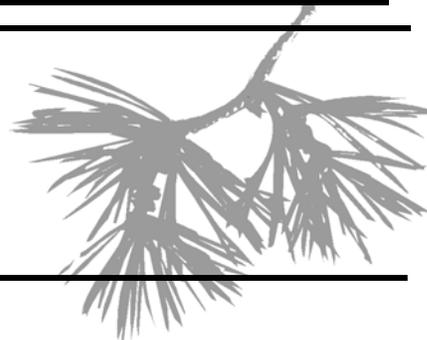

Chippewa and Superior National Forests



December 2001

Forest Plan Revision



Plan Revision Moves Ahead

The National Forest Management Act requires revision of all Forest Management Plans at least once every 15 years. Our current forest plans were issued in 1986. Revision of the Chippewa and Superior National Forest plans was initiated with publication of a Notice of Intent in August of 1997. A series of public workshops were held during the following year to develop preliminary alternatives that will be analyzed in an environmental impact statement (EIS). A set of preliminary alternatives had been identified when three significant events occurred that temporarily redirected plan revision efforts: the July 1999 wind storm, announcement of new planning regulations, and the national roadless area initiative. From the summer of 1999 to the present, the planning team has continued to refine the preliminary alternatives and has begun the EIS analysis based on new information and public input. The planning team is currently working on a draft EIS which we expect to release to the public by late summer, 2002.

New Issues and Key Indicators

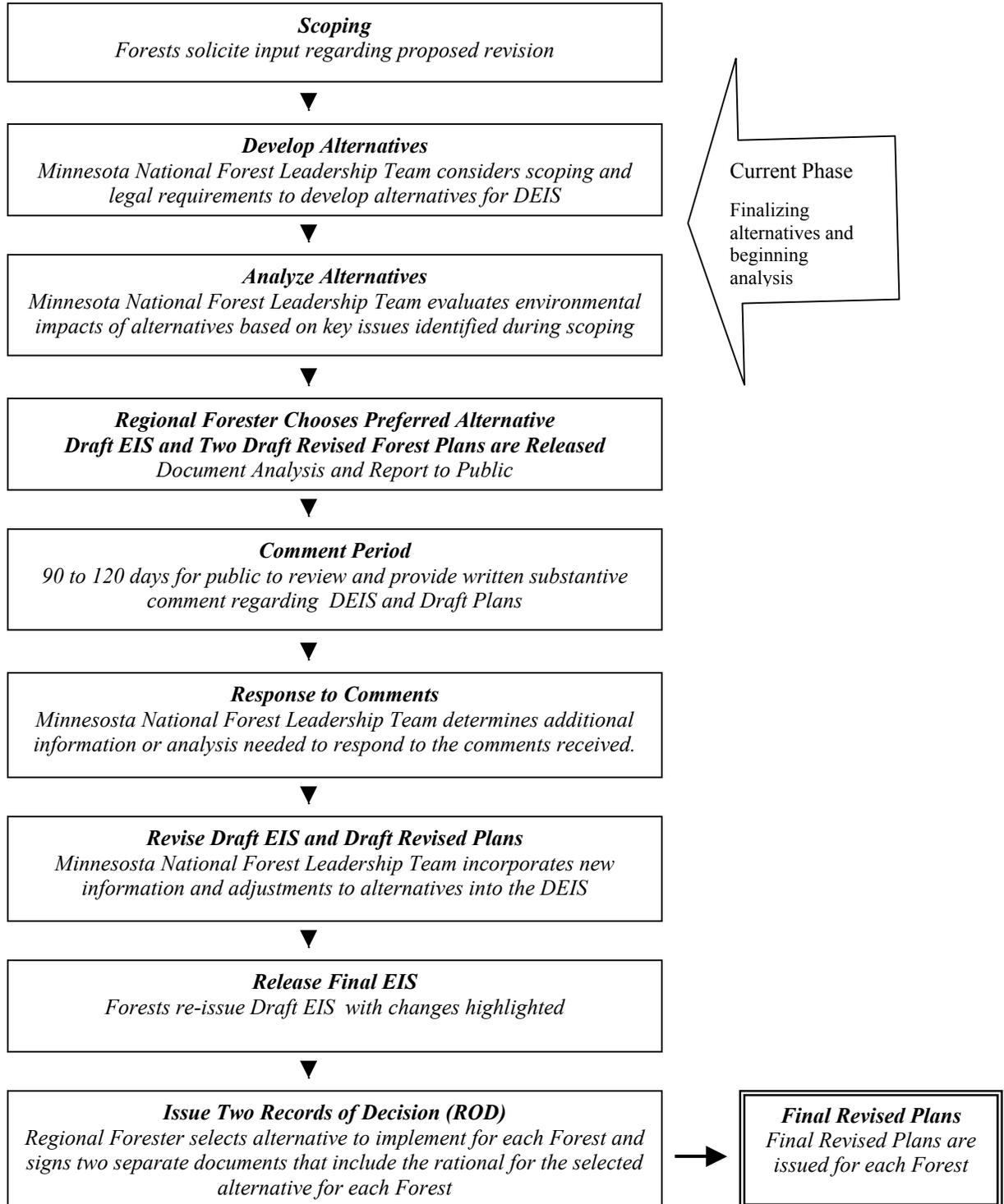
A preliminary list of issues was presented in the scoping information that went to the public earlier in the plan revision process. As a result of public input, several key issues were added that will be addressed in the plan revision analysis. The impacts of the alternatives will be measured and compared in terms of the key indicators for each issue. The table towards the back of this newsletter describes the entire range of issues the plan revision analysis will address.

