern hardwoods, and long-lived pine and oak systems. A diversity of ecological systems such as early successional systems and mid- to late-successional ecosystems will provide for species viability and diversity, as well as continue to supply healthy populations of a variety of game species. Globally rare barrens communities will be enhanced, and management will continue to provide habitat in recovery support of threatened and endangered species such as the gray wolf and bald eagle.

Achieving this vision for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests will require collaboration with the public and responding to issues and concerns promptly with courtesy and fairness. It means being good neighbors, working cooperatively, inviting the involvement of others, and sharing credit for accomplishments.

Decision and Rationale

Need for Change

The original Forest Plans were approved on August 11, 1986. The need to change these Plans became apparent to the Forests through a combination of the following: new scientific information and recommendations on managing for biological diversity provided by a committee of scientific experts formed by these Forests in 1992; new scientific information in the realm of conservation biology appearing in published research; management concerns developed as a result of monitoring and evaluation, including the difficulty in producing predicted outputs while also meeting standards and guidelines, and meeting acre treatment predictions; and public comments shared with the Forests throughout the implementation of the 1986 Plans. These sources all contributed to the conclusion there was a need to change some of the management direction for these Forests in the following four general topic areas: access and recreation; biological diversity; special land allocations; and timber production.

New information and recommendations for forest management were provided to the Forests in two reports: A scientific committee report in 1994 titled *Report on the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests*; and a subsequent report in 1995 titled *Report on the Socioeconomic Roundtable Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests*. The recommendations in these reports served as a source of new issues, information, and changed conditions (since 1986) that influenced the need to revise the Forest Plans.

In response to the recommendations, the Forest completed an ecosystems inventory that identified areas most able to respond to ecological restoration efforts and to serve as ecological references. The Forest also recognized the need for stronger management direction regarding aquatic ecological systems while an on-going effort to classify and inventory aquatic systems is completed.

The amount of recreational opportunities for high quality semi-primitive experience brought up during appeals and litigation for both Plans remained a concern for a segment of the public and for local forest managers. As required by the National Forest Management Act of 1976, an inventory and evaluation of areas suitable for consideration as additional wilderness was completed. This evaluation took into account contribution to quality semi-primitive recreational opportunities, as well as the aspects of ecological restoration that would be associated with Wilderness designation.

The 1986 Forest Plans had very divergent all-terrain vehicle (ATV) policies. The Nicolet National Forest did not permit ATV use, while the Chequamegon National Forest provided on-trail and on-road ATV use, as well as considerable off road/off trail ATV access. Public comment during issue development, and management concerns about off-road motorized recreation led to a more evenly balanced and resource sensitive ATV policy being an important consideration.

Yearly monitoring of timber harvest found the Forests unable to provide the predicted levels of timber volume. Two of the reasons for this were: net growth rates for timber were lower than predicted; and implementing integrated forest management and meeting goals and objectives of other resources effectively reduced the number of acres available for commercial timber treatments.

The 1996 Notice of Intent to revise the 1986 Forest Plans identified the issues described above as needs for change. In addition, other issues were identified such as road density and access management, special forest products, and the recognition of tribal treaty rights.

Chapter 1 of the FEIS identifies the following outline of issues/concerns/management opportunities as the primary areas where change needed to be considered:

Access and Recreation

- All-terrain and Off-road Vehicle Use/Motorized Use
- Semi-primitive Non-motorized areas
- Wilderness

Biological Diversity

- Aquatic, Riparian, and Wetland Ecosystems
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Landscape Pattern
- Old Growth
- Wildlife

Special Land Allocations

- Research Natural Areas
- Special Management areas

Timber Production

- Timber Production
- Special Forest Products

Decision Overview

I chose a modified version of Alternative 5 as the Selected Alternative. Alternative 5 was the Preferred Alternative in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and was the foundation for the Proposed Plan. The modifications I chose provide the best mix of benefits to address the needs for change identified in the Notice of Intent to revise these Plans. They were developed to respond to public comment received during the formal comment period on the DEIS and Proposed Plan, as well as to respond to further internal management issues and concerns considered during the comment period. Forest management is long-term in concept and implementation, and I seek to set in motion the actions that will provide future generations a healthy, beautiful, productive, and diverse forest.

The 1986 Plans were well crafted, and have guided the management of these Forests for 17 years. The vision in those Plans was excellent for that time. I have reviewed the 17 years of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and have listened to sources of new information as well as current expressions of public desire for management of these Forests. I make these adjustments to the management direction of the original Forest Plans to move these forests forward into the next 10-15 years.

I recognize that none of the Alternatives satisfy all of the interested publics, due to the diverse values and views on the highest and best uses of these Forests. The Selected Alternative provides the best opportunity to improve ecological conditions while providing a broad spectrum of recreational opportunities and a realistic level of commodity production.

The Selected Alternative is outlined in the companion document, *Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan* (Forest Plan). The finer details of my decision are contained within the revised Forest Plan as Goals and Objectives, Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines, Management Area desired future conditions (prescriptions) and their accompanying Standards and Guidelines, recommendations for Wilderness Study Areas, identification of lands suited/not suited for timber production, calculation of the allowable sale quantity (ASQ), and monitoring and evaluation requirements.

The management direction in the revised Forest Plan is designed to:

- Improve the long-term ecological health of the Forests.
- Contribute to meeting current and future social and economic needs.
- Provide sustainable and predictable levels of products and services.
- Emphasize management that is responsive to future needs for change.
- Provide consistent management direction at the Forest level that will support site-specific project decisions in the context of broader ecological, social, and economic considerations.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) documents the analysis of the alternatives considered and of the public comment received on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Plan. This analysis served as the foundation for my decision on the revised Forest Plan for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. My decision incorporates by reference the analysis of effects, the management direction disclosed in the FEIS and revised Forest Plan, and the planning record in its entirety. All references and citations used in this ROD are fully described in the FEIS and revised Forest Plan.

My decision applies only to National Forest System lands on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. It does not apply to any other Federal, Tribal, State, or private lands, although the effects of my decision on those lands are considered.

Decision Summary and Rationale

Biological Diversity – Ecological Health

Ecological health was one of the primary issues leading to significant change from the 1986 Forest Plans. The *Report on the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity* served as an important source of new information for designing alternatives to address issues related to species diversity, viability, and ecosystems sustainability. My decision will continue forest restoration and change this relatively young forest toward a multi-aged, multi-layered structure.

The Selected Alternative will implement land allocations, standards, guidelines, and management area prescriptions designed to reduce risk to viability for species most at risk, increase success in maintaining species and ecosystems diversity, and maintain and/or restore components of the ecological systems important to their sustainability.

The revised Forest Plan incorporates a strategy for developing restoration of landscape ecological patterns, composition, and structure for both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Aquatic, Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems

The revised Forest Plan provides strengthened management direction for aquatic ecosystems. The Forest Plan provides a Goal with related Objectives, for healthy aquatic ecosystems along with a variety of supporting Standards and Guidelines. It includes an *Aquatic Desired Condition* that describes a detailed long-term vision and prescription for the desired future condition for the aquatic systems, emphasizing healthy watersheds resilient in the face of natural and/or man-caused events. The desired conditions include intact riparian corridors whose structure, function, and composition are intact, that serve as landscape connectors, and that are maintained or restored consistent with the ecological capability and the sustainability of the Forests' ecosystems.

The Forests are completing an ecological classification and inventory of aquatic ecosystems. This information will provide the basis for setting more specific Goals and Objectives on spatial priorities for management and an array of aquatic ecological restoration and maintenance elements.

Ecosystem Restoration and Landscape Pattern

The elements of my decision related to terrestrial ecological systems are based on new information about ecosystems management across a large landbase. I am adjusting landscape scale patterns and species composition on the Forests. The adjustment, over time, will change the forest landscape of relatively small blocks of contiguous forest types, which are the historic legacy of past logging, farming and catastrophic fire, to a landscape that contains larger contiguous blocks of older forest.

