

Recreation Facilities, Settings and Opportunities

Key Message:

The Superior National Forest and northern Minnesota in general, are renowned locally, regionally, and nationally for the quality and variety of recreational opportunities they provide. Recreation use will be managed to provide desired opportunities, reduce user conflicts, and avoid damage to the forest. The Superior is the eighth most visited national forest in the entire country. Providing outdoor recreation opportunities is a public-private partnership in Minnesota, involving federal, State, county and local levels. The Plan recognizes the incomparable value of the BWCAW, the many developed and dispersed recreation activities, and the contribution to local economies by those using the BWCAW and non-wilderness recreation opportunities.

The Plan:

- *Retains the numerous existing recreational developments that exist on the Forest, including non-motorized trails, developed and primitive campsites, picnic areas, swimming beaches, etc.) (See attached table)*
- *Increases the amount of National Forest System land that is managed with a primary emphasis on recreation.*
- *Puts greater emphasis on recreational opportunities that are unique to the Superior NF, including semi-primitive areas and scenic landscapes.*
- *Continues to offer a natural setting with road access to many areas*
- *Places high priority on scenery management in areas such as the Gunflint and Fernberg corridors and the North Shore.*
- *Provides for increased scenic quality in the ¼ to 3 mile area as viewed from popular travel routes and use areas.*
- *Provides for management of RMV use on the forest through a system of designated trails and use of designated forest roads.*

Change from 1986 Plan:

When compared to the 1986 Forest Plan, the Revised Plan provides:

- 41,500-acre increase in Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape MA
- 4,500-acre increase in Semi-primitive Non-motorized Recreation MA
- 30,000-acre increase in Semi-primitive Motorized Recreation MA

Under the Revised Plan, the Superior National Forest will be managed for the following mix of recreational experiences:

- 5% of the Forest provides a primitive recreation experience
- 29% of the Forest provides a semi-primitive non-motorized experience
- 8% of the Forest provides a semi-primitive motorized experience
- 57% of the Forest provides a roaded-natural experience, (75% of these “roaded natural” areas have remote character)
- 1% of the Forest provides a more rural type of experience.

Change from Proposed Plan:

In the Proposed Plan, the Isabella Pines area was allocated to the “Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape” Management Area, however we determined that this area did not have the same characteristics of all the other areas allocated to that management area. Those other areas (Gunflint Trail, the North Shore, Johnson Lake, Fernberg Corridor, etc) are along highly

traveled roads, and are destination-type areas, with resorts, lodges, and highly developed recreational facilities. The Isabella Pines area has more dispersed recreation types of facilities and is along a much less traveled highway.

In the Revised Plan, the Cucumber Lake area is expanded (adding approximately 1000 acres) to include additional interconnected lakes and land areas that could provide a better semi-primitive nonmotorized canoeing experience.

Superior National Forest – Existing Recreational Facilities

| Recreation Facility Type | Key Features | |
|--|--|---|
| Developed (Fee)Campgrounds | 23 campgrounds of 3 to 66 campsites Most have potable water 2 campgrounds w/ electrical hookup | 597 total campsites capacity of up to 4,800 people. |
| Rustic (No fee) campgrounds | 18 campgrounds of 1 to 8 campsites | 64 total campsites capacity of up to 500 people. |
| Backcountry campsites | 236 water access campsites on 99 lakes, capacity of up to 1,800 people | 41 hike-in campsites with capacity of up to 320 backpackers |
| Non-wilderness canoe routes | 13 routes of 1 to 39 miles in length | |
| Picnic Areas | 16 picnic areas with 1 to 25 tables | |
| Swimming Beaches | 10 beaches, no lifeguard patrol | |
| Water Access Sites | 82 developed carry-down sites | 98 developed ramp (drive- down) sites |
| Trails 2,788 total opportunity miles | Outside BWCA Wilderness (Miles) | Inside BWCAW (Miles) |
| Hiking | 474 | 192 |
| Portages | 43 | 154 (summer) 20 (winter) |
| Hunting/Fishing Trails | 80 | |
| Interpretation Trails | 3.75 | |
| Horse Trails | 90 | |
| Bike Trails | 255 | |
| ATV Trails | 40 (current, additional proposed in Revised Plan) | |
| Cross Country Ski Trails | 473 | 43 |
| Snowmobile Trails (current, additional proposed in Revised Plan) | 705 (current, additional proposed in Revised Plan) | 6 (by law) |
| Dogsled | 91 | |
| Snowshoe | 199 | |
| The above list facilities shows that the Superior National Forests provides a vast array of recreational opportunities, from developed sites to primitive sites and from motorized use to non-motorized use. In addition to these facilities, the Forest also provides a spectrum of recreational settings, ranging from places without facilities where a recreational visitor can have quiet and solitude with few amenities such as roads, to places with a high degree of facility comforts where they can expect interaction with other visitors. | | |