

Need for Change

Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Ottawa National Forest

The Ottawa National Forest proposes to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the purpose of revising the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended. This document includes a description of the proposal for revising the Forest Plan and supplementary information. Section IX (Pages 31 to 48) contains the Notice of Intent as proposed to be published in the Federal Register.

**USDA Forest Service
Eastern Region**

September 18, 2003

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication of program information (including Braille, large print or audiotape) should contact the U.S. Department of Agriculture TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice or TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Table of Contents

I.	FOREST PLANS AND THE FOREST PLAN REVISION PROCESS	1
	<i>What is a Forest Plan?</i>	1
	<i>What Decisions are made in the Forest Plan?</i>	1
	<i>What Factors Indicate a Need to Revise the Forest Plan?</i>	2
	<i>Why is it Time to Revise a Forest Plan?</i>	2
	<i>How Was the Proposal to Revise the Forest Plan Developed?</i>	3
II.	TRIBAL, GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AND EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT.....	4
	<i>Pre-Notice of Intent Involvement</i>	4
III.	APPLICABLE LAWS, REGULATIONS, POLICY AND DIRECTION.....	5
	<i>Laws and Regulations</i>	5
	<i>Current Policy and Agency Priorities</i>	7
IV.	FOREST'S NICHE AND SUMMARY OF CURRENT FOREST PLAN.....	9
	<i>Introduction & Brief History</i>	9
	<i>The Ottawa Today</i>	9
	<i>Program, Activities and Uses</i>	10
	<i>The Future</i>	11
	<i>Summary of Current Forest Plan</i>	11
V.	PLANNING CRITERIA FOR DEVELOPING THE REVISED PLAN.....	13
VI.	THE PROPOSAL FOR REVISING THE FOREST PLAN	16
	<i>Sustaining Ecosystems & Uses</i>	16
	<i>Forest Access – All-Terrain Vehicles/Off-Road Vehicles</i>	22
	<i>Water Resources</i>	23
	<i>Wilderness</i>	24
VII.	ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED IN THE FOREST PLAN REVISION PROCESS.....	26
	<i>Implementation Issues</i>	26
	<i>Issues Adequately Addressed in the Present Forest Plan</i>	26
	<i>Issues Outside Forest Service Jurisdiction</i>	27
	<i>Possible Future Amendments</i>	27
	<i>Wild and Scenic Rivers</i>	27
	<i>Editorial Changes</i>	28
VIII.	NEXT STEPS IN THE REVISION PROCESS.....	29
	<i>Notice of Intent (2003)</i>	29
	<i>Content Analysis (2003)</i>	29
	<i>Development of Alternatives (2004)</i>	29
	<i>Environmental Analysis (2005)</i>	29
	<i>Draft Forest Plan (2005)</i>	30
	<i>Revised Forest Plan (2006)</i>	30
IX.	THE NOTICE OF INTENT.....	31

I. Forest Plans and the Forest Plan Revision Process

What is a Forest Plan?

The Forest Plan is a management strategy that guides all natural resource management activities for a National Forest for a 10 to 15 year period. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA) require that a land and resource management plan (Forest Plan or Plan) be prepared for each National Forest.

The Ottawa National Forest Plan provides guidance for the implementation of project level decisions across the Forest. All projects must be in compliance with the Forest Plan, or the Plan must be amended.

What Decisions are made in the Forest Plan?

The Forest Plan provides a programmatic framework for decision-making on National Forest System lands. Within the Forest Plan, decisions are made in the following six areas:

1. ***Establishing Forest-wide Multiple Use Goals and Objectives*** (36 CFR 219.11 (b)). A **Goal** describes a desired condition of the land to be achieved in the future. In the Forest Plan, a goal responds to a management challenge. An **Objective** is a concise, time-specific statement of measurable, planned results that responds to pre-established goals. The Forest Plan uses objectives to discuss the plan's emphasis by resource area.
2. ***Establishing Forest-wide Management Requirements (Standards & Guidelines)*** (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27). The Forest Plan establishes forest-wide management requirements in the form of standards and guidelines that are applied to all management activities. Standards and guidelines establish the "bounds" or "rules" which are applied to management practices to achieve the Forest Plan's goals and objectives.
3. ***Establishing Management Areas and what can occur in them*** (36 CFR 219.11). Management Areas are "subdivisions" of the forest with their own sets of goals, objectives, desired conditions and standards and guidelines. Each management area has a unique purpose, desired future condition and management prescriptions to move the land toward that desired condition.
4. ***Determining Lands Suited for Timber Management and the Allowable Sale Quantity*** (36 CFR 219.11)

Land Suitability: Forestlands are analyzed for suitability for timber management when a Forest Plan is developed. Forestland can be classified either suitable for timber production or one of several categories of lands not suited for timber production.

Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ): The quantity of timber that may be harvested from suited lands covered by the Forest Plan. The ASQ is the maximum level - not a target or goal - which cannot be exceeded by the end of the Forest Plan period.

5. ***Monitoring and Evaluation Activities*** (36 CFR 219.11 (d)). Monitoring and evaluation of the Forest Plan determines progress in meeting Forest Plan direction. This direction includes monitoring and evaluating the management goals, objectives, practices and standards and guidelines. Through this process, any necessary changes to the Forest Plan can be identified and amended as necessary.
6. ***Recommendations for Wilderness or Wild & Scenic Rivers.***

The Wilderness Act of 1964 (36 CFR 219.17) defines wilderness as an area of undeveloped federally owned land, designated by an Act of Congress. The Forest Service is charged by Congress to manage these areas to protect and enhance the natural conditions, and provide opportunities for solitude and unconfined recreation.

The Wild and Scenic River Statute (Section 5(d)(1)) allows rivers and their immediate environments that possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, be preserved in free-flowing condition to be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

What Factors Indicate a Need to Revise the Forest Plan?

The NFMA provides direction for revising the Forest Plan. In addition to the prescribed timeline for revisions (at least every 15 years), four additional indicators can direct the need for a revision. According to those indicators, the Forest Plan may be revised:

1. When conditions of the land or demands of the public have changed significantly.
2. When changes in Agency policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on forest programs.
3. When an interdisciplinary team recommends a revision during the monitoring and evaluation process.
4. When new information suggests that a revision is necessary as stated in the Forest Service handbook on environmental policy and procedures (FSH 1909.15).

Why is it Time to Revise a Forest Plan?

At this time, there are three reasons to revise the Ottawa Forest Plan:

1. ***The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that Forest Plans be revised at***

least every 10-15 years. The Regional Forester approved the Ottawa's Plan in 1986.

2. ***National guidance for strategic plans and programs has changed since 1986.*** The Agency goals and objectives, along with other national guidance for strategic plans and programs, have changed.
3. ***Standards and guidelines should be revised to address new information and changed conditions.*** New research and information is available regarding management of forestlands, including information from Forest monitoring and evaluation.

How Was the Proposal to Revise the Forest Plan Developed?

The Ottawa National Forest developed the proposal to revise the Forest Plan through a Forest Plan Need for Change process. The process consisted of the following efforts:

- The Ottawa National Forest solicited input from the public, employees, other government agencies and Tribal representatives.
- An interdisciplinary team analyzed all comments.
- A thorough review of past monitoring and evaluation efforts, new scientific information and changed conditions of the land provided valuable information used to help define issues.
- Multiple assessments were conducted to help determine the current situation, such as species viability evaluations; social and economic assessments; roadless/wilderness assessments and others.
- Decisions from recent Forest Service appeals and lawsuits were also taken into consideration when formulating issues.

Results of this process indicated that much of the information and direction in the original plan is still appropriate. These aspects will be carried forward into the revised plan with little or no change.

The review also pointed out several concerns that cannot effectively be addressed through planning or plan revision because they are operational, budget dependent, or outside the control of the Forest Service. (*Part VII. Issues Not Addressed in this Forest Plan Revision.*)

From the remaining comments a preliminary list of potential "need for change" issues was developed. The Ottawa National Forest Management Team reviewed the proposed changes and recommended the proposal that is presented in this document. It is important to note that this proposal directs the Forest to focus analysis on issues identified as being most critically in need of change.

II. Tribal, Government and Public and Employee Involvement

The Ottawa National Forest is committed to revising the Forest Plan in collaboration with interested individuals, groups, other government agencies, and local Tribes. The Forest will strive to create an environment that involves all interested publics, as well as employees. The Forest will promote opportunities for involvement at the appropriate time and in the appropriate forums. Enhanced public involvement with individuals, groups, government agencies, local Tribes and others will help us create plans that are practical and implementable.