The two forests partially addressed ecological restoration in the 1986 Forest Plans, and thousands of acres of uneven-aged forest management have been implemented as the beginning step towards creating interior forest habitat. Now the Selected Alternative will take another step forward to incorporate large blocks of interior and longer-lived forest into the restored forest landscape. In time, the management direction based on my decision will provide increased security for species that thrive under conditions of large patches of mature interior northern hardwoods, long-lived red/white pine mixed with oak, and large patches of barrens and surrogate-barrens communities. The shift in

management toward increasing the amounts and patch sizes of these forest communities is tempered with recognition of the need to maintain aspen as part of the incumbent body of species and communities native to these Forests.

I have responded to broad concerns about biological diversity by allocating considerable acreage to the management of interior mature northern hardwoods as well as to the management of more mature oak and long-lived pines, and to pine barrens conditions as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Acres of management areas emphasizing ecosystem restoration in Selected Alternative	
Management Area	Acres in Selected Alternative
2B – interior northern hardwood systems	209,000
3B – oak forest with pine component	11,000
4B – pine forest with oak component	30,000
4C – conifer; surrogate pine barrens	13,000
TOTAL	263,000

Over the long-term, the Wilderness areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized areas with no timber harvest, and areas managed specifically for interior mature northern hardwoods (Management Area 2B in the revised Forest Plan) will combine to provide landscape-scale patches of interior northern hardwoods at least 20,000 acres in size. The Selected Alternative provides for 6 such core areas that total 286,400 acres and responds effectively to species viability concerns as well as to concerns for ecosystem resiliency to large disturbance events.

The combined spatial distribution of these areas, along with Research Natural Areas, Special Management Areas, Old Growth complexes, Wild and Scenic River corridors, and areas managed for uneven-aged northern hardwoods (Management Area 2A in the revised Plan), contributes to long-term ecosystem connectivity on a landscape scale. The information available to me indicates that the balance in landscape design I have selected is sufficient for ecological sustainability of the varied systems present on the Forests. This landscape design also provides consideration of those citizens and groups interested in maintaining the amount of aspen habitat that was present on the Forests as a legacy of timber removal in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s.

A forest is always changing. The changes in a young forest that is growing into a mature forest are apparent, although it may take a lifetime for us to see the full effect. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests we see now grew out of a drastically altered landscape left to us from an earlier time. If my decision is implemented over several decades it will shift the forest landscape away from the fragmented blocks left to us early in the 20th century to a balanced landscape of large blocks of interior forest as well as stands of aspen and other vegetation types. My intent is to provide a greater degree of habitat security in the future for the sum-total of all the plant and animal species native to these forests.

Change in a forest takes time. During the first decade aspen habitat could potentially decrease by only a very small percentage. In the second and third decades there would be a noticeable decrease in aspen habitat. Another Forest Plan Revision will occur in 10-15 years that will position the Forest and the public for discussion and decision on the amount of aspen to retain into the future. If this decision is implemented into future

decades, I recognize the future decrease in aspen could lead to a probable future decrease in the habitats of some popular game species and other species that use aspen. I am also aware of the public concern about the social and economic effects of reducing habitat for popular game species. With that in mind, I tempered the shift in management to not significantly decrease aspen habitat in the first decade. My decision also provides 291,000 acres of Management Area 1 with primary emphasis on aspen through even-aged vegetation management. This is approximately 19% of the National Forests' acreage. The public and private forests that adjoin the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests also provide a mix of wildlife habitats, including aspen.

Old Growth

I chose 85,500 acres of Old Growth and Natural Feature complexes to be included in the Selected Alternative based on stand composition and structure that generally reflect a full complement of desired old growth conditions. I recognize that some of the old growth complexes reflect the legacy of turn-of-the-century land management activities and may be missing some composition or structural elements. The Old Growth complexes contribute to the landbase available for ecological reference and together with Research Natural Areas and Special Management Areas can provide places of refuge for species preferring such habitat. Old Growth complexes provide differing levels of habitat elements, some were more critical to retain than others.

Over the long-term it is to be expected that Wilderness areas, Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized areas not managed for timber, and forested wetlands will contribute further to the ecological function of old growth complexes as well as to the landscape available as ecological reference.

Wildlife

I wanted direction for wildlife habitat protection and maintenance of native wildlife species to be integrated into all aspects of Forest management. The revised Forest Plan provides Forest-wide standards and guidelines for specific wildlife habitats and species, including Threatened and Endangered Species and Regional Forester Sensitive Species. The protection and conservation of wildlife habitats are also integrated into silvicultural prescriptions, and into the management area standards and guidelines, providing more comprehensive management guidance than the original Plans.

Special Land Allocations

Part of the landscape ecological design in the revised Forest Plan includes the allocation of land to serve as ecological reference areas, areas that provide current conditions or have high potential to provide conditions that represent the array of native ecosystems. This referential foundation is made up from three types of areas: Research Natural Areas (RNAs), Special Management Areas (SMAs), and the Old Growth complexes described above. The ecological inventory done since the 1986 Plans was the primary foundation for changes in the Candidate Research Natural Areas (CRNAs) and SMAs listed in the revised Forest Plan.

I have identified 35 areas as Research Natural Areas and Candidate Research National Areas. Research Natural Areas are part of a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for research and education, and to provide important components of biological diversity for the Forests. The RNAs and CRNAs on the Forests have been assigned to a management prescription that is consistent with RNA objectives. As the

Plan is implemented, we will strive to complete the required establishment reports and work to gain concurrence of the Director of the North Central Research Station for those CRNAs that are appropriate to be designated as RNAs. When these actions have been accomplished, the administrative steps required for the RNA designation will be viewed as completed.

These areas cumulatively function as important contributors for sustainable ecosystem management, including provision of a long-term increase in security of species viability and diversity. Therefore they were significant enough in my mind to be treated as a minimum management requirement in the development of alternatives. The 35,200 acres of RNAs and CRNAs, and the 63,900 acres of SMAs, as well as the Old Growth complexes in the Selected Alternative serve in the role as minimum management requirements. The decision for these special areas is shown in Table 2:

Table 2. Comparison of special management areas between 1986 Plans and Revised Forest Plan		
Special Allocation	Current Plans	Revised Forest Plan
RNA	2,500 acres	2,500 acres
CRNA	Nicolet = 71 sites ¹ Chequamegon = 464 acres	32,700 acres
SMA	13,000 acres	63,900 acres
Old Growth Complexes	67,600 acres	85,500 acres
¹ The 1986 Nicolet Plan referenced Candidate Research Natural Area sites, but did not reference acres.		

Access and Recreation

Access and recreation has steadily become a more important function of the Forests as the population has increased and as neighboring lands have been converted or fragmented by other uses. Greater use of the Forests has increased conflict among various types of recreational activities, and with other resource values such as water quality. Changes in Forest Plan direction was needed to reduce these conflicts, and to provide for higher quality recreational experiences on the Forests.

All-Terrain Vehicles

All-terrain vehicle (ATV) access policies on the two Forests were very different under the original Plans, the Nicolet permitting essentially no access while the Chequamegon provided ATV trails, permitted access to most roads, and allowed off-trail/off-road travel (Table 3). There was also a user-developed ATV play area on the Chequamegon.

I want a more balanced policy across these Forests. To that end, I have decided to restrict ATV access to designated trails and roads on both Forests and to prohibit cross-country travel to avoid the associated resource degradation. ATV trail mileage will be increased on the Forests. The 284 miles of developed ATV trail on the Chequamegon National Forest will continue under this decision.

