



# Forest Plan Revision

Chippewa National Forest



Superior National Forest

## UPDATE

### September 2003

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#### **Another Step towards Completion**

Forest Plan revision on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests has entered another key step towards completion. During the coming three to four months, the planning team will be evaluating public comments and determining appropriate responses through a process called “content analysis”.

Content analysis is a systematic method of compiling, categorizing, and capturing the full range of viewpoints and concerns expressed in public comments.

Content analysis is utilized to help the Forest Service clarify, adjust, or focus technical information to prepare the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Final EIS is the document that updates, expands, and corrects the information in the Draft EIS. A summary of public comments and Forest Service responses will also be published in the Final EIS.

The Record of Decision is the Forest Service document in which the Regional Forester decides on that management direction that will be contained in the revised Forest Plans, and presents the rationale for his decision.

The final revised Forest Plans will be developed based on information in the Final EIS and the Record of Decision.

#### **Over 5,200 Letters Received**

The comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Proposed Forest Plans closed on September 11.

Over 5,200 letters were received from other government agencies, elected officials, tribal governments, private organizations, private individuals, and employees. Of this total, approximately 30% were original letters and 70% were “form letters” (letters that were identical, or nearly identical, in content and usually advocated a preferred approach on a single topic).

The number of letters we received and their content tells us that many people care about their national forests, and that a wide variety of ideas exist about how the forest should be managed.

#### **Forest Service Response to Comments**

We have heard from you and now it is our role to respond to your comments. The following are several ways that we might respond:

- A. Modify the proposed Forest Plans or other alternatives

The Forest Service received specific recommendations for change to specific alternatives and to the management direction in the proposed Forest Plans. The planning team is reviewing the potential effects of each recommended change.

## B. Construct additional alternatives

In reviewing recommended changes to the existing alternatives, the planning team may determine that the best response is to develop a separate, new alternative that lies within the range of the original alternatives.

## C. Revise or add analysis

Some comments made specific suggestions regarding the analysis of effects. Where appropriate, the planning team will incorporate new or revised analysis in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

## D. Correct facts, incorporate new information, and revise conclusions

Many public comments pointed out errors or identified a need for additional information. Where included, new information, analysis, or alternatives could lead to revised conclusions.

## E. Acknowledge the comment and explain why no change is being made.

## What's next?

### *...final steps of Forest Plan Revision*

We have come a long way along the route that leads to revised Forest Plans. Here is what will be happening in the near future:

The Final EIS, decision document, and final revised Forest Plans will be issued in spring of 2004. This is a time when the planning team will have their "heads down" busily working through the many tasks that need to be done to prepare the Final EIS.

Between now and release of the final documents, the planning team will be very busy responding to comments, testing proposed solutions, conducting additional analysis, and preparing documentation.

We will continue to provide general updates via this newsletter and the Plan Revision web site. Detailed information will be made available at the time of the issuance of the Final EIS, along with the Regional Forester's Record of Decision, and the revised Forest Plans.

## New National Planning Rule

If you have heard about changes to national Forest Service planning rules, you may be wondering how plan revision efforts on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests fit with national planning direction.

The purpose of national guidelines is to provide an appropriate level of consistency in management on national forests while allowing individual Forests to respond to unique local and regional resource demands. New, national guidelines for planning on national forests have been under development for the past few years.

Last November, a proposed national planning rule was released which would eliminate most of the procedural requirements and redundancies in the planning process. The proposed rule continues to emphasize public involvement, sustainability, use of science, and monitoring and evaluation to accomplish sustainable multiple-use management on all national forests.

A decision regarding the final national planning rule is not expected until later in 2004. Therefore, the final analysis and documentation for Forest Plan revision on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests will continue following the 1982 Planning Rule.

The proposed rule is scheduled for review by the Office of Budget and Management later this year. For more information about the proposed National Planning Rule see: [www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma](http://www.fs.fed.us/emc/nfma)

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### **Or visit the Plan Revision web site:**

[www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa)

## The Route to a Revised Forest Plan