The purpose of the forest plan is to:

- *guide all natural resource management activities on the forest*
- *establish management standards and guidelines*
- *provide for multiple use and sustained yield of goods and services*
- *realize maximum long-term net public benefits in an environmentally sound manner*

How are Forest Resource Management Plans Revised?

The Chippewa and Superior National Forests will complete a joint analysis and issue two separate decisions and two separate plans. This reflects similar analysis needs but differing local needs and constraints on the two forests. The plan revision team is operating under the 1982 Planning Regulations with a focus on sustainable management across the Forests as a whole. As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the analysis of the environmental effects of the various alternatives will be documented in an environmental impact statement (EIS). The plan revision process is following these basic steps:



A Landscape Ecosystem Management Approach

National Forests will continue to change regardless of our management activities. However, humans can affect the processes of change in light of ecosystem management objectives. Based on our knowledge of natural processes we can encourage the outcomes we want and discourage the outcomes that are not desirable. The analysis that guided development of the current (1986) forest plans focused on the outputs that different alternatives would provide within the various management areas. Multiple use allows for a range of activities to occur on the same piece of ground.

Revision of the Chippewa and Superior National Forest Plans will utilize a new approach to the developing and analyzing alternatives to help achieve a balance between social needs for multiple use and resource needs for biological diversity. The Landscape Ecosystems on the two Forests have been mapped. The Forest Service is establishing long term ecosystem goals, by alternative, for the condition of the vegetative landscape in 10, 50, and 100 years. The vegetative conditions will be projected for each of the management alternatives in terms of the key indicators.

Other major land management organizations in northeastern Minnesota are also analyzing their management in terms of the effects on the natural ecosystems. The Chippewa and Superior National Forests are involved in the Landscape Ecosystem Management approach developed by the Minnesota Forest Resource Council through the Northeast and North Central Minnesota assessment groups. We recognize that what happens on National Forest lands affects other ownerships that are interspersed within National Forest boundaries. While we are coordinating planning efforts with other parties and mapping conditions across all ownerships, the Forest Plan Revision decisions will only guide management on National Forest lands. The Chippewa and Superior National Forests are also coordinating with other National Forests in the region.

Landscape Ecosystems on the Two Forests

Landscape Ecosystems
are groupings of native plant communities where they dominate the landscape.

