

Vegetation Management

Key Message:

The Revised Plan provides direction for long-term health of the land by actively managing ecosystems through timber management, prescribed fire, wildlife and watershed enhancement projects, and in some areas, allowing natural processes to dominate. The Revised Plan lists short term (10-20 year) and long-term (100+ year) goals for age, composition and tree species diversity. These objectives were developed to ensure biological diversity and forest health, adequate wildlife habitat, productive forests, and contribution to a vibrant timber and tourist industry. The Revised Plan uses a Landscape Ecosystem approach for managing vegetation, which was developed through the Minnesota Forest Resources Council. This approach will help facilitate cooperative management among land owners and land managers within the forest landscape.

Vegetative objectives at a specific site on the Forest will be determined through a combination of Landscape Ecosystem Objectives (what is desired landscape-wide) and Management Area direction (what is desired socially and economically in a specific area of the Forest).

The Plan:

- *Sets objectives for vegetation will result in wildlife habitat, timber products, and management for watershed, riparian and scenic values*
- *Calls for an increase in the amount of red, white and jack pine, spruce/fir and northern hardwood vegetative communities.*
- *Calls for maintaining the current acreage of lowland conifer and lowland hardwoods.*
- *Calls for a decrease in the amount of aspen vegetative communities.*
- *Has goals for increased tree species diversity within stands (more mix of tree species within a stand).*
- *Maintains a full range of age classes from young to old trees.*
- *Increases acres of old forest, old growth forest, and multi-aged upland forest vegetation.*
- *Provides for old growth through vegetative objectives, and through Management Areas that are not suitable for timber management.*
- *Encourages larger patches of both old and young trees.*
- *Increases the maximum size limit for temporary openings created by timber harvest to 1000 acres to better mimic natural disturbance patterns.*
- *Uses timber management as a primary tool for reaching vegetative objectives.*
- *Increases use of prescribed fire as a management tool, but does not use stand replacement fire.*

Briefing Paper

Landscape Ecosystem (LE) approach

The landscape ecosystem approach was developed using new information and science. The University of MN, the MN DNR, the Forest Service and the MN Forest Resources Council helped to develop this information and ways of using it in forest management. The National Forests do not exist within a vacuum, but are part of a larger ecosystem. Using this approach for vegetative management allows the various land managers to speak a common language and to better coordinate activities within the landscape.

Superior National Forest Landscape Ecosystems (Northern Superior Uplands Landscape)

- *Jack Pine/Black Spruce*
- *Dry-mesic Red and White Pine*
- *Mesic Red and White Pine*
- *Mesic Birch/Aspen/Spruce-Fir*
- *Sugar Maple*
- *Lowland Conifers (including rich swamp)*

Chippewa National Forest (Northern Minnesota Drift and Lake Plains Landscape)

- *Dry Pine*
- *Dry-mesic Pine*
- *Dry-mesic Pine/Oak*
- *Boreal Hardwood/Conifer*
- *Mesic Northern Hardwoods*
- *White Cedar Swamp*
- *Tamarack Swamp/Forested Bog/Forested Poor Fen*

LE objectives and Management Area direction work together to determine what vegetation management is carried out on the ground.

The LE objectives determine what the vegetation should be across an entire Landscape Ecosystem (for example, within the Jack Pine/Black Spruce ecosystem). The Management Area direction provides more general desired conditions for what is socially and economically desired within a management area.

Old growth

The landscape ecosystems have objectives for a full range of age classes including old forest and old growth forests. Old growth will be provided for in management areas not suited for timber management such as RNAs, Candidate RNAs, Unique Areas, and the BWCAW. Management Areas such as Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Recreation, Recreation Use in a Scenic Landscape, and Riparian Emphasis Areas will also contribute to old growth as they are managed to meet management area objectives. The Forest Plans include a guideline for protection of old growth characteristics when conducting projects covered under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act.