ATV road routes have been common on the Chequamegon. Classified roads on the Chequamegon will be posted open for ATV use except:

1. On roads where the Forest does not have the authority to designate as an ATV route; and
2. In instances where the local Ranger District identifies and closes specific routes for management issues such as safety, resource degradation, township concerns, or recreation use conflict.

Posting of open roads for ATV routes will take time and the ATV Use Transition Plan (see the section “Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation”) can be modified as resource management issues arise.

Table 3. Comparison of ATV policy between the 1986 Plans and Revised Forest Plan			
ATV Policy	Current Chequamegon Plan	Current Nicolet Plan	Revised Forest Plan
Trails	Trail construction and use allowed	Trail construction and use not allowed	Up to 85 miles of new trail on Nicolet. Up to 100 miles of new trail on the Chequamegon. Adaptive management applies
Open Road Use	Open road use allowed	Open road use not allowed	Open road use allowed where posted open
Off- trail/off-road	Off-trail/off-road use allowed	Off-trail/off-road use not allowed	Off-trail/off-road use not allowed

On the Nicolet National Forest, opportunities to open roads for ATV use will be done in consultation with local governments. I recognize that identification of ATV recreation opportunities on the Nicolet National Forest may take a longer time than identification of these opportunities on the Chequamegon National Forest. Enhancements to existing town-designated ATV routes on the Nicolet can be implemented by designating specific existing Forest system roads as ATV routes in collaboration with township governments.

New ATV trail opportunities on the Forests will be carefully identified. I direct the Forest Supervisor to identify and carefully evaluate new trails for ATV use on both Forests and strive to construct some new trails. The ATV Use Transition Plan will provide the concept for opening and closing roads for ATV use. Only after evaluation and monitoring of these new trails as well as open roads will the Forest Supervisor make the decision to continue identifying opportunities for ATV use as identified in the Selected Alternative.

The ATV play area on the Washburn District will be closed. The degradation of the steep sandy slopes and plant life caused by user-developed trails in this area is unacceptable. This area is immediately adjacent to the Moquah Barrens Wildlife Management Area and a potential progressive expansion of user-developed trails into this wildlife area would be unacceptable. I recognize that the play area on the Washburn District has strong support among ATV users, especially local users and they perceive that loss of this play area would restrict their access to a recreation experience that is not available elsewhere on the Forests at this time. However, the resource damage cannot continue and I direct the Forest Supervisor to also seek opportunities to rehabilitate this area.

The existing 4-Wheel Drive trail (Pipeline Trail) will be maintained, however, should maintenance methods prove ineffective and monitoring confirm unsafe conditions or unacceptable resource damage, the existing 25-mile trail will be closed and relocated to another location, provided agreements with non-Forest entities cover future maintenance and monitoring.

Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) Areas

The revised Forest Plan provides for an increase in quality of SPNM experience over time. I did not choose to greatly modify the amount of acreage allocated to SPNM areas in the original Plans, but chose instead to increase the quality of experience found in those areas.

My approach to improving semi-primitive recreational opportunities focused on more than acreage. With regard to Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized areas, I focused change on increasing the quality of the experience available to the people who use them. The current Plans permit timber harvest within SPNM areas, and people who use these areas have commented over the past years that it is difficult to tell the difference between hiking in forests primarily managed for timber and hiking within an SPNM area. To respond to this concern, eight of the nineteen areas designated SPNM in the revised Forest Plan are not in the suited timber base, and harvesting is not permitted, with a few exceptions for special circumstances. Relatively continuous late successional hardwood forests characterize these areas, which have characteristics conducive to the feeling of being alone in the deep woods. These areas will also contribute to interior northern hardwood forest core areas, and to ecological connectivity across the landscape, as described above under Biological Diversity.

The other 11 SPNM areas permit timber harvest and are within the suited timber base, but emphasize a limited time frame for vegetation treatment during any ten-year period. This contributes to the experience of quiet remoteness in these forested areas for most of each decade. There are also limitations on the percentage of an area that may be harvested within a ten-year period, and limitations on clearcut size, in order to further differentiate between the recreational experience within these areas, and the recreational experience within other suited timberlands.

The proposed Wilderness Study Areas (described below), when added to the acres of SPNM areas, provides an increase in opportunity for this type of recreational experience.

Wilderness

I reviewed the inventory and evaluation of all areas on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests suited for consideration as potential Wilderness. A total of nine areas met National Wilderness criteria, and after evaluation, there were eight areas considered suitable for potential Wilderness. I have chosen three areas totaling 15,500 acres to be recommended as Wilderness Study Areas: Flynn Lake, Porcupine Addition, and Spring Brook. All three areas are located on the west side of the Forests, and would be an addition to the approximately 44,000 Wilderness acres already present. Motorized access to Wilderness Study Areas will be permitted only for private land access, for access to existing gravel sources until alternative sources are located, and in emergency situations. If designated as Wilderness, these additions would provide a 36 percent increase in the Wilderness acreage on the Forests.

I recognize that local county governments, as well as Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources and local tribes, did not express support for additional Wilderness. The local

populace is divided on this issue as well. There is interest in increased Wilderness designation expressed by national interest groups. As the population of the country increases, areas where recreationists can experience solitude and remoteness are becoming increasingly rare.

I decided to represent the national level need for, and interest in, Wilderness by a recommendation for these Wilderness Study Areas. This decision also recognizes the local perspective that has appeared to be primarily in favor of no additional Wilderness, by proposing only a moderate increase. Only those three areas having the combination of excellent recreation qualities as well as excellent potential for naturally occurring ecological restoration and for providing ecological reference were selected for recommendation as Wilderness Study Areas.

Total and Open Road Density

The revised Forest Plan retains the current Plans' Forest-wide goals of reducing total road densities on the Forests to an average of 3 miles of road per square mile of forest. Management guidance on spatial allocation of open road densities is also provided. I decided to continue reducing the amount of total roads and the amount of open road to resolve conflict with quieter forms of recreation, impacts on streams, and effects on some wildlife species.

Areas of the Forests are assigned specific long-term open road density goals to improve opportunity for recreational experiences with less intense motorized activity. Some areas are designated as non-motorized areas with full vegetation management. The roads in these areas will not be open for motorized use by the general public, but the lands are part of the suited timberlands, and will be fully managed for forest products. These areas occur primarily in aspen areas and provide quality non-motorized hunting opportunities.

Another set of areas is designated for an open road density of 2 miles per square mile. These areas are managed to provide a semi-primitive motorized experience in areas smaller than 2,500 acres, or are managed for predominantly natural appearing settings with some probability of experiencing isolation.

The entire combination of all of the various road density reductions (general forest, SPNM, Wilderness Study Areas, non-motorized areas with full vegetation treatment and those smaller areas providing a semi-primitive motorized experience) all result in a cumulative reduction of the number of open roads across the Forests. I recognize the strong public opinions on both sides of the road density issue. Monitoring and evaluation during Plan implementation will provide information on the effects of implementing this goal.

Timber Production

Timber Production

The revised Plan identifies 862,000 acres of suited timberlands on the two National Forests. The Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ), for the first decade of the planning period, is 720 million board feet for the Chequamegon and 590 million board feet for the Nicolet. The improved determination of ASQ, based on lessons learned during 17 years of Plan implementation, and better identification of suited timberlands are resolutions to the need for change from the current Forest Plans. I have provided direction in the revised Forest Plan for sustainable timber harvest to be applied on the landscape, blended with ecological restoration and achieving biological diversity on a landscape level. This should

alleviate past problems with the Forests' inability to provide both species and product outputs on a sustained basis due to past standards and guidelines that were not well integrated and hesitation to enter areas under study for the revised Forest Plan.

This plan improves the species product projections as well as the health and viability of forest ecosystems. With the improvements in determining suitable forestland and growth and yield projections, the species product mix were re-evaluated to provide better reliability for timber sale offerings. The identification of special silvicultural prescriptions to achieve ecosystem restoration led to better estimations of the Forests' ability to produce timber products.