Pre-Notice of Intent Involvement

Public involvement efforts to notify interested individuals about upcoming revision efforts began in August 2002. Using current mailing lists, the Ottawa National Forest worked in cooperation with the Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee National Forests to announce upcoming revision of all three Michigan National Forests' plans. This initial contact shared information regarding the revision process, opportunities for public involvement and a timeline for completion.

News releases were distributed across the state during the fall of 2002 announcing the initiation of revision efforts to a region-wide audience. A Forest website was created in December 2002 as a method for providing timely updates and revision information. (www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa)

In addition to these letters, news releases and the creation of a website, face-to-face meetings have taken place with Congressional representatives, cooperating agencies and Tribal representatives. Forest personnel have also participated in a variety of organizational meetings as invited guest speakers to raise awareness about the upcoming revision and to answer questions about the Forest and its management.

In January and February 2003, public meetings were held across the western Upper Peninsula. Meetings were held with Forest Service personnel during the same time period. After a brief overview of the plan revision process and current plan implementation, attendees were asked to provide their comments on the current Forest Plan. The Forest used the comments received to help define the issues that will be addressed in revision.

III. Applicable Laws, Regulations, Policy and Direction

Laws and Regulations

There are a number of current (and proposed) laws, regulations and policies that will have some affect on the revision process. These include, but are not limited to:

Current Laws

1897 Organic Administration Act as amended: Created the National Forests and established purposes.

1906 Preservation of American Antiquities Act: Provides direction to protect, inventory, and manage cultural resources on lands owned by the government of the United States.

1911 Weeks Law as amended: Authorized the purchase of forested, cutover, or denuded lands. The Eastern National Forests were established as a result of the Weeks Law.

1948 Clean Water Act as amended: Provides direction to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's water.

1955 Clean Air Act as amended: Provides direction to protect and enhance the quality of the Nation's air resources so as to promote the public health and welfare and the productive capacity of the population.

1960 Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act: Established multiple-use and sustained-yield policies for the management of the National Forests.

1966 National Historic Preservation Act as amended 1980 and 1992: Established a program for preservation of historic properties throughout the nation. The National Register of Historic Places established regulations for the maintenance and expansion of this list are found at 36 CFR 60. This Act required the establishment of regulations to provide for curation of historical properties, the regulations are at 36 CFR 79. Further protection for archaeological resources are in 36 CFR 296.

1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as amended: Provides for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers system through designation processes and prescribing standards for management of study and designated rivers.

1968 National Trails System Act: Provides for the establishment of a national trails system.

1969 National Environmental Policy Act: Established the Forest Service's decision-

making process and how to document the effects of our actions. Committed the federal government to a policy of creating and maintaining “conditions under which people and nature can exist in productive harmony.”

1973 Endangered Species Act as amended: Provides a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved and provides a program for conservation of such species.

1973 Rehabilitation Act as amended: Provides for universal access to facilities and programs.

1974 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act as amended: Provides for the preparation of a strategic plan for all National Forests based on an assessment of renewable natural resources.

1974 Preservation of Historical and Archaeological Data Act: Provides for the preservation of historical and archeological data which might otherwise be irreparably lost or destroyed.

1975 Federal Noxious Weed Act: Provides for the control and management of nonindigenous weeds that injure or have the potential to injure the interests of agriculture and commerce, wildlife resources, or the public health.

1976 National Forest Management Act as amended: Provides standards and guidelines for National Forest planning and management. Currently there are two sets of rules that are available for Forest Planning-1982 and 2000 Planning Rules. The Michigan National Forests have decided to use the 1982 Forest Planning Rules because the 2000 Planning Rules were determined to be neither straightforward nor easy to implement because of the number of very detailed analytical requirements, lack of clarity regarding many of the requirements, lack of flexibility, and lack of recognition of the limits of agency budgets and personnel.

1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act: Protects and preserves for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions.

1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act as amended 1988: Provides protection of archaeological resources and sites which are on public lands and Indian lands.

1987 Michigan Wilderness Act: Provides for the designation of wilderness on National Forest System Lands in the state of Michigan.

1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: Provides for the protection of Native American Graves.

In 2002 Proposed Rules were published in the Federal Register with the intent of

maintaining many of the underlying concepts of sustainability, monitoring, evaluation, collaboration, and use of science. The Proposed Rule is intended to provide a planning process which is more readily understood, is within the Forest Service's capability to implement, is within anticipated budgets and staffing levels, and recognizes the programmatic nature of planning. When the 2002 Planning Rule is approved, the Michigan National Forests will review the transition advice contained within the Rule and determine how best to proceed with Forest Plan Revision.

Current Policy and Agency Priorities

Road Management Policy. A National Forest System Road Management Policy was published on January 12, 2001, which contains direction on analysis standards for assessing the need for new road construction; for evaluating the existing road network to determine what roads are necessary for future management; and for identifying what roads can be decommissioned. Site-specific road management decisions will not be resolved within the Revised Forest Plan. The Forest Plan Revision will, however, set the desired conditions, objectives, and standards for roads on the Forest.

Roadless Area Conservation Rule. The USDA Forest Service released the Roadless Area Conservation Rule on January 12, 2001. The effort will inventory and evaluate any roadless areas that may be suitable for Congressional designation as wilderness per existing planning rules. Public comment and concern will also guide what types of activities should occur in these areas.

USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan. The agency has completed its Strategic Plan to comply with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA). This Plan documents the agency commitment to sustainable forest management. The strategic plan lays out the goals and objectives for the USDA Forest Service for the next five years. The plan has four long-term goals: ecosystem health, multiple benefits to people, scientific and technical assistance, and effective public service.

National Fire Plan. The National Fire Plan protects communities, natural resources, and the lives of firefighters and citizens. It is based on ongoing cooperation and communication among federal agencies, states, local governments, Tribes and interested publics. The federal wildland fire management agencies worked closely with partners to prepare a 10-year comprehensive strategy, which was completed in 2001.

Healthy Forest Initiative. In an effort to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely land management decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest health, President Bush has introduced the Healthy Forest Initiative. This includes:

- Improving procedures for developing and implementing fuels treatment and forest restoration projects in priority forests and rangelands, in collaboration with local governments.
- Reducing the number of overlapping environmental reviews by combining project

analysis and establishing a process for concurrent project clearance by federal agencies.

- Developing guidance for weighing the short-term risks against the long-term benefits of fuels treatment and restoration projects.
- Developing guidance to ensure consistent NEPA procedures for fuels treatment activities and restoration activities, including development of a model Environmental Assessment for these types of projects.

Four Threats to National Forests. The Chief of the USDA Forest Service recently identified four key threats to national forests. The Forest Service is committed to focusing on stewardship for the long-term desired future condition of the land. Land management threats identified are:

- **Fire and fuels** -- Many forests have become overgrown and unhealthy. In a drought, unnatural accumulation of fuels can contribute to a catastrophic fire. Forests must be returned to the way they were historically, and then get fire back into the ecosystem when it is safe.
- **Invasive species** -- Invasives affect half of all imperiled species in the United States. To meet landscape-level challenges like invasive species, long-term outcomes across the entire landscape must be considered.
- **Loss of Open Space**--America is becoming more urbanized and losing open space.
- **Unmanaged recreation** -- Outdoor recreation has grown substantially on the national forests and grasslands, and it is likely to continue to grow. In particular, there is significant growth in ATV use, and concern about the damage they may cause to the ecosystem. Light recreational use did not need management, but heavier use now does.

Report of the National Tribal Relations Program Task Force: A Vision for the Future. Published August 2000. The National Tribal Relations Task Force provided a set of recommendations designed to improve the consistency and effectiveness of program delivery and to institutionalize long-term collaborative relationships with tribal governments. The recommendations were focused on pervasive problems and concerns that surfaced repeatedly in different contexts and were symptomatic of underlying problems in working relationships between the Forest Service and the Tribes. The recommendations were grouped in three categories designed specifically to improve program delivery: administrative, policy, and legislative. The Report of the Tribal Relations Program Implementation Team was published in June, 2003.

IV. Forest's Niche and Summary of Current Forest Plan

INTRODUCTION & BRIEF HISTORY

The Ottawa National Forest encompasses about one million acres within the western tip of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Glacial geology characterizes most of the Ottawa, providing variety in landform from hilly glacial moraine to outwash sandplains. Rock outcroppings, and more substantial hills and ranges from geological events in the deep past, also contribute to the unique ecological and scenic features of the Forest.