Chippewa

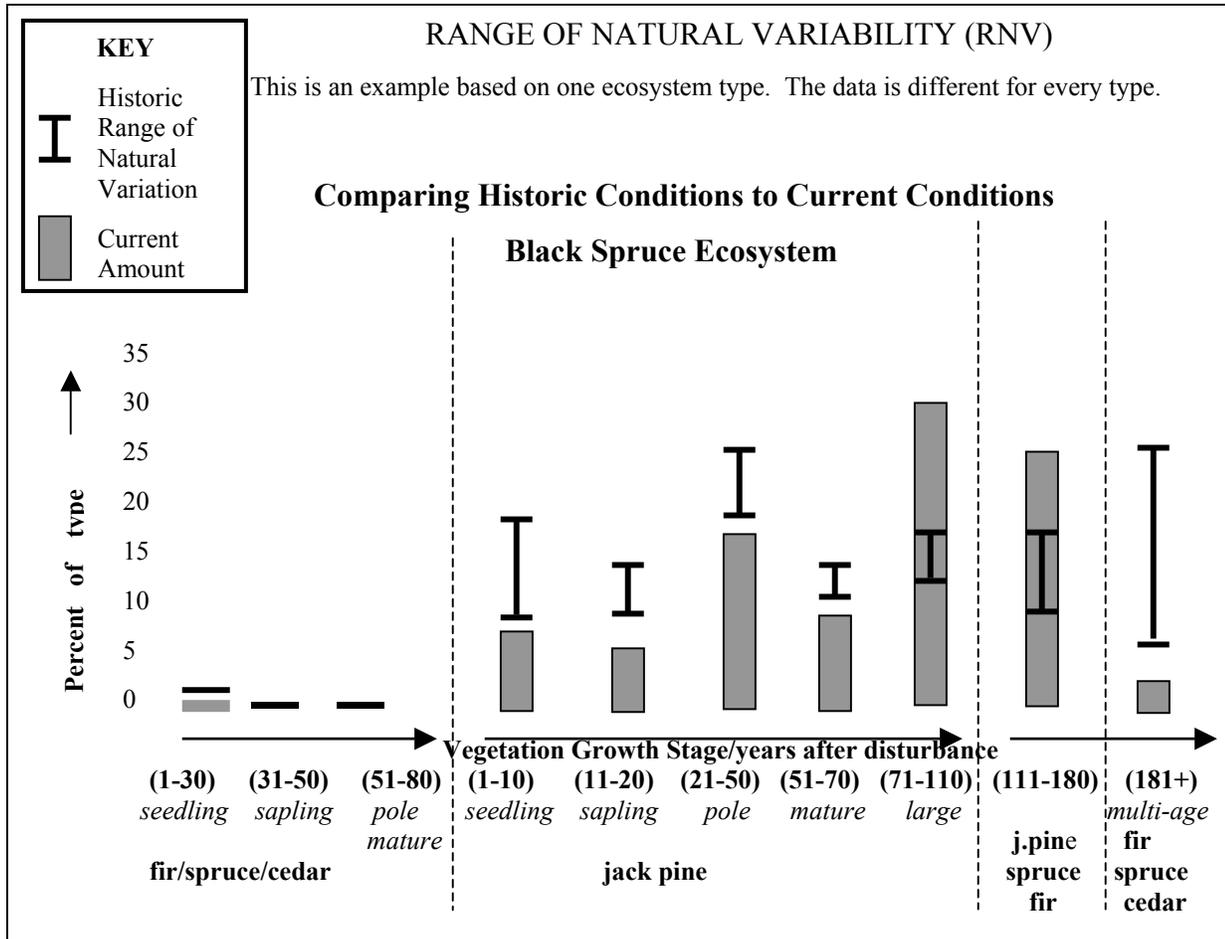
Dry Pine
Dry-mesic pine/oak
Dry-mesic pine
Boreal hardwood conifer
Mesic northern hardwood
Tamarack swamp
Forested poor fen
White cedar swamp
Wet meadow

Superior

Jack pine/black spruce
Mesic aspen-birch-fir-spruce
Dry-mesic white pine-red pine
Mesic white pine-red pine
Sugar maple
Lowland conifer
Rich swamp

Range of Natural Variability (RNV)

As noted in the table of Key Issues and Key Indicators, many pieces of information will be used to compare and evaluate trade-offs among the alternatives. One piece of information is *range of natural variability*. This information provides a comparison in terms of vegetative character over time. An example is the historic occurrence of different ages of Jack Pine in a Jack pine-black spruce landscape ecosystem at various periods of time after a disturbance. This can be displayed in a conceptual graph. The range of natural variability is represented by the vertical lines above each time period for the various ages and species. The current amount is represented by the shaded bars.



Range of Natural Variability

-past range of conditions in terms of composition, structure, and function of major ecosystems in the landscape. It does not imply ecosystems are able to – or there is a desire to – return to historical conditions.

Based on information about an existing Landscape Ecosystem we can use computer models to project what a particular ecosystem will look like in the future under different management scenarios described in the alternatives. We can then compare this projection to the range of natural variability to identify missing vegetative types or growth stages. The National Forests have coordinated with the Minnesota Forest Resource Council in collecting, analyzing, and defining the RNV for each of the landscape ecosystems listed earlier in this newsletter.

Key Issue (*new issue since NOI)	Key Indicators
Watershed Health*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount of watershed in open or young age class condition (acres) • amount and condition of roads in watersheds (miles per square mile or acres) • number of stream crossings in watersheds • amount of riparian area restored or enhanced within watershed (acres)
Riparian Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • abundance of large woody debris in riparian areas (tons per acre) • vegetation community composition and structure in riparian areas • amount of road in riparian areas (miles per square mile) • amount of soil compaction within riparian areas exceeding a specified threshold (acres) • shoreline disturbance (miles) • projected timber harvest in riparian areas (cords, board feet, cubic feet) • amount of riparian area restored or enhanced (acres)
Fish Habitat Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • river and stream channel conditions • focal species habitat (acres) • amount of fish habitat restored or enhanced (acres) • indicators from previous two issues
Changes in Tree Species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predicted forest vegetation community composition (acres)
Forest Age Class Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predicted forest vegetation communities by age class over time (acres)
Habitat Fragmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount and distribution of patch sizes by vegetation community type and age class (number, acres and location) • degree of connectivity • amount and distribution of forest interior habitat (acres and location) • amount of edge (miles) • road density (miles per square miles)
Old Growth Forests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount and distribution of old growth (acres and locations)
Rare Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lynx habitat (acres) • gray wolf habitat (acres) • bald eagle habitat (acres) • focal species habitat (acres) • habitat improvements for rare species or resources (acres, structures)
Wildlife Habitat Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road/trail density (miles per square mile) • focal species habitat (acres) • temporary and permanent upland openings (acres) • likelihood of maintaining viable populations of all species over time
Prescribed Fire Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • amount and location of management-ignited fire that could be used to meet ecological resource objectives (acres by forest type and age class) • amount and location of wildland fire that could be used as a tool to meet ecological resource objectives (acres by forest type and age class)
(continued on next page)	