I recognize the issues surrounding the level of the Forests' ASQs, including the concern of local communities and industry most directly affected by this decision. The two National Forests have consistently provided timber to local communities and industry for decades but did not ever provide the full amount of timber outlined in the ASQ for the current plans. Although the amount of timber offered has decreased in recent years due to a variety of reasons, this revised Forest Plan provides the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests the opportunity to continue timber harvest offerings within the new ASQ.

Therefore, while I recognize that the combined ASQ (1.31 billion board feet) of the revised Plan is lower than the combined ASQ (1.67 billion board feet) of the original Plans, I also recognize that the revised Forest Plan still provides the potential for a program that can contribute to this economic sector within the State of Wisconsin and at a national level.

Special Forest Products

The revised Forest Plan added a Goal of ensuring that harvest of special forest products such as birch bark, maple syrup, conifer boughs, and various forms of club mosses over the long-term is within sustainable levels. The current Plans do not address this issue and the growing interest in collecting special forest products led me to provide guidance. I also recognize that establishment of a Goal as well as Standards and Guidelines for these products will increase our knowledge and understanding of the role these species play in forest ecosystem. I address the concern for the increased harvest of special forest products by including guidance to determine sustainable levels of harvest by monitoring use of special forest products.

Tribal Rights

I recognize the Forest Service's trust responsibility and treaty obligations toward Indian Tribes. Management direction contained within the revised Forest Plan emphasizes the importance of Tribal treaty-rights and interests. Nothing in this revised Forest Plan is intended to affect the Tribes' treaty-guaranteed hunting, fishing, and gathering rights. Tribal consultation is expressly emphasized as important to site-specific implementation of the Forest Plan.

Changes between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements

A substantial amount of public comment has been received and analyzed since the issuance of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and the Proposed Plan. Based on this analysis, and on internal management concerns, I have made some modifications to Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative in the DEIS) and those modifications are now the Selected Alternative in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. It is the basis of the revised Forest Plan.

I made some changes in the Goals and Objectives, and concurrently in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan that is tied directly to the Objectives. A considerable number of changes were also made to the Standards and Guidelines, predominantly related to increasing clarity, improving the ability to adaptively manage the resources and eliminating guidance that is duplication of management direction already provided in laws, regulations, and/or in agency policy.

The most substantial changes were made in ATV policy, recommendation for three Wilderness Study Areas, and land allocations to areas with modified silvicultural prescriptions focusing on large-scale patches of uneven-aged interior northern hardwoods, even-aged oak-pine, and even-aged natural pine-oak. These three forested-ecosystems were primary design features for responding to recommendations for increasing landscape-scale patches across the Forests to support strengthened ecological sustainability, including response to species viability concerns.

All-terrain Vehicles

The following elements of an ATV policy remained as described in Alternative 5:

- No off-trail or off-road ATV use.
- No ATV play-areas.
- Roads and trails closed to ATVs unless posted open.
- ATV trails open all year except during Spring breakup.

Primary ATV policy changes made in the modification to Alternative 5 include:

- Classified Forest system roads on the Chequamegon will be open for ATVs except: 1) on roads where the Forest does not have the authority to designate as an ATV route; and 2) on roads closed by local District action.
- ATV routes on the Nicolet will be considered in consultation with township-governments to enhance ATV access.
- ATV routes (roads designated open for ATV use) are open to ATVs when the roads are also open to all vehicular traffic.
- ATV routes generally closed to public traffic (closed classified roads) will have the same ATV open season as ATV trails.
- Up to 185 miles of new ATV trail may be added to the Forests.
- Eliminated the term “connector.”

Other Off-Highway Vehicle policy change:

- The existing 25-mile Pipeline 4 Wheel Drive (4WD) trail will remain in place. No additional trails will be added unless they are due to relocation of the Pipeline trail.

These changes respond to public concerns that insufficient access had been provided in the Proposed Plan, that the open season for the ATV routes was far too limiting, and that no additional 4WD trails should be built.

Wilderness

Alternative 5 contained a recommendation of three areas as Wilderness Study Areas (Flynn Lake, Porcupine Addition, and Hungry Run). Public comments for and against new Wilderness designations were consistent with pre-draft commentary and did not suggest a particular change in Wilderness designation. Management considerations led to a proposed change in the areas recommended for study, while maintaining essentially the same acreage being considered for Wilderness Study Areas. I reallocated Hungry Run to management as interior northern hardwood, and changed the allocation of Spring Brook from Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized to an area recommended for Wilderness study. Review of the two areas showed that Spring Brook has the higher combined value for recreational characteristics, and ecological reference and restoration potential. My decision is to recommend only those areas for Wilderness study that have the highest combined values on those three characteristics. Although allocations to SPNM areas were decreased by 200 acres in total acreage (due to a change of Spring Brook from a SPNM area to a Wilderness Study Area), this change responds to the public concern shared about the limited amount and quality of semi-primitive recreational opportunity available on these two Forests.

Biological Diversity

Alternative 5 (Preferred Alternative) provided a relatively low to moderate shift in management emphasis on landscape-scale patches of three forested ecosystems important to increasing biological diversity on the Forests. I decided to improve these aspects of landscape design in support of biological diversity. It is sufficiently important to long-term ecological sustainability to make the following modifications to the allocations to uneven-aged interior northern hardwoods, even-aged oak-pine, and even-aged natural pine-oak as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Acres of management areas emphasizing landscape-scale patches of three forested ecosystems		
Management Emphasis	Acres in Alternative 5	Acres in Selected Alternative
Interior Northern Hardwoods	130,000	209,000
Even-aged Oak-Pine	1,700	11,000
Even-aged Natural Oak Pine	16,500	30,000

I have concluded that the results of implementing the Selected Alternative will move the ecological systems on the Forests in the needed direction to increase overall security of species viability and diversity. The Selected Alternative will increase the likelihood of persistence of species of viability concern, and provide for an increase in species and ecological community diversity and sustainability.

As I stated above, I recognize the decrease in early successional forest is one of the effects of allocating more land area to these management emphases. I tempered the shift in emphases with concurrent consideration of the need to improve security for species of viability concern, the need to provide early successional habitat for related species and biological systems, and of the public concern for game species and the economic effects of decreases in hunting game species.

Public Involvement

The Forest Service conducted an active public involvement program throughout the plan revision process, including consultation with Federal, State, tribal, and local governments and agencies. A large number of private citizens became involved in the revision process through participation in public meetings and open houses, attendance at public hearings, and sharing their ideas verbally or in writing throughout the revision effort. A full description of the public participation activities that were undertaken is located in Appendix A of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

On October 18, 1994, the Forest Supervisor sent a letter to all Forest employees outlining an approach to the forest plan revision, including public involvement. He emphasized the importance of working collaboratively and building relationships with people in order to effectively involve the public in the management of their national forests.

In May 1996, the Forests held a public meeting to seek public input on establishing an effective public involvement plan for the revision process. As a result of that meeting, a public involvement plan was developed.

The Forests provided proposed revision issues to the general public for comment during July 1995, and held a series of public open houses at that time to facilitate information sharing. Resulting comments were analyzed and incorporated into the design of the revision topics, which were published in a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register on June 27, 1996.

The NOI informed the public of the 60-day comment period, and provided the calendar for a second series of open house meetings, which were held in July and August 1996. These meetings were held in northern Wisconsin towns containing Forest Service offices, and were designed to:

- Provide information about the need for changing the Forest Plans, the plan revision process, preliminary issues, the nature, and scope of the decisions to be made, and the aspects of the current plans that would not be changed.
- Provide descriptions of the alternative development and public involvement components of the revision process.
- Aid the Forests in gathering additional public perspective on the scope of the decisions made.

In December 1996, the Forests completed content analysis of 188 responses that were received in response to the NOI and associated public open house meetings. This information was then used to further develop revision issues and/or in the development of alternatives.