The Forest was largely created through the reforestation, financial assistance, and employment programs of the federal government during the Great Depression. In 1929, there were extensive tracts of tax-delinquent land in each of the Lake States. The Forest Service acquired many of these clearcut, burned, and barren lands in cooperation with the States. With the advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), large forest nurseries were developed and pine plantations were established. Establishment of the CCC and location of many camps in the region vastly increased the rate of reforestation by providing essential labor, developing substantial forest nurseries and controlling wildfire. The result was to greatly accelerate renewal of the forest resource on what had been worthless land.

Native Americans have used the lands that make up the Ottawa National Forest for thousands of years and treaties ensure their continued use. Treaty rights are exercised by tribes and tribal members in various ways, such as hunting, fishing, cultural practices and gathering of forest plants. The Forest Service recognizes treaty rights as a matter of national policy and more locally on the Ottawa through a "Memorandum of Understanding" with sovereign and federally recognized tribes of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians.

THE OTTAWA TODAY

The Forest has a remote solitude that is unique and unexpected for the Upper Midwest. Located a day's drive away from Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Chicago and other large, metropolitan areas, the Forest is a frequent destination for people craving a natural and peaceful experience. The overall population density in Michigan is 175 people per square mile, while the area encompassing the Ottawa is 25 or fewer people per square mile. The visitor gets an immediate perception of wildness/remoteness when entering the Ottawa National Forest and will experience miles of beautiful roadways with continuous natural scenery. Outstanding scenic beauty abounds in the Forest's steep to level terrain, rock outcrops and ledges. Most spectacular is the northern hardwoods autumn color display.

The Forest is composed of predominantly northern hardwood tree species with associated plants and animals. Mixed stands of early successional (aspen/birch), and lowland and upland conifer trees are also common. Much of the forest cover is less than 100 years old and is rapidly maturing. More information about the Forest's resources is provided below.

Program, Activities and Uses

Providing Recreation Opportunities

Visitors to the Forest are often surprised at the multitude and variety of motorized and non-motorized recreational opportunities on the Forest. The Ottawa National Forest offers a wide spectrum of camping experiences, hiking and other trails and Scenic Byways. Hunting is also a major recreational activity on the Ottawa, with prime habitat for deer, black bear, and grouse.

With over 500 lakes, 2000 miles of fishable streams including 300 miles of designated and over 175 miles of study National Wild and Scenic Rivers, and access to Lake Superior at Black River Harbor (the only safe harbor administered by the Forest Service), the Ottawa provides a wide variety of canoeing, kayaking, and boating experiences along with high quality warm and cold water fishing opportunities. Restoring and maintaining water flows is a focus of forest management activities.

Portions of the Ottawa National Forest receive over 200" of snow annually. Referred to as "Big Snow Country", winter sports enthusiasts enjoy alpine and nordic skiing, snowmobiling, dog-sledding, and ice fishing for several months of the year. There are over 485 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and numerous cross-country ski trails.

For those people seeking a more remote experience, the Ottawa is home to three unique and very different wilderness areas. As the Forest's appeal as a recreation destination has grown, forest managers are challenged to balance increased demand with protection of natural resources, conflicts between motorized and non-motorized use, and the need to maintain trails and recreational facilities.

Providing Habitat for Wildlife, Plants and Fish

The Ottawa land base lies in the transition between the northern boreal forests and eastern deciduous forests. A great diversity of species are supported in this environment, such as timber wolves, bald eagles, loons, bobcat, fisher, various species of trout, lake sturgeon, unique aquatic species, many kinds of ferns and flowering plants, etc. Some species are common; others are relatively rare and/or exist on the "edge" of their most southerly or northerly ranges. In recent years, new "non-native invasive species" such as European buckthorn, purple loosestrife, and Eurasian watermilfoil, have been occurring on the forest, creating new management challenges.

Forest Health and Restoration, and Use

Restoration of forest health occurs through the interplay of natural processes and management practices of forest managers. The Forest's recovery from the logging era is a function of this. Ninety percent of the Ottawa is forested. Factors that shape the Ottawa's forest health programs include: (a) the Federal requirement to contribute to the viability of forest plant and animal species known to exist on the forest; (b) a strong local and regional economic demand for forest products; (c) natural successional patterns of forest vegetation related to soils, seed sources,

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

climate and other factors; (d) numerous “overstocked”, dense forests in the aftermath of the logging era; (e) demand for cultural and traditional products of the forest; (f) increasing scientific knowledge about forested ecosystem function, structure and processes in the forests of the Upper Peninsula, and (g) fire management. The Forest’s timber management program is the primary tool for restoring and providing a diverse range of sustainable habitats for many species, supporting forest restoration and health, and providing for traditional and cultural uses and wood fiber.

Transportation System

The transportation system on the Ottawa provides access to the Forest and for publics and communities for a diverse mix of uses. The Federal Government has jurisdiction of and manages approximately 60 percent of the land within the Congressionally proclaimed boundary of the Ottawa. Because the Forest is managed for multiple uses, fish and wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and timber products, most resources benefit from variety in road densities and standards. Since the Forest’s road system is already in place, the Forest is focusing efforts on maintenance and reconstruction to provide an adequate and affordable transportation system in place.

THE FUTURE

In addition to the programs and challenges cited above, changing public values, increased need for goods and services and shrinking budgets create a challenging environment for Forest managers. An important goal is to maintain the unique and remote characteristics of the Ottawa National Forest that make it such a special place. Together with support and input from the public, local and state governments, Tribes, and other groups, the Forest can be managed in an environmentally sustainable manner that will contribute to the needs of the present and future generations.

Summary of Current Forest Plan

The Ottawa National Forest Plan was approved in 1986. Through implementation of the Forest Plan, the Ottawa provides for a variety of resource uses, recreational opportunities and services to the public while providing for protection of soil, water, visual and cultural resources, and all native plant and animal species.

The Forest Plan also established a Forest vision for the future, which defined the role the Ottawa has in providing public benefits; protection of resources; providing for social needs; and providing for biological diversity. Standards and guidelines were designed to provide management direction to be used in attainment of the desired future condition of each management prescription.

A brief overview of several important Plan goals follows:

Transportation Systems and Uses. The current Forest Plan provides for a road system to serve commercial, area community, as well as recreational use, with a relatively low density

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

system. This system fits the remote character of the Ottawa, minimizing new road construction and emphasizing use of existing roads. Road density and use guidelines are integral to the goals of each management area. Goals for some management areas address road closure to provide semi-primitive experiences. Some low standard roads on the Forest are generally closed to passenger vehicles, other roads are signed for all-terrain vehicle use.

Wildlife Habitat. The Forest Plan provides for a great diversity of wildlife habitats and communities which reflect the ecosystems on the Forest. A large remote habitat area provides for species benefiting from remoteness. Many other areas on the Forest provide for a diversity of species including those popular with hunters. Objectives and guidelines promote conditions across the Forest and within stands that maintain or add diversity to the Forest. This diversity contributes to the health of hundreds of native species including threatened and endangered species. Viewing wildlife in natural settings is a growing visitor activity on the Ottawa.

Vegetation Management. Management on the Forest works to restore components of ecosystems that existed prior to the forest cut-over of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This Forest Plan continues the goal of a healthy forest while producing goods and services our society demands today in a sustainable manner. Harvest practices are designed to maintain site quality, and reforestation goals fit the ecological capabilities of each site. The Ottawa provides a mix of timber products that, purchased and manufactured locally, are consumed by families and businesses throughout the region and beyond. The vegetation management program works to restore ecosystems, create habitats, and provide timber products.

Recreation Opportunities. The Ottawa provides a diverse set of recreational opportunities within a remote environment. Forest visitors find hiking and mountain bike trails, lakes and Wild and Scenic Rivers for canoeing and fishing, forests for hunting white-tailed deer and ruffed grouse, and a diversity of wildlife viewing opportunities. The recreation settings range from areas accessible to most motorized vehicles to areas where no vehicles are permitted, reflecting the demands of our many forest users.

Wilderness. Three wildernesses provide natural environments, habitats and special visitor experiences. They are managed to maintain their special characteristics and provide distinct settings within the western Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin region.

V. Planning Criteria for Developing the Revised Plan

As directed by NFMA, 36 CFR 219.12(c), the Forest Service has identified criteria to guide the planning process. Under NFMA guidelines, criteria must be included that achieve the objective of maximizing net public benefits (the overall long-term value of positive effects less negative effects).

These criteria may be derived from a variety of sources, including:

- Laws, executive orders, regulations, and agency policy as set forth in the Forest Service Manual.
- Goals and objectives in the Resource Planning Act Program and regional guidelines.
- Recommendations and assumptions developed from public issues, management concerns, and resource use and development opportunities.
- Plans and programs of other federal agencies, along with those of state and local governments.
- Ecological, technical, and economic factors.
- Resource integration management requirements in 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27.