Key Issue	Key Indicators (continued)
Uneven Aged Mgt & Even Age Mgt Management*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harvest methods by forest type and native plant community (acres)
Timber Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timber sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • aspen pulpwood sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • other hardwood pulpwood sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • softwood pulpwood sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • hardwood sawtimber sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • softwood sawtimber sell volume (board feet, cubic feet) • suitable land for timber production (acres, map display)
Scenic Quality*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenery Integrity Levels forestwide and by management area (acres)
Recreation Opportunities & Forest Settings*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Forest land by Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) class (Rural, Roaded Natural, Semiprimitive motorized; Semiprimitive Nonmotorized; Primitive) by management areas (acres) • road density by type of road by ROS class (miles per square mile/type of access) • trail density by type of trail and ROS class (miles per square mile/type of trail) • recreation motor vehicle and snowmobile cross-country access available (acres)
Potential Wilderness Additions*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • areas recommended for wilderness designation (acres)
Recreation Motor Vehicles & Snowmobiles*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Forest land ROS class by management area (acres) • consistency among public land agencies and the two National Forests • road density by type of road by ROS class (miles per square mile/type of access) • trail density by type of trail and ROS class (miles per square mile/type of trail)
Water Access*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • number of water bodies by type of access and type of water classification within each management area • number of water bodies with no access within each management area
Economic Sustainability of Local Communities*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recreation revenues (dollars, recreation visitor days) • value and volume of wood and wood products production (dollars, board feet) • value and quantities of production of non-wood forest products (i.e., birch bark, balsam boughs, sugar maple sap, etc.) (dollars, tons, gallons, etc.) • employment by Forest Service program area (number of jobs) • employment by major industry (number of jobs) • Forest Service revenues and payments to counties (dollars) • viability and adaptability to changing economic conditions of forest-dependent communities, including indigenous communities • cumulative economic impacts
Social Sustainability*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designation of known special places • designation of known culturally and traditionally important areas • type of road (miles) • permanent roads closed to motorized traffic (miles) • seasonality of closure to motorized vehicles (miles) • community resilience in response to changes proposed by alternatives • effects on known community values

What's coming?

Before a draft revised Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement can be released, much work needs to be completed. Listed below are some of the key steps or tasks that are underway and will be completed during the next few months, and which you will be hearing more about in future newsletters.

Preliminary Alternatives

The planning team is continuing to refine the preliminary alternatives based on new information and analysis. The preliminary alternatives will look different with the Landscape Ecosystem approach even though the themes that were developed previously are the same. A discussion of the continuing evolution of the alternatives will be included in the next newsletter. Maps of the revised preliminary alternatives will be loaded on the web site.

Resource Integration and Analysis of Alternatives

- Modeling changes in vegetation by alternative using Dual Plan model and conducting vegetative effects analysis.
- Developing social assessment and social impact analysis.
- Analyzing economic effects of alternatives, including use of IMPLAN model.
- Integrating transportation planning and conducting roads effects analysis.
- Determining wildlife effects, including conducting species viability evaluations through use of scientific panels.
- Integrating recreation and scenery management and conducting recreation effects analysis.
- Evaluating areas for potential wilderness recommendations. Only an act of Congress can actually designate a wilderness area.
- Integrating water, riparian and aquatic management and analyzing effects on these resources.
- Providing for protection of soils and analyzing effects.
- Integrating fire management and conducting fire effects analysis.

This is not a complete list of resources to be considered or tasks to be done. As tasks are completed and information is available, we will keep you updated through future newsletters or by posting information on the website.

For more information:

Additional information is available on the Chippewa National Forest web site:

www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

Specific questions concerning revision may be directed to:

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In order to be placed or remain on the Forest Plan Revision mailing list, or to request revision documents not available on the internet, please call (218)335-8681, ttruecker@fs.fed.us

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