The Forests received hundreds of comments on a wide variety of issues in response to further public involvement efforts such as scoping letters, various types of media coverage, and additional open house meetings. During 1999, another series of local meetings were held in most northern Wisconsin towns with Forest Service offices. Six public meetings were held in Wausau, Wisconsin, between February 1997 and June 1999.

The public input received throughout the planning process, 17 resource assessments completed in 1997, and 10 Analysis of the Management Situation reports accomplished in 1998 all contributed to the development of 10 Problem Statements. These Problem Statements refined the NOI issues, and were used as the basis for designing the alternatives.

During the period between October 11, 1996 and August 31, 2001, approximately 1800 comments were received in response to communications activities. All told, approximately 2000 individuals, groups, organizations and agencies have been contacted and/or have participated in the planning process.

The Proposed Forest Plan and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) were made available to the public for review and comment on April 11, 2003, with a 90-day comment period of April 11 to July 11. The comment period was later extended, in response to public requests, to August 11, 2003. During the comment period there were 10 open houses and 5 hearings held throughout the State to provide the public the opportunity to obtain more information about the draft documents and to offer another avenue for providing their comments.

A total of 2,941 responses, oral and written, were received during the 120-day comment period. Additional responses were received after the close of the comment period. All responses were considered when the decisions on the Final Forest Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) were being made.

A summary of the public comment analysis and the Forest Service response to comments is located in Appendix A of the FEIS.

Alternatives

Alternative Development

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests plan revision began in 1994 with the determination there was a need to change both Forest Plans approved in 1986. Indicators for the need to change included:

- Public comments during implementation of the 1986 Plans.
- Changed conditions as reflected in monitoring and evaluation during Plan implementation.
- Availability of new information and scientific understanding.

The Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in 1996. In addition, 17 resource assessments were conducted to establish the context for change. An Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) was accomplished for each of 10 problem areas (issues) identified from the assessments. The AMS for each problem area thoroughly described the foundation for change, as well as potential range of response by problem area that could be developed into alternatives.

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the Management Act of 1976, requires consideration of a broad range of reasonable alternatives. This consideration was accomplished by an interdisciplinary team in order to provide adequate basis for identifying the alternative that comes closest to maximizing net public benefit. The process used to formulate the alternatives considered in detail is described in Chapter 2 of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Alternative 1 is a combination of the two current Forest Plans, but with a recalculated combined Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) of 1.46 billion board feet. The combined ASQ of the 1986 Plans was 1.67 billion board feet, however current Plan implementation monitoring had shown that the ASQ of 970 million board feet on the Nicolet was not reasonable based on new information.

Alternatives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 were developed to provide a range of movement towards the direction of change identified in the Notice of Intent. A range of choices for each issue was developed that, to varying intensities, addressed the need for change. Mixtures of these issue-specific choices were combined into individual alternatives. The range of alternatives for the revised Plan not only covered all the issues but provided the decision maker realistic choices regarding the level of response to the issues within any given alternative.

Alternatives Not Considered In Detail

Although they contributed to the range of alternatives, seven alternatives were eliminated from detailed study. A more detailed description of these alternatives and the reasons for not considering them further can be found in the FEIS, Chapter 2, *Alternatives Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study*. The seven alternatives considered but eliminated from further study are listed below:

- An alternative that emphasized early successional habitat, employed limited emphasis on Alternative Management Areas, and emphasized increases in either motorized or non-motorized recreation.

- An alternative emphasizing maintenance of aspen acreage present at the end of the first decade of implementation of the 1986 Plans, while concurrently addressing the revision's biological diversity issue.
- Alternative(s) providing ATV off-road, off-trail cross-country use.
- Alternatives providing an increase in ATV intensive use areas.
- An alternative considering all Inventoried Roadless Areas mapped in the Roadless Area Conservation Rule Final Environmental Statement (RACFS) as potential Wilderness.
- An alternative maintaining the combined ASQs for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests at the level predicted in the 1986 Plans, or increasing the ASQs to the level calculated in the Maximum Timber Benchmark.
- An alternative permitting departure from the policy of non-declining timber yield.

Alternatives Considered In Detail

Selected Alternative

The Selected Alternative is a modification of Alternative 5. Like Alternative 5, the Selected Alternative provides a traditionally managed forest that emphasizes hardwood sawtimber, however, the Selected Alternative differs from Alternative 5 by increasing emphasis on ecosystem restoration and a higher level of landscape scale interior forest conditions. The emphasis on Old Growth areas in Alternative 5 is also present in the Selected Alternative. The amount of area recommended for Wilderness study is similar as well. It provides for increased species viability over time through protection of ecological reference areas, a higher allocation of management with modified silvicultural methods that provide for some amount of ecosystem restoration. Like Alternative 5, the Selected Alternative provides about equal and relatively moderate emphasis on motorized and non-motorized recreation. It provides a moderate level of new ATV trails on the Forests and low amounts of opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. It provides a moderate level of aspen emphasis. The combined ASQ for this alternative is 1.31 billion board feet.

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 is the No Action alternative and reflects the forest-wide direction from each of the 1986 Plans. "No Action" means that the current management allocations, activities and management direction found in the existing Plans, as amended, would continue. One change was included in this alternative: the combined ASQs were limited to 1.46 billion board feet because the timber capability was reanalyzed using the current Plans' management direction, and 1.46 billion board feet was the upper limit of timber production capability.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 places the most emphasis of the Revision Alternatives on production and maintenance of early successional species. It also emphasizes more motorized recreation than other alternatives, provides the highest amount of new ATV trails and connectors, and provides for the longest annual ATV use of designated routes (on-road use). This alternative provides the least emphasis on northern hardwood interior forest, oak and pine forest, and on management for surrogate barrens. It provides the highest number of acres with aspen emphasis, including Alternative 1. Alternative 2 identifies one area to be recommended for Wilderness study (6,300 acres). This alternative has a combined ASQ of 1.34 billion board feet, which is second highest of the alternatives.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 places the most emphasis of all alternatives on ecosystem restoration, landscape scale interior forest conditions, and providing semi-primitive non-motorized experience. This alternative provides no new ATV trails, a low number of connectors, and does not permit ATV use on classified roads. It identifies two areas for recommended Wilderness study (8,000 acres). Alternative 3 provides the highest acreage of the alternatives in Management Area 6B semi-primitive non-motorized areas (suited timberlands), and a relatively high amount of the Management Area 6A (non-suited timberlands) semi-primitive non-motorized areas. The alternative provides for a combined ASQ of 1.24 billion board feet, and provides the highest emphasis on modified silvicultural methods to achieve ecosystem restoration components. It provides a relatively low acreage of aspen emphasis.

Alternative 4

Alternative 4 responds primarily to the lack of quality remote recreational settings on the Forests, recommending all 8 potential Wilderness areas for study (56,100 acres), and designating the most Management Area 6A semi-primitive non-motorized acres of any alternative, and a relatively high amount of Management Area 6B semi-primitive non-motorized areas. No new ATV trails are provided for, ATVs are not permitted on roads, and ATV access is not permitted on the Nicolet. This alternative provides for a moderate level of ecosystem restoration, including a moderate emphasis on landscape scale interior forest conditions. Alternative 4 provides the lowest number of suitable acres, and the lowest combined ASQ of 1.22 billion board feet, and the lowest number of acres with aspen emphasis.

Alternative 5

Alternative 5 provides a traditionally managed forest that emphasizes hardwood sawtimber. It provides for species viability over time through protection of ecological reference areas, some allocation of management with modified silvicultural methods providing for some amount of ecosystem restoration. This alternative provides about equal and relatively moderate emphasis on motorized and non-motorized recreation. It provides a moderate level of new ATV trails and connectors on the Forests and 3 ½ months of ATV access to classified roads. The alternative recommends three areas for Wilderness study (15,400 acres), and provides low amounts of opportunities for semi-primitive non-motorized recreation. The alternative provides a low to moderate emphasis on landscape scale interior forest conditions, and a high emphasis on Old Growth areas. It provides a moderate level of aspen emphasis. The combined ASQ for this alternative is 1.30 billion board feet.