The Forest Service identified and used the following criteria to develop the proposal for revising the National Forest Plans:

1. ***Role in Providing Public Benefits:*** The Revised Forest Plan will describe the Ottawa National Forest's role in identifying the values and benefits the Forest is best able to provide in the region. It will identify the unique role of the Ottawa National Forest in providing goods, services, and forest uses and will consider:
 - The scarcity or abundance of resources; ecological conditions and public uses in the region's forests;
 - The ability of the Ottawa to provide these benefits; and
 - The costs associated with providing them.
2. ***Integrating Program Goals and Protecting Resources:*** The Revised Plan will comply with NFMA management requirements (36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27), including requirements for integrating program goals for timber, vegetation management, recreation, fish and wildlife, soil and water, and research natural areas. Additional requirements exist for resource protection, vegetative manipulation, silvicultural practices, riparian areas, soil and water, and biological diversity. (Specific management requirements that must be met when accomplishing goals and objectives are defined in 36 CFR 219.27).
3. ***Conserving Biological Diversity:*** The Revised Plan will provide for diversity of plant and animal communities, and tree species, consistent with the overall multiple-use

objectives of the Forest. While the legal planning area is the area within the national forest boundary, the landscape includes areas outside of the planning area and under other ownership and management. In the planning process, the effects of surrounding land management and use as it relates to the conservation of biological diversity will be considered. The concepts of planning at appropriate landscape scales, considering spatial distribution of habitat, and range of natural variability will be applied.

4. ***Social Needs:*** The Revised Plan will contribute to a range of public needs, expectations, and concerns that maximizes benefits (36 CFR 219.12[c]). Recognizing many paths to achieving ecological sustainability, the Revised Plan will integrate public needs, expectations, and concerns about the Forest into the decisions about maintaining ecosystem health and diversity, and providing for social and economic needs, goods and services.
5. ***Collaborative Stewardship:*** The Revised Forest Plan will be the product of collaboration with Tribes, local units of government, public and private organizations, landowners, and concerned citizens.
6. ***Consistency Among the Michigan National Forests:*** The Revised Forest Plan will strive for consistency among the three Michigan National Forest Plans, to provide for more consistent management and better service to the public.
7. ***Consistency with Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest:*** The Revised Forest Plan will strive for consistency with the Chequamegon/Nicolet National to provide for more consistent management and better service to the public.
8. ***Tribal Consultation:*** The Forest Service will continue to work collaboratively through the consultation process as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Tribal – USDA Forest Service relations On National Forest Lands within the Territories Ceded in Treaties of 1836, 1837, and 1842 in consideration of Executive Orders, EO11593 Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Environment, EO13007 Indian Sacred Sites, EO13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.
9. ***Need for Change Proposed Actions:*** Comments received from the public, Tribes, other agencies, and employees were categorized into one or more of the following categories:
 - **Forest Plan Proposed Changes:** These are Forest Plan proposed changes that are directly related to the six major decisions made in a Forest Plan and there is clear rationale for a warranted change.
 - **Forest Plan Editorial Changes:** These are Forest Plan changes that are editorial in nature. These changes provide improved understanding of the current Forest Plan. These changes do not change the intent of Forest Plan direction, goals, or objectives. The intent is to improve the clarity of the Forest Plan.
 - **Forest Plan Future Amendment Change.** These are Forest Plan possible changes

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

that may be addressed by future amendments. A determination has been made that the proposed change is not “ripe” (ready) to be included in the Forest Plan Revision process. For example: information may not be currently available to adequately address the issue or complete the change in a timely manner.

- **Addressed in Assessments/Analysis:** These are suggestions or issues that will be addressed in Forest Plan Revision assessments and/or environmental analysis. Generally, these suggestions and/or issues are questions pertaining to the effects or outcomes of Forest Plan program, activities, uses, and proposed changes.
- **Scientific Research Needed:** These are suggestions or issues that require scientific research in order to evaluate if a change is needed.
- **Implementation Item:** These are suggestions that are not changes related to Forest Plan decisions, but the way the Forest Plan is being implemented. These suggestions are better addressed through Forest Plan implementation, project-level analysis, or at the administrative level.
- **Outside Mission or Authority of Forest Service:** These are suggestions for change that are beyond the authority or outside the mission of the Forest Service.
- **Addressed in Forest Plan or Recent Decision:** These are suggestions that have been addressed in the current Forest Plan or through a recent Forest Service amendment or decision. Sufficient information or rationale was not provided to support a change to the Forest Plan, recent amendment, or Forest Plan environmental assessment decision.

Little or no change will be made to those areas of the plan which are not addressed here, unless compelling and substantive information is developed.

VI. The Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan

The Revised Forest Plan will be crafted to make it a flexible document that quickly responds to the changing needs of the Ottawa National Forest. Only the most urgent need for change topics are included. Other topics that may require changes to the Forest Plan have been identified, but may be addressed with future amendments.

The Forest Plan is a dynamic document. Following revision, the Forest will focus on other issues, which were raised, but not addressed in this analysis. These issues may be handled in the form of Forest Plan Amendments.

Sustaining Ecosystems & Uses

Since the implementation of the current Forest Plan, knowledge of ecological capabilities and mapping of ecological units has advanced. Experience using this information leads us to reassess the suitability of lands for timber management, to contribute to the viability of plant, and animal species and to adjust management objectives which better match ecosystem capabilities.

A. Invasive Species: Plants and Animals

Current Situation: There is limited direction in the Forest Plan addressing the control of invasive species. There is a Forest goal to protect and enhance habitats which indirectly speaks to control of invasive species. There is no direction in the Forest Plan that specifically addresses the application of chemical pesticides or herbicides for the express purpose of controlling non-native invasive plants. However, there is direction provided for limited use of chemicals for vegetation management purposes where it is most effective and adverse impacts can be mitigated. Furthermore, this requires coordination with other governmental agencies, local government units, and adjacent landowners. Direction allows for the use of EPA registered pesticides only after analysis demonstrates such use is essential to meet management direction.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Provide direction to control and prevent the spread of invasives.
- Limit the amount of roads built, limiting avenues for spreading invasive species.
- Provide direction to monitor and promote adaptive management of invasives.
- Provide direction for the control of invasive species in wilderness.

Rationale for Change: No federally listed noxious weeds are known to occur on the Ottawa National Forest. None of the Michigan noxious weeds known to occur on the Ottawa are particularly abundant or considered to present a risk to local agriculture. However, invasive non-native plants exist and are, in cases, replacing native vegetation. Non-native species can alter natural ecosystems in several ways and affect forest health. Invasive plants can cause changes in water conditions and fire regimes, changes in soils, displace existing wildlife food sources,

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

displace rare species, change multiple-species communities into monocultures, and change erosion and sedimentation processes.

A number of non-native invasive animals of growing concern on the Ottawa threaten plant composition and regeneration, as well as the availability of habitats for native terrestrial and aquatic species.

Proposed Change: Revise the Forest Plan to include standards and guidelines outlining a program of non-native invasive plant and animal listing, inventory, mapping, treatment and monitoring; develop guidelines that direct and prioritize non-native invasive prevention and control, including the use of prescribed fire in wilderness. This proposal will contribute to forest health and complement Forest efforts to restore ecosystem components and function.

B. Research Natural Areas (RNAs)

Current Situation: There is one designated RNA on the Forest located in the McCormick Wilderness. In addition, there are two candidate RNAs, one each in Sylvania Wilderness and Sturgeon Gorge Wilderness. Establishment records have been started for both candidate areas but remain to be completed. Standards and guideline provide for the management and protection of these areas.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Identify additional RNA candidates.

Rationale for Change: Forest planning regulations direct National Forests to provide for the establishment of RNAs during the planning process. This meshes with the Ottawa's ecosystems-based information and management approach.

Proposed Change: Provide for the establishment of additional research natural areas based on a review of existing candidate areas using new ecological information.

C. Management Indicator Species

Current Situation: Thirteen species including two mammals, eight bird species, and three species of fish are periodically monitored. Monitoring focuses on trends in habitats and populations in order to better understand relationships between habitat and management activities.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Consider adding invertebrates, plants and community types.
- Consider adding amphibians and reptiles.
- Include species that are not habitat generalists, but include species which can be effectively and efficiently field surveyed.
- Adjust the survey protocols to improve effectiveness.

Rationale for Change: The objective of the MIS set is to improve the knowledge of the ecology of the Forest and understand these species/communities sensitivity to management activities. New species-related information is available and there is a need to conduct monitoring in a manner that is effective and cost efficient.