Alternative 6

Alternative 6 provides a forest where early-successional species receive some emphasis while providing moderate emphasis on biological diversity issues. There are moderate amounts of non-motorized recreational opportunities in this alternative, and more of the non-motorized areas are managed for timber. Conversion of early successional to longer-lived species progresses relatively slowly, and the alternative maintains a moderate emphasis on factors related to biological diversity. Recreation opportunities focus on non-motorized areas having a fully managed forest, on low amounts of semi-primitive non-motorized opportunities, and on low to moderate opportunities for ATV access. Alternative 6 recommends four areas for Wilderness study (28,985 acres). Its combined ASQ is 1.29 billion board feet, and it provides for a high number of acres emphasizing aspen.

Alternative 7

Alternative 7 responds to concerns for production of northern hardwood sawtimber products and has a moderate to high emphasis on biological diversity, providing a moderate amount of emphasis on landscape scale patches of interior forest. It provides a high amount of Old Growth areas. This alternative provides for no new ATV trails, some new ATV connectors, and no ATV road routes unless serving as connectors. Alternative 7 allocates a moderate amount of acres to semi-primitive non-motorized emphasis, and recommends four areas for Wilderness study (25,771 acres). The combined ASQ for this alternative is 1.29 billion board feet, and the alternative provides for a moderate level of aspen emphasis.

Alternative 9

Alternative 9 provides a high response to biological diversity issues, and provides high amounts of motorized recreation access and ATV use. This alternative provides for the most new ATV trails and connectors, but does not permit ATV access on classified roads, except as connectors. It recommends three areas for Wilderness study (15,803 acres), and provides a low amount of the more remote form of semi-primitive non-motorized areas, and a moderate amount of the semi-primitive non-motorized areas with timber management. This alternative provides the second strongest emphasis on ecosystem restoration, a high emphasis on landscape scale patch management and Old Growth. The combined ASQ for this alternative is 1.31 billion board feet, and it provides a low emphasis on aspen management.

Consistency with Other National Policies, Laws, and Authorities

The list of laws and policies provided here is not a complete list of all laws, regulations, Executive Orders, etc. that might apply to the Forest Plan Revision. In all cases the alternatives are consistent with national law, policy, and direction.

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA)

The 1982 National Forest Management Act (NFMA) regulation (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)) require that at least one alternative be developed that responds to and incorporates the Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program's tentative resource objectives for each National Forest/Grassland as displayed in Regional Guides.

The Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000), in lieu of an RPA Program, was completed in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

While Forest Plans should be consistent with the broad guidance provided in the Strategic plan and should consider the information provided by the RPA Assessment along with other available and relevant science, neither the Strategic Plan nor the Assessment contain recommended outputs that must be incorporated in specific Forest Plans.

Government Performance Results Act (GPRA)—Forest Service Strategic Plan

The GPRA requires Federal agencies to prepare periodic strategic and annual performance plans, focusing on outcomes and results. The first Strategic Plan issued by the Forest Service in 1997 replaced the Agency's former strategic plan created under the RPA. This plan was updated in 2000.

The goals and objectives in the revised Forest Plan are consistent with the Forest Service Strategic Plan.

Ecosystems Health – The revised Forest Plan addresses ecosystem health in a variety of ways. It uses ecosystem management as the basic framework when developing management direction. Management activities are tailored to the capabilities and sensitivities of specific landscapes across the Forest. The revised Plan emphasizes vegetation and fuel treatments to move vegetation toward desired conditions in an environmentally sensitive manner. It includes standards and guidelines to protect, improve, and/or mitigate impacts to watersheds, riparian and aquatic habitats, and to threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitats.

Multiple Benefits to People – The revised Forest Plan provides sustainable levels of economic contributions to communities and continuance of a variety of uses, while providing clean water, protections for at-risk ecosystems components, proper ecosystem functioning, and a broad spectrum of recreation uses.

Scientific and Technical Assistance – The revised Forest Plan is based on adaptive management, using monitoring and evaluation to enhance our understanding of the resources. Monitoring and evaluation provide an avenue for incorporating new information and obtaining technical assistance on management problems. Monitoring and evaluation give us an indication of progress toward desired conditions. As scientific and technological changes take place, there may be changes to monitoring and evaluation methods that allow us to measure progress in new ways. Monitoring is a tool, while desired conditions are the objective. I fully anticipate advances in technology and research findings to change our understanding of indicators monitored and methods used.

Effective Public Service – The revised Forest Plan was developed in response to comments from the public regarding management of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests, as well as in response to results of monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the 1986 Forest Plans. The revised Plan provides for human uses of the environment as well as preserving much of the inherent “wildness” of some areas on the Forests. Forest Plan goals and objectives emphasize cooperation and coordination with other interested parties in management of the natural resources on the Forests.

Healthy Forest Restoration Act—Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) National Fire Plan (NFP)

In August, 2002, the President announced a series of new administrative steps referred to as the HFI to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires and improve the health of our nation’s forests.

These actions will reduce red tape and delays in reduction of devastating fires and insect infestations that damage both public and private lands. The new procedures will ensure that needed environmental reviews and public review processes are conducted in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The NFP is a long-term investment that will help protect communities and natural resources, and most importantly, the lives of firefighters and the public. The NFP is a key component of the HFI. It is a long-term commitment based on cooperation and communication among Federal agencies, States, local governments, tribes, and interested publics. Federal wildland fire management agencies worked closely with the partners to prepare a 10-year Comprehensive Strategy, completed in August 2001.

The revised Forest Plan provides direction that implements the NFP by applying broader uses of prescribed fire.

This decision is consistent with the Healthy Forest Restoration Act as old growth areas are identified and protected. This decision continues vegetation management activities to restore and enhance a healthy forest.

National Energy Policy (Executive Order 13212)

In May 2001, Executive Order 13212 was signed to expedite the processing of energy-related projects. The National Energy Plan was developed to implement the Executive Order. The Plan Revision Team validated that no additional utility corridors are planned by local utility companies across the Forests. Existing corridors are displayed on maps in the planning record. It is my determination that the revised Plan is in compliance with Executive Order 13212.

Transportation Rule and Policy

On January 12, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service signed the Administration of the Forest Development Transportation System; Prohibitions; Use of Motor Vehicles Off Forest Service Roads (Transportation Rule), and Forest Service Transportation, Final Administrative Policy (Transportation Policy). The Transportation Rule and Policy provide guidance for transportation analysis; they do not dictate or adopt land management decisions.

The transportation Rule requires the Forest Service to identify a minimum road system, determining which roads are needed (classified) and which roads are unneeded

(unclassified). Decisions are to be accomplished through area/project planning and documented through NEPA process, including full public participation.

Beginning on January 12, 2002, the Transportation Policy requires that a roads analysis (watershed or project-area scale) be prepared before most road management decisions are made to inform those decisions to construct or reconstruct roads. This roads analysis is not a formal decision-making process. Road management decisions are made through the NEPA process with full public and tribal participation and involvement.

The *Roads Analysis, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest* was completed in December, 2002. As required by the Transportation Policy the information in that analysis has been used to inform my decision.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The revised Forest Plan will provide management direction for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests for the next 10-15 years. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) discloses the effects for a range of alternatives addressing the issues associated with the need for change, including a No Action Alternative, Alternative 1. The FEIS considered effects to the significant issues and other resources over the planning period and projected over the next 100 to 150 years, depending on the resource area.

Decisions made in the revised Forest Plan do not represent irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources. Actions that would disturb Forest resources cannot occur without further environmental analysis, public involvement, and a decision document, therefore this revised Forest Plan does not result in a commitment of resources.

During project implementation the application of standards and guidelines limit the extent and duration of any adverse environmental impacts associated with management activities proposed under the guidance of this revised Forest Plan. For a detailed discussion of effects see Chapter 3 of the FEIS.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

Regulations implementing NEPA require the specification of "...the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable" (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). The Council on Environmental Quality defined the "environmentally preferable" alternatives as

"...the alternatives that will promote the national environmental policy as expressed in NEPA's section 101. Ordinarily, this means the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural, and natural resources."

Based on the analysis of effects contained in the FEIS, Alternatives 3 and 4 are the environmentally preferable alternatives, each for its own reasons. Alternative 3 would accomplish the greatest level of ecological restoration within a broad array of forest systems over the long-term than any of the other alternatives. This Alternative also has the second highest allocation of acreage to management areas protected from disturbance. Alternative 4 would provide the highest level of protection from disturbance. It has the least amount of timber harvest, the least amount of new ATV trail (zero miles), and the most allocation of forest acreage to areas protected from

disturbance, including areas recommended as Wilderness Study Areas and SPNM areas not managed for timber. Alternative 4 ranks second with regard to ecological restoration across a wide array of ecosystems.

Although Alternatives 3 and 4 are preferable from the standpoint of the physical and biological environment and are most responsive to the ecological issues raised in the need for change identified in the Notice of Intent to revise these Plans, they provide simplistic resolution to the socio-economic issues. Forest management is complex. Use and protection of biological resources and physical resources must mesh with social and economic well-being. I believe that the Selected Alternative addresses this complexity and provides a better balance among social, economic, physical, and biological aspects of the environment.

I believe the Selected Alternative incorporates the best of the ecological management changes of Alternatives 3 and 4. The Selected Alternative sufficiently shifts management of the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests in an ecological direction that provides for and contributes to species viability and diversity. I also believe the Selected Alternative is a more balanced consideration of the socioeconomic issues of long established human use and sense of place associated with these forests – issues of long-term reduction in aspen habitat and potential reductions in populations of associated game species, issues surrounding the level of timber production important to local communities, and the relative opportunities for motorized and non-motorized recreation.

Monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the changes I have made, over time, will guide the Forests to determine if there is need for any further long-term ecological shifts in forest management. Until such a need is identified, the information I have indicates the Selected Alternative is the appropriate management balance for these Forests to provide the highest net benefit to the public over the long-term.

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act as Amended by the National Forest Management Act

When the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests began this revision effort in June 1996, the Agency's 1982 planning regulations were in effect. On November 9, 2000 a new planning rule was adopted. This new rule permitted ongoing revisions to be completed under the 1982 rule if the revision had begun before the 2000 rule was issued. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests revision effort met this criterion and has proceeded under the 1982 planning regulations.

Net Public Benefit (NPB)

Forest Plans are supposed to "...provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services from the National Forest System in a way that maximizes long term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner" [36 CFR 219.1(a)]. Net public benefits can be defined as the overall value to the Nation of all outputs (benefits) and positive effects, less all associated inputs (costs) and negative effects, whether they can be quantitatively valued or not.

Present Net Value (PNV)

Part of determining net public benefits is determining the Present Net Value, which is used in the determination of economic efficiency of each alternative. A comparison of the alternatives' PNVs is shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Present Net Value by Alternative	
Alternative	Economic Efficiency PNV
Alternative 1	\$ 2.653 billion
Alternative 2	\$ 2.567 billion
Alternative 3	\$ 2.591 billion
Alternative 4	\$ 2.596 billion
Alternative 5	\$ 2.587 billion
Alternative 6	\$ 2.585 billion
Alternative 7	\$ 2.590 billion
Alternative 9	\$ 2.566 billion
Selected Alternative	\$ 2.575 billion

As shown above, all alternatives except Alternatives 2 and 9, have higher PNVs than the Selected Alternative (revised Forest Plan). The differences among these PNV's were based primarily on differences in the alternatives' timber programs, and some differences in estimated recreation activity. The values considered in the PNV calculations are those that either have a market value, or that have assigned values based on estimates of Forest Service research.

Determining the alternative that "...maximizes long term public benefits..." goes beyond this comparison of costs, market values, and amenities with readily assigned values. This determination considers such elements as balancing the ATV policies on these two Forests, responding to scientific information that demonstrates the need to shift management emphasis in order to maintain biological diversity and ensure species viability, and lessening the conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities. Since PNV does not include these sorts of non-priced benefits, it was not my only criterion used in my decision.

Based on the preceding discussion, it is clear that the revised Forest Plan (Selected Alternative) does not have the least impact on the environment, nor does it generate the most market value commodities and amenities. However, I believe it does best balance the maintenance of high values of the elements considered in economic efficiency, and of the non-priced benefits that are a critical part of the need for change in these Plans.

I am confident that the management direction contained in the revised Forest Plan is within the physical and biological capability of the land, and can be accomplished without a reduction of that capability.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898 (59 Federal Register 7629, 1994) directs federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations.

I have determined, from the analysis disclosed in the FEIS that the revised Forest Plan is in compliance with Executive Order 12898.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

The Endangered Species Act creates an affirmative obligation "...that all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered and threatened (and proposed) species" of fish, wildlife, and plants. This obligation is further clarified in the national Interagency memorandum of Agreement (dated August 30, 2000) which states our shared mission to "...enhance conservation of imperiled species while delivering appropriate goods and services provided by the lands and resources."

Based upon my consultation with the USFWS, their concurrence with our Biological Assessment, and my commitment to meet obligations under ESA concerning conservation measures, reasonable and prudent measures, and terms and conditions, I have determined that the Revised Plan is in compliance with the ESA.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act (Executive Order 13186)

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and as such does not authorize any site-specific activity. It includes direction to improve structure, composition, and pattern of ecological systems distributed across the landscape to provide greater assurance of ecosystems sustainability, and species diversity and viability (revised Forest Plan, Chapters 1, 2, and 3). Potential impacts to habitat from proposed vegetation treatments will be analyzed at the site-specific project level. I have determined that the management direction and monitoring plan of the revised Forest Plan are in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186.

Clean Air Act

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Some prescribed burning may occur during implementation of the revised Forest Plan. According to analysis disclosed in the FEIS, all alternatives are expected to meet air quality standards. Potential impacts will be analyzed at the project level, and will comply with appropriate air quality regulations. The revised Forest Plan protects air quality and complies with the rules, regulations, and permit procedures of the EPA. I have determined that the revised Forest Plan will comply with the provisions of the Clean Air Act.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Projects undertaken in response to direction of the revised Forest Plan will fully comply with the laws and regulations that ensure protection of cultural resources. The revised Forest Plan contains direction for cultural resource management including direction to integrate cultural resource management with other resource management activities.

Several other laws apply to the preservation of cultural resources on federal land. Since the revised Forest Plan does not authorize ground-disturbing activities, consultation with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) under the NHPA is not required. Tribal consultation has occurred during the development of this revised Forest Plan.

It is my determination that the revised Forest Plan complies with the NHPA and other statutes that pertain to the protection of cultural resources.

Clean Water Act

The objective of the Clean Water Act is to "...restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters." One of the Act's goals is to "...provide for the protection and propagation of fish, shellfish, and wildlife" and provide for "...recreation in and on the water" (33 U.S.C. 466 et seq., Title I, Section 101). Based on analysis disclosed in the FEIS, the revised Forest Plan satisfies the Clean Water Act.

The revised Forest Plan contains management direction to ensure management activities maintain or improve watershed conditions. Management direction including best management practices is designed to maintain or improve soil, water, riparian, wetland, and aquatic resources, including beneficial uses. Cumulatively this direction will ensure continued compliance with the Clean Water Act.

Energy Requirement and Conservation Potential

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Because the scope of the proposed action is limited both in terms of geographic area and extent of activities, the FEIS explains that the revised Plan will have little or no effect on current local energy use and offers no opportunity for energy conservation.

Invasive Species (Executive Order 13112)

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Executive Order 13112 on Invasive Species directs that Federal agencies should not authorize any activities that would increase the spread of invasive species. The revised Forest Plan includes direction designed to limit the spread of invasive species. Therefore I have determined the revised Forest Plan is in compliance with E.O. 13112.

Prime Farmland, Rangeland and Forestland (Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum # 1827)

The revised Forest Plan complies with the Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum #1827, which requires conservation of prime farmland, rangeland, and forestland. This revised Plan manages the Forest with sensitivity toward adjacent private and public land uses. It includes guidance to cooperate and coordinate with adjacent and surrounding landowners when conducting management activities on the Forest to minimize impacts on their management.

Wetlands and Floodplains

The revised Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. It contains direction for improvements to riparian and wetland areas, contains standards and guidelines providing protection for them, and describes the long-term desired conditions for such areas. Therefore, I have determined that the revised Forest Plan will not have any adverse impacts on wetlands and floodplains.

Equal Employment Opportunity, Effects on Minorities and Women

The FEIS describes the impacts to social and economic factors in Chapter 3. The revised Forest Plan will not have a disproportionate impact on any minority or low-income communities. I have determined that the revised Forest Plan will not differentially affect the Civil Rights of any citizens, including women and minorities.

Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Government, 1994.

These policies support the Forest Service actions in establishing mutual and beneficial partnerships with American Indians and Alaska Natives and honoring treaty obligations. Forest Service policy is recorded in FSM 1563.

Other Policies

The existing body of national direction for managing National Forests remains in effect. Standards and guidelines included in the revised Forest Plan provide direction specific to the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. The revised Forest Plan provides direction contributing to the Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 revision).

Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation

How and When the Revised Forest Plan will be Implemented

Implementation of this ROD may occur 30 calendar days after the Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision and Final EIS is published in the *Federal Register* (36 CFR 219.10 (c)(1)). Implementation of the Revised Plan will be accomplished and tracked through the objectives detailed in Chapter 3 of the Revised Plan. These objectives will be used to help design the Forests' annual program of work. They will also be used to formulate out year budget requests.

Transition to the Forest Plan

Revised Plan direction will apply to all projects that have decisions made on or after the implementation date of this ROD.

There are many management actions that have decisions made before the implementation date of this ROD. The projected effects of these actions are part of the baseline analysis documented in the FEIS and Biological Assessment for the Revised Plan.

Recognizing that execution of all phases of ATV decision will not occur immediately, an ATV Use Transition Plan will be developed to provide guidance for processes and designation of ATV routes and trails open for public use. When the ROD is implemented, closure orders will be issued for the immediate closure of off trail/off road ATV use as well as the Open 26 play area on the Washburn Ranger District.

The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) 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, NFMA 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."

I have decided not to modify any existing timber sale contracts solely due to the Revised Plan. These contracts will be executed according to their terms and these effects were disclosed in the FEIS. Existing timber contracts will, in most cases, be completed within three years. The decision is left to the Forest Supervisor to determine whether to modify decisions authorizing timber sales not currently under contract.

Other use and occupancy agreements are substantially longer than timber contracts. These use and occupancy agreements will be reviewed to determine whether or when the Forest Supervisor should exercise discretion to bring them into compliance with the revised Forest Plan. Recent project decisions that have not yet been implemented will be reviewed and adjusted by the decision maker, if necessary, to meet the direction found in the revised Plan.

The decision maker has the discretion on a case-by-case basis, to modify pre-existing authorizations to bring them into compliance with the revised Forest Plan standards and guidelines. I find that the statutory criteria of "as soon as practicable" and excepting "valid existing rights" useful in exercising that discretion.

Future Changes to the Plan

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is designed to answer questions regarding implementation of the Revised Plan. Monitoring and evaluation will tightly focus on decisions made in the Record of Decision (ROD). Elements in monitoring will include requirements from NFMA regulation as well as other pertinent law and regulation.

Evaluation reports will display how Forest Plan decisions have been implemented, how effective the implementation has proved to be in accomplishing desired outcomes as well as what we learned along the way. This will allow a check and review of the validity of the assumptions upon which decisions were based.

Amending the Forest Plan

The aim of monitoring is adaptive management—the ability to respond to current conditions or make appropriate changes based on new information or technology. Forest Plans are normally revised on a 10-year cycle with anticipated completion of the revision occurring 10-15 years after plan approval. However, depending on the answers to monitoring questions, the Forest Plan may be amended or revised to adapt to new information and changed conditions.

The need to amend the plan may result from:

- Recommendations of an interdisciplinary team based on monitoring and evaluation results.
- Determinations by the Forest Supervisor that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperating agreement or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but not consistent with elements of the Plans management direction.
- Administrative appeal decisions
- Planning errors found during forest plan implementation
- Changes in physical, biological, social or economic condition.

The Forest Supervisor will determine whether the proposed changes in the Forest Plan are significant or non-significant. Significance here is defined by the NFMA regulations and is different than significance as used under NEPA.

Administrative Appeal of My Decision

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to the provisions of 36 CFR 217.3. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appears in the Milwaukee Journal. Appeals must be sent to:

<p>Regular Mail: USDA Forest Service – Appeals Group Attn: EMC Staff Stop 1104 1400 Independence Ave SW Washington DC, 20250-1104</p>	<p>FedEx: USDA Forest Service – Appeals Group Attn: EMC 201 14th Street SW 3rd Floor Central Washington DC 20024</p>
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Because of time delays related to increased security requirements, the Federal Express address may provide earlier delivery.

A copy of the appeal must simultaneously be sent to the deciding officer:

Regional Forester of the Eastern Region
 USDA Forest Service
 Eastern Region
 626 East Wisconsin Avenue
 Milwaukee, WI 53202

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217.
- The name, address, and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and subject.
- Date of the decision and name of and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made.
- The reason for the appeal including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

Contacts

More information on this decision, the revised Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests Land and Resource Plan, and/or the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forests Final Environmental Impact Statement can be obtained by contacting:

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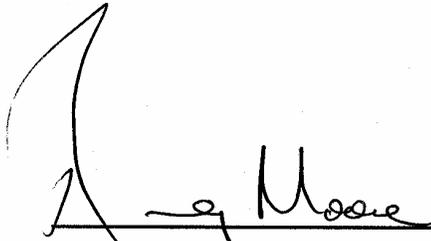
Public Affairs Officer
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
68 S Stevens Street
Rhineland, Wisconsin 54501
(715) 362-1362 or (715) 362-1300

Conclusion

For the past several years, Chequamegon-Nicolet personnel have worked with tribal governments, members of the public, elected officials, and other agencies to produce the revised Forest Plan. I am pleased to make my decision based upon solid relationships that have evolved through coordination and cooperation to ensure sustainable conditions for the ecological and human environments on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests.

The revised Forest Plan evolved from alternatives formed from the best available science and the work of a dedicated interdisciplinary team of Forest Service employees. However, science does not always provide definitive answers to complex resource management topics, nor can any one field of science provide all of the answers. Yet science can offer insight into the effects of management decisions and actions. In other words, good science can clear the fog and let us see which choice best lets us reach our goals.

The challenge that remains before all of us is to work together to implement the revised Forest Plan. I fully understand this can be difficult to achieve. At the same time, I am confident that cooperation will unite us, because I believe that the concern we all have for the Forest is our common bond—that these lands remain productive, ecologically healthy, and beautiful—for both the current generation and future generations.



Randy Moore, Regional Forester

3/30/04

Date

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**Chequamegon-Nicolet
National Forests**