Proposed Change: The Forest will assess and revise management indicator species and monitoring requirements during the preparation of the Draft Forest Plan. There is a need to identify MIS to improve the evaluation of the effects of the Forest Plan and to conduct monitoring in an effective and efficient manner.

D. Vegetation Management

Current Situation: The Ottawa National Forest is a diverse landscape covered with large continuous blocks of vegetation. It is the goal of the Forest to sustainably manage the Forest to match vegetation goals with ecosystem conditions, to provide elements of biodiversity native to the area, create and maintain habitats for species of public interest, to maintain viable populations of species known to exist on the Forest, and to produce timber products which contribute to the well-being of regional and local economies, and help meet society's demands. Timber sale contracts follow federal contracting procedures, are based on fair market value, and will adhere to equal opportunity principles.

Ninety percent of the Forest is forested; about half of these acres are in upland northern hardwoods. About 20 percent of the forested acres are aspen-paper birch with the remainder in a mix of pine, spruce-fir and lowland species. At a broad scale vegetation is managed in terms of management areas, most of which have vegetation composition objectives that vary the proportion of each vegetation component. Management areas were aligned in the current Forest Plan with general information about the ecosystems potential of different land units of the Forest.

Management areas are typically 5000 acres or larger. Prescriptions for management areas define broad, desired future conditions. These desired conditions may involve tree species compositions, road density and access requirements, if appropriate, recreation environments and use, and wildlife habitat goals.

Nearly one-half of the forested portions of the Ottawa are managed for the northern hardwood type. This varies on the Forest with some management areas (i.e. management areas 2.1, 6.1, and 6.2) emphasizing uneven-aged management of hardwoods, and other management areas (i.e. management areas 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2) emphasizing even-aged management of this type. The current Forest Plan directs that, overall, approximately 60% of hardwood acres are to be managed using uneven-aged methods, the remainder even-aged methods.

About 20% of the forested acres on the Ottawa are managed for early successional species, such as aspen, jack pine, and paper birch. Aspen management direction focuses on maintaining 138,000 acres of aspen for the long term. Management Area 1.1 is the primary aspen area on the Forest, although aspen does occur in varying amounts in other management areas. Paper birch regeneration is to be emphasized where site conditions allow. The importance of upland

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

openings as an early successional habitat is also recognized with the inclusion of a long-term goal of 24,000 acres of permanent upland openings in the Forest Plan.

Some management areas emphasize long-lived conifers (i.e. management areas 4.1 and 3.1) others emphasize short-lived conifers (i.e. management areas 1.1, 2.1, and 4.2).

The current Forest Plan identifies 562,000 acres as suitable for timber production and these form the basis for the timber harvest levels described in the plan. Some 364,000 acres were identified as not suited for timber products because they were assigned to other uses, could not meet minimum management requirements or were not the most cost efficient in meeting Forest Plan objectives.

The authorized timber sale program for the Ottawa stated in the current Forest Plan is 13.1 million cubic feet (78 million board feet), on an average annual basis, for the first period and projected at 17.2 million cubic feet (113 million board feet) for the second period.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Consider the adequacy/appropriateness of current Forest Plan direction addressing early successional habitats (i.e. aspen, jack pine)
- Consider changing the percentage/acres mix between even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural systems
- Adjust the mix of long-lived conifers and short-lived conifers
- Review the current Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ)
- Address management concerns of early successional species that are declining and other species indirectly influenced by the amount of early successional forests
- Target aspen and paper birch as forest types that need to be emphasized for regeneration.
- Review current direction on how much, where and which forest types are included in the desired future condition (DFC)
- Clarify/reword current direction regarding even-aged management adjacent classified old growth.
- White pine and hemlock emphasis need to be incorporated into the Forest Plan specific to land capability.

Rationale for Proposed Action: Improved information on the ecosystem capacity of different land units of the Forest has become available since the current Forest Plan was developed. This provides an opportunity to better align the management of the various hardwood and conifer components of the forest composition with the inherent ecosystems capabilities and limitations that change across the Forest landscape. This information will support the continued recovery of the Ottawa from the timber cut-over of the late 19th century and the early 20th centuries. In addition, this information will be used to ensure ecosystems can continue to contribute to cultural, commercial or personal gathering of special forest products.

The Forest is required to take steps to contribute to the viability of forest plant and animal species known to exist on the Forest. New resource data and information has been developed

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

which improves the knowledge of the current viability of species and the management steps that can be taken to contribute to the viability of all species known to inhabit the Forest.

The Forest is also required to consider changing the management of forest vegetation as needed to conserve habitat for the Canada lynx.

Consideration of the above new information may affect the species, location, and amount of timber products that can be offered for commercial harvest. The Ottawa remains an important contributor to the market for timber products used by regional firms in the production of dimensional lumber, plywood, paper and other products. Timber sale contracts follow federal contracting procedures and are based on fair market values and equal opportunity principles. The Ottawa needs to validate its ability to maintain its contribution to this market through management which is sensitive to ecosystems capabilities and sustains quality ecosystem conditions.

Proposed Change: Forest Plan direction will be changed to enhance the Forest's contribution to species viability. Changes may affect Forest-wide goals and management requirements, direction for individual management areas, and management standards and guidelines pertaining to individual species, including tree species, or habitats.

Changes may be made to old growth forest management direction concerning management of stands adjacent to old growth. Consideration will be given to adjusting the amount of old growth as necessary to contribute to species viability.

Forest Plan direction will be changed as needed to contribute to a diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species consistent with the overall multiple-use objectives including cultural resources and values, and commercial, and personal gathering of special forest products.

Forest Plan direction will be changed to reflect improved ecosystems information concerning the suitability of forest lands to be managed for timber products. This may change the location and number of acres of lands suited and not suited for resource use and timber production in order to protect soil productivity and watershed conditions. This may also lead to changes in the number of acres managed long term for various hardwood and conifer species.

Improved ecosystems information will be used to better align hardwood management silviculture (i.e., uneven-aged or even-aged methods), and management area prescriptions in which it dominates, with areas on the Forest where ecosystems capabilities favor its application. This will result in an increase in the number of acres managed on an uneven-aged versus an even-aged basis. Also greater emphasis will be given to the inclusion of white pine and hemlock in northern hardwood stands as a means to improve biological diversity. In addition, there will be an increase in the number of acres managed for long-lived conifers such as spruce, red and white pine.

These proposed actions will lead to a change in tree species compositions in some management areas, and a change in the location of some management areas on the Forest to better align with new information on ecological land types of the Forest.

In addition, improved resource information will be used to match short-lived and long-lived conifer species with areas on the Forest where ecological characteristics favor them. In a similar manner improved resource information will be used to better align aspen management and the amount of managed forest openings on the Forest with ecosystems characteristics that favor their current and future management. Also, the amount and location of early successional conditions, including aspen management will be adjusted as necessary to support the requirements of the Lynx Conservation Assessment Strategy and conserve the Canada lynx.

The monitoring section of the Forest Plan will be revised to include a periodic review of the application and effectiveness of the management direction and practices described above.

As a result of the above proposed actions, the ability of the Forest to maintain its current planned and projected levels of timber harvest and contribution to the regional economic market will be reassessed.

Forest Plan direction will be changed to address the role of wildfire and prescribed fire in fire-prone ecosystems, including in Management Areas emphasizing conifer species.

E. Canada Lynx

Current Situation: Current Forest Plan direction provides goals, objectives and standards and guidelines which describe conditions, and desired future conditions for the Canada lynx; however, there are no goals, objectives, or standards and guidelines that specifically mention the Canada lynx.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Add standards and guidelines for the Canada lynx to provide adequate guidance for the protection of the Canada lynx
- Need to understand needs for remote habitat (needs of the wolf and lynx are different)

Rationale for Change: There is a need to revise the Forest Plan to provide protection for the Canada lynx. The Canada lynx was federally listed as threatened in March of 2000. Prior to listing, a number of federal agencies including the U.S. Forest Service, prepared a Lynx Conservation Assessment and Strategy (LCAS). The LCAS was developed to provide a consistent approach to conserve Canada lynx of federal lands in the conterminous United States. The conservation measures presented in this document were developed to be used as a tool for conferencing and consultation, as a basis for evaluating the adequacy of current programmatic plans, and for analyzing effects of planned and on-going projects on lynx and lynx habitat. In the LCAS, the Forest Service agreed that forest plans would include measures necessary to conserve Canada lynx for all administrative units identified as having lynx habitat.

Proposed Change: Change management direction as needed to provide for the protection of Canada lynx and/or lynx habitat.

Forest Access – All-Terrain Vehicles/Off-Road Vehicles

All-Terrain Vehicles/Off-Road Vehicles (ATV/ORV) use on the Ottawa National Forest and forest roadways has changed over the past 20 years. User opportunities and resource protection will be improved through changes to the Forest Plan.

Current Situation: Direction in the Forest Plan for ATVs and ORVs is combined with snowmobile direction. In general, in Roaded Natural Recreational Opportunity areas on the Forest Management Areas (MA) 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, and 7.1) ATVs and ORVs are allowed to use roads and forest lands unless they are specifically designated closed. Main collector roads are currently unavailable to ATVs and ORVs through a Forest Supervisor's closure order. In MA 6.1 the area is closed to ATVs/ORVs except where specific roads and trails are designated open. Management Area 6.2 allows use of ATVs/ORVs only on trails specifically designated open and system roads that are not specifically closed are open to ATV use as long as no resource damage is occurring or state laws being broken. In other MAs use is minimal (e.g. in scenic or recreational segments of WSRs in MA 8.1) or not permitted (e.g. Wilderness Areas).

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Create an ORV trail system for motorized and non-motorized use and access
- Open all roads to ATVs. (or just all Level 3 roads)
- Use old roads to create trails
- Do not use temporary logging roads as ATV trails
- All areas of the Forest should be closed to ATVs unless posted open.
- Too much cross-country ATV traffic causing damage; noise.
- Connect current trail systems.

Rationale for Change: Current Forest Service policy is to manage ATV/ORV use. To be consistent with Forest Service policy, the Ottawa National Forest will consider implementing a designated ATV/ORV system. On the Ottawa National Forest there is a need to improve motorized recreation opportunities and conditions. The Ottawa has the opportunity to continue to provide for ATV/ORV use while protecting forest resources. The Ottawa National Forest has the land base to provide a quality, sustainable, ATV/ORV experience without causing conflicts with other types of recreation or resources. When the current Forest Plan was approved, ATV use was relatively low, mainly consisting of hunters. Recreation demand related to ATV/ORV use in areas open to use, and roadways open to use, on the Ottawa National Forest is rapidly growing. Current direction on areas and roads open to use needs to be clarified. Also, user opportunities and access is fragmented within the Forest as the user moves between ownerships. In addition, it must be ensured that soil and water resources of the Forest that provide the base upon which all uses take place are well protected.

Proposed Change: The proposed action is to provide direction within the Forest Plan to manage ATV/ORV use consistent with national policy while maintaining or improving coordination with local governments and other public agencies. In order to maintain soil and

water quality, opportunities for ATV/ORV use that minimize/mitigate possible damage to soil and water resources and wildlife habitat will be defined. Access may be adjusted to provide for both ATV use, and opportunities to enhance biodiversity, well into the future on the Ottawa. Consideration will be given to ATV/ORV improvements that can come from better coordination with area governments on access, roads open to use, and management guidelines. In addition, consideration will be given to a policy allowing a designated ATV/ORV system.

Water Resources

Management of the Ottawa National Forest has worked to restore watershed conditions and stream conditions since its beginning in the 1930's. Cut over and burned lands were reforested, stream conditions and fisheries improved and guidelines used to avoid degradation of water quality in project areas. This work continues today.

A. Riparian Areas.

Current Situation: Direction for riparian management within the current plan can be improved so that riparian function and structural conditions are maintained. The existing riparian direction within the Forest Plan does not reflect current research findings.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Revise logging practices to protect wetlands
- Allow for site-specific adjustments to meet conditions and goals of individual projects.
- Protecting the temperature/moisture regime in riparian habitats should be included in the Forest Plan
- Add language providing direction on riparian enhancement/restoration projects

Rationale for Change: Knowledge of riparian structure and function, and the effects of management on it, has made advances since the Forest Plan was originally written. Some of this current riparian research has taken place in the western U.P., making it directly applicable to the Ottawa's riparian ecosystems. The Ottawa has been designing vegetation management projects reflecting this applicable research, which supports the continuing ecosystem restoration of the Forest.

The existing Forest Plan includes some guidelines linked to riparian structure and function which can be improved.

Proposed Change: The Revised Forest Plan will identify improved standards and guidelines that enhance protections and guide management decisions in riparian areas. These will address riparian function and structure which contributes to biodiversity. These will also address management to improve cold water stream habitats.

B. Management of Dams

Current Situation: The current Forest Plan needs clear direction concerning the management

of stream dams on the Forest.

Representative Comments on Needs for Change:

- Maintain a minimum instream flow value
- Need to address minimum instream flows for regulating dams
- Need to include how to manage existing dams and impoundments

Rationale for Change: A clear guide to the management of dams and their affect on stream conditions is needed. This guide should provide for the consideration of habitat effects, species migration effects, stream flow characteristics, when using dams to create fishing ponds/pools, create barriers to invasive species, and enhance recreation opportunities and facilities.

Proposed Change: Guidelines will be included in the Revised Forest Plan to be considered with projects involving existing dams and additions or removals of dams on forest streams. Guidelines will address residual stream flow, habitat for sensitive species, trout fisheries, and recreational values. These guidelines will not apply to hydro-power dams on the Forest managed under licenses administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

C. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

Current Situation: The Forest Plan does not contain provisions (direction) contained within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders.

Rationale for Change: The proposed changes are needed to include the terms and conditions by which the FERC license order requires the aquatic and riparian areas to be managed by.

Proposed Changes: The proposed change is to incorporate by reference the Federal Regulatory Commission license orders relating to aquatic and riparian habitat.

Wilderness

The Ottawa National Forest has three designated Wildernesses encompassing over 50,000 acres. Some public comment expressed interest in additional wilderness designations and stronger protection of backcountry values. There has been some public interest specifically in the Trap Hills area on the Ottawa National Forest.

Current Situation: Sylvania, Sturgeon River Gorge, and McCormick areas were recommended for Wilderness designation in 1986 Forest Plan. They were provided protection of their wilderness characteristics until wilderness studies could be completed. In 1987 Congress added the three areas to the National Wilderness Preservation System. In response to designation, the Forest Plan was amended in 1992 to include standards and guidelines for the management of the three wildernesses. In 1995 the Forest Plan was again amended to include the standards and guidelines for continued motorboat use on Big Bateau, Devil's Head, and Crooked Lake in Sylvania Wilderness. Each wilderness is managed under a separate management area prescription due to the ecological uniqueness of each area and due to the varying recreational

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

user demands.

General Forest Plan goals related to wilderness include: to provide for an appropriate amount of wilderness and/or wilderness study, and provide opportunities and conditions that will minimize motorized and nonmotorized recreation user conflicts.

Representative Comments on Need for Change:

- Create additional wilderness areas across the Forest
- Designate Trap Hills as a wilderness area
- Stronger protection of back country values
- Preserve remote areas
- Motorboat issues on Crooked Lake in Sylvania Wilderness

Rationale for Change: The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) provides for the review and recommendation of Wilderness study areas.

Proposed Change: A roadless inventory and wilderness evaluation will be part of the revision process. The inventory process will analyze areas for roadless qualities. Those areas that meet basic inventory criteria will be evaluated as potential wilderness. Based on the results of this work, recommendations to Congress may be made for potential wilderness study areas.

VII. Issues Not Addressed in the Forest Plan Revision Process

Forest Plan decisions only apply to National Forest System lands. The following types of topics are beyond the scope of the Forest Plan:

- Items that do not deal with the six decisions required by the planning regulations at 36 CFR 219.
- Site-specific decisions related to implementation of the Forest Plan.
- Decisions outside Forest Service jurisdiction.
- Decisions on the Forest budget or allocations of personnel.
- Actions requiring changes in laws or regulations.

The following is a review of comments raised by individuals in the initial scoping of “need for change” issues that will not be addressed in the revision.

This section concludes with a reference to editorial changes that will be made during the revision process.

Implementation Issues

Many of the comments received did not suggest a change in the current plan, but did suggest changes in the way the Plan is implemented. The Ottawa will address these types of comments through administrative processes as time and resources allow. Implementation comments raised by the public include:

- Enforcement of regulations and rules regarding snowmobile and ATV travel
- Design roads and trails to minimize user conflicts
- Install artificial nesting platforms for loons
- Provide environmental education opportunities
- Post signs in campgrounds and other areas identifying invasive plant species

Issues Adequately Addressed in the Present Forest Plan

The following is a list of comments the Forest determined were adequately addressed in the Forest Plan. The Forest's analysis of the current management situation identified there were no critical and compelling reasons to change the direction in the Forest Plan for these topics. The Forest will not address these topics in the Forest Plan revision process unless compelling and substantive information is developed.

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

- Land acquisition policy for the Forest
- Snowmobile access
- Road/Transportation management
- Partnerships

Issues Outside Forest Service Jurisdiction

A number of suggestions were received that are outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service and not included in the Forest Plan. The following are examples of items that are outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service that will not be addressed in the Forest Plan revision process:

- Inadequate budgets for recreation facilities maintenance
- Cumbersome and lengthy administrative processes
- Shifting management of forest lands to another agency
- Hiring/personnel policies
- Closure of facilities

Possible Future Amendments

The following are topics identified as possible changes that may be addressed by future amendments. A determination has been made that the proposed change is not “ripe” (ready) to be included in the Forest Plan Revision process:

- Special use communication sites
- Special uses utility corridors
- Esker mining
- Hardrock minerals
- Wildland fire use
- Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Designated Rivers - Portions of six river systems were designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with the Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991. The Ottawa is working to complete Comprehensive River Management Plans (CRMP) and finalize the river corridor boundaries. The Forest Plan will be amended in the future, as necessary, based on the completion of this work.

Current plan direction resulted from the 1994 Forest Plan Amendment No. 4 which provides for management standards and guidelines for wild, scenic, and recreational river segments on the Ottawa National Forest. At present river corridor boundaries are defined as ¼ mile either side of the mean high water mark. This direction for designated rivers is contained within Management Area 8.1.

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

Study Rivers – Portions of five river systems were defined as part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System with the Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991.

Current plan direction resulted from the 1994 Forest Plan Amendment No. 4 which provides for the protection of these rivers pending future study and possible designation into the Wild and Scenic River system. At present river corridor boundaries are defined as ¼ mile either side of the mean high water mark. This direction for study rivers is contained within Management Area 9.2.

Editorial Changes

There are a number of editorial changes that will be made to better define, clarify, or further explain the intent of the Forest Plan. These include but are not limited to:

- Clarify UPPCO leases; administration and termination.
- Clarify the purpose and uses of the North Country National Scenic Trail.
- Clarify wording from various parts of current Plan to make it more consistent regarding Management Area direction.
- Clarify text on monitoring invasives and rare plants.
- Define use of native plant species in decommissioning roads and other restoration work.
- Clarify direction regarding transportation safety.

VIII. Next Steps in the Revision Process

Notice of Intent (2003)

The purpose of the Notice of Intent (NOI) is to inform the Tribes, public, and local, county, and state governments that the Michigan National Forests are proposing to revise Forest Plans and invites the public to participate in the process by commenting on the proposed revision items.

Content Analysis (2003)

The Forests will conduct a content analysis on all comments received during the Notice of Intent 60-day comment period. Comments will be assessed for issues and suggested alternatives, then grouped when similar.

Development of Alternatives (2004)

The USDA Forest Service will develop several revision alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). These alternatives will provide different ways to address the “need for change” based on the major revision issues or topics discussed above.

The Forest will evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives and explain reasons for eliminating some alternatives from detailed study. A “no-action alternative” is required, meaning that management would continue under the existing Forest Plan.

In developing and describing alternatives, the desired settings will be defined, levels of use, and resource conditions. The Forest will estimate resource outputs associated with progress toward desired conditions, during the next ten to fifteen years. A number of potential alternative elements have been listed in the proposed actions. Some of these elements will be analyzed in detail, while others may be considered without a detailed analysis. The DEIS will display and compare alternative ways of managing National Forest System lands, and outline the physical, biological, social, and economic effects of each alternative.

Environmental Analysis (2005)

The DEIS will display and compare alternative ways of managing the Ottawa National Forest. The DEIS will also describe the anticipated physical, biological, social, and economic effects of each alternative. The Forest Service will identify a preferred alternative and a proposed Revised Forest Plan. The DEIS and proposed revised plan are expected to be published in **2005**. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement and proposed Revised Forest Plan will be 90 days from the date it is published in the *Federal Register*.

Draft Forest Plan (2005)

After the end of the comment period on the DEIS, the Forest Service will review, consider, analyze, and respond to public comments in preparing the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Revised Forest Plan. The Forest Service proposes to complete the FEIS in **2006**.

Revised Forest Plan (2006)

The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the FEIS, together with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, in making a decision and adopting the final Revised Forest Plan. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision would be subject to appeal in accordance with federal regulations (36 CFR 217).

The Revised Forest Plan will set the management direction for the Ottawa National Forest for the next 10-15 years.

Under current direction, the responsible official is the Regional Forester, Eastern Region, 626 East Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203.

IX. The Notice of Intent

[3410-11-P]

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE

Revised Land and Resource Management Plans for the Huron-Manistee National Forests (Alcona, Crawford, Iosco, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Oscoda and Wexford Counties, Michigan); the **Hiawatha National Forest** (Alger, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Delta, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette and Schoolcraft Counties, Michigan); and the **Ottawa National Forest** (Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Marquette and Ontonagon Counties, Michigan).

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statements.

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service intends to prepare three separate and individual Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents for revising the **Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha and Ottawa National Forest** Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plan) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1604(f) (5) and USDA Forest Service National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning regulations. The National Forests in Michigan are concurrently starting the revision process for each of the three National Forests. The Revised Forest Plans for each Forest will supersede the existing Forest Plans, which were approved in the mid-1980s, and any amendments associated with those individual Forest Plans. This Notice describes the focus areas of change, the estimated dates for filing the EIS, the information concerning public participation, the names and addresses of the responsible agency official and the individual who can provide additional information for each of the three National Forests in Michigan. In an effort to create efficiencies in the process, the Michigan National Forests are identifying areas of Plan Revision where resources, information needs, data assessments and public involvement can be cooperatively accomplished by all three Forests.

DATES: Your comments are needed on this Notice of Intent (NOI) in writing on or before November 17, 2003. The Draft EIS documents should be available for public review by March 2005. The Final EIS and Revised Forest Plans should be completed by March 2006. Comments should be addressed to the appropriate National Forest as shown below.

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to:

Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forests NOI - FP Revision Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forest 1755 S. Mitchell St. Cadillac, MI 49601	Hiawatha Nat'l Forest NOI – FP Revision Hiawatha Nat'l Forest 2727 N. Lincoln Rd. Escanaba, MI 49829	Ottawa Nat'l Forest NOI – FP Revision Ottawa Nat'l Forest E6248 US Hwy. 2 Ironwood, MI 49938
---	---	---

Or direct electronic mail to (type: **NOI – FP Revision in the subject line**):

Huron-Manistee National Forest:	r9_huronmanistee_revision@fs.fed.us
Hiawatha National Forest:	r9_hiawatha_revision@fs.fed.us
Ottawa National Forest:	r9_ottawa_revision@fs.fed.us

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forests Forest Planner Phone: 231.775.5023 Fax: 231.775.5551 TTY: 231.775.3183 www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf	Hiawatha Nat'l Forest Forest Planner Phone: 906.786.4062 Fax: 906.789.3311 TTY: 906.789.3337 www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha	Ottawa Nat'l Forest Forest Planner Phone: 906.932.1330 Fax: 906.932.0122 TTY: 906.932.0301 www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa
--	---	---

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:

Randy Moore, Regional Forester, Eastern Region,
626 E. Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Regional Forester for the Eastern Region gives notice of the Agency's intent to prepare three separate EIS documents to revise the **Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha and Ottawa** National Forest Plans. The Regional Forester approved the original National Forest Plans in the mid-1980s. These plans guide the overall management of the Michigan National Forests. The six primary decisions in the Forest Plan are:

1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives
2. Forest-wide management requirements
3. Management area direction
4. Lands suited and not suited for resource use and production (timber management etc.)
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements
6. Recommendations to Congress (such as wilderness), if any

By the requirements of the National Forest Management Act, National Forests must revise the Forest Plan every 10-15 years (U.S.C. 1604[f][5]). At this time, there are three reasons to revise the current Forest Plans:

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

1. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that such plans be revised every 10-15 years;
2. New research and information is available regarding management of forestlands; and
3. Agency goals and objectives, along with other national guidance for strategic plans and programs, have changed. The agency Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan (2000) provides guidance to forest planning.

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR REVISING THE FOREST PLANS: Across the state of Michigan, people value the opportunities public forests provide for enjoying recreation, solitude, nature study, and scenic beauty. People also expect important products from managed forests, such as wildlife species and habitats, recreation opportunities and events, wood products, and other forest products. The Michigan National Forests are integral to the sense of place for communities across the State, as well as adjoining states.

However, each of the three Michigan National Forests also serves local communities with diverse needs and unique expectations. When making decisions in the revised plans, economic and social impacts will be examined. Each National Forest has proposed to focus analysis on topics identified as being most critically in need of change for their individual National Forest. These were identified through public comment, monitoring and evaluating implementation of the current forest plan.

HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST ■ ■ REVISION TOPICS

- 1. Sustainable Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses:** The Hiawatha National Forest has diverse ecosystems that provide habitat for numerous plants and animals, serve as a setting for recreational activities, and provide a mix of forest products. Since the implementation of the Forest Plan, new information on the ecological function and capability of the forest landscape has been developed. The Hiawatha has also completed mapping of ecological units using updated criteria and information, which will be used, along with other resource information, to:
 - ◆ Determine the most effective mix of tree species, their sizes and locations;
 - ◆ Determine how the vegetation composition and structure will provide conditions that contribute to species viability, habitat for game species, recreation, and forest products;
 - ◆ Determine the best locations to manage for old growth characteristics;
 - ◆ Determine what lands are suitable for timber harvests.

The Hiawatha National Forest proposes the following revisions to the Forest Plan:

- A. Vegetation Management:** Some of the Plan's vegetation composition and structure goals have not been met. This is due to numerous factors, including changed market demand, natural events (such as insect and disease infestations, wind events and fire), and the discovery of new rare plant and animal species. Species most affected were jack pine and the aspen group. The Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Review and change, where necessary, the vegetation goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines.
2. Use improved information about the Forest's ecosystems to better align management prescriptions where ecosystem capabilities favor their applications.

B. Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Sensitive and Management Indicator Species: The Hiawatha has many threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species. These species require a diverse array of ecological conditions. Based on species viability evaluation and review of the current Forest Plan, the Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Revise desired future conditions, goals, objectives and standards and guidelines to address rare species.
2. Incorporate by reference designated federally threatened, endangered and proposed and Regional Forester Sensitive Species.
3. Evaluate and change Management Indicator Species, as necessary, based on monitoring and new information.
4. Assess current and projected Canada lynx habitat to determine the amount and distribution of suitable habitat. Develop standards and guidelines that incorporate the Canada Lynx Conservation Strategy, when appropriate.

C. Land Suitability: The Plan classifies lands as suited and unsuited for timber production. Because of improved ecological classification information, there is a need to review the Hiawatha's lands allocated as suited and unsuited for timber production. The Hiawatha proposes to review and change, as necessary, lands identified as suitable and not suitable for timber production, incorporating new information on ecosystems sustainability and capability.

D. Old Growth: The Forest Plan provides for a minimum of 51,988 acres of lands classified as suitable for timber production to be designated as old growth. This implies that timber harvest could occur because suited lands are available to contribute the Forest's timber volume goals. The Plan also provides guidance on the amount and species composition by management area. New ecological information and monitoring of designated old growth stands indicates some adjustments to the old growth system are needed. The Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Review the old growth system design, focusing on ecological function.
2. Designate core old growth areas that include: wilderness, research natural areas, semi-primitive non-motorized areas, and Grand Island National Recreation Area.
3. Maintain current Plan minimum of 51,988 acres of designated old growth in addition to core areas; however, re-classify designated old growth stands from suited to unsuited for timber production.
4. Develop forest-wide desired future conditions, goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines for old growth.

E. Management Areas: The Hiawatha has 26 different management areas. Each area has a desired condition, prescriptions and standards and guidelines. The Hiawatha has mapped its ecological land types (ELT) to better define the inherent ecosystem capabilities that

change across the forest. There is a need to modify management goals and objectives so that management is better aligned with the inherent capability of the land and other multiple use objectives. The Hiawatha proposes to review and change management areas to incorporate ecological land types, new information on ecosystems, sustainability and capability concepts and other pertinent resource information.

- F. **Research Natural Areas:** Research Natural Areas are examples of important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics to complete the national network of research natural areas (RNAs). The Hiawatha has 3 designated and 18 candidate RNAs. The Hiawatha proposes to review the existing candidate RNAs using new ecological information (ecological land-type mapping).
- G. **Timber Output:** The Hiawatha's projected timber harvest may change in response to changes to land suitability, management prescriptions, and vegetation goals. Any changes to lands identified as suited for timber production, as well as vegetation objectives, may have an affect on timber volume. The Hiawatha proposes to adjust, as necessary, the Plan's timber projections based on changes to land suitability, vegetation goals and management areas.

- 2. **Watershed Health:** Approximately 46 percent of the Hiawatha National Forest is designated as wetlands. It includes nearly 1,850 miles of streams and 28,700 acres of lakes and ponds. Based on new ecological information, monitoring, and review of existing Plan direction, the following areas need to be updated:

- A. **Watershed, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat:** The Hiawatha proposes to:

- 1. Develop a desired future condition, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for watershed, riparian and aquatic resources.
- 2. Incorporate by reference the State of Michigan Water Quality Management Practices on Forest Land (BMPs).
- 3. Establish watershed, riparian and aquatic monitoring protocol and standards.

- B. **Soils: The Hiawatha proposes to:**

- 1. Develop a desired future condition, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines to insure that soil productivity and function is maintained in conjunction with new ecological information.
- 2. Incorporate by reference regional soil standards.

3. Recreation

- A. **Access:** Recreation use and demands for access have changed since the Forest Plan was developed. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation users have increased and demands for access to inland lakes and the Great Lakes continue to rise. The Hiawatha National Forest proposes to develop forest-wide and/or update management area desired condition statements, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for recreation access. It will include direction for:

- 1. Motorized and non-motorized access that provides opportunities for future loop and

connected trails.

2. Forest-wide direction for OHV (off highway vehicles) use.
3. The quantity and development level for inland lakes and Great Lakes boat accesses.
4. Providing access to both motorized and non-motorized recreation settings on inland lakes.

B. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum: Forest Plan Amendment 5 (which resolved the appeal(s) of the Forest Plan in 1986), allocated the areas of Delia's Run, Boot Lake and Buck Bay Creek to a "semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). Prior to the amendment, these areas were allocated to a "roaded natural" ROS. These areas do not meet the desired future condition for management for the SPNM recreation setting because there is a historic pattern and significant motorized use throughout these areas and the quality of the setting is not beneficial to SPNM recreation. The Hiawatha proposes to change the ROS classification for these areas from semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive motorized.

4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers

A. Wilderness Areas: The Hiawatha National Forest has six wilderness areas (Rock River Canyon, Big Island Lake, Mackinac, Round Island, Delirium, and Horseshoe Bay) and two RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) Areas (Government Island and Fibre). The Forest conducted an initial roadless inventory and found no areas except Fibre that qualified as roadless. Based on our initial inventory and assessment, only Fibre will be further evaluated for wilderness study.

B. Wild and Scenic Rivers: The Forest Plan identified the Indian, Carp, Whitefish, Sturgeon, and East Branch Tahquamenon Rivers as "study rivers" for evaluation of their potential for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (WSR). They were allocated to Management Area 8.4, with management direction that would not diminish their river values or free-flowing condition. As a result of the Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991, these rivers were designated as Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers. Those segments with primarily National Forest ownership were designated as wild and scenic rivers, while those segments with primarily private ownership were designated as study rivers. The Hiawatha completed resource assessments for all five rivers and amended the Plan with comprehensive management plans for the Indian and Carp Rivers. The Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Incorporate specific river management plans and establish final corridor boundaries for the designated sections of the East Branch Tahquamenon, Sturgeon and Whitefish Rivers.
2. Incorporate new information and update management direction for National Forest lands within the study river segments.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US: Your comments about the Hiawatha National Forest's proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicated that you are referencing the Hiawatha National Forest's proposed

changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forest in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern.

The document titled “Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Hiawatha National Forest” provides additional details on the revision topics and is available upon request. You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request this additional information by calling the number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forest’s web page. See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation."

HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS ■ ■ Revision Topics

The Huron-Manistee National Forests have completed the Forest Plan Revision “Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests.” The following summarizes the proposed changes to the Forest Plan that are necessary to bring the 1986 Forest Plan as amended up-to-date.

1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses

- A. **Management Areas:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests’ management areas are based on ecological and social economic considerations. Each management area has unique desired conditions, goals and objectives. There is a need to change management areas, desired conditions, goals and objectives because there is new ecological and social information and conditions. The Huron-Manistee National Forests propose to:
1. Increase ruffed grouse emphasis areas by 1,400 acres; Rural areas by 74,300 acres; Semiprimitive Areas by 10,500 acres; and candidate Research Natural Areas by 9,600 acres; and decrease the sandy hills and plains management area by 59,700 acres and deer and wildlife emphasis areas by 20,800 acres.
 2. Establish desired conditions, goals, and objectives for the aquatics and riparian, undesirable invasive species, fire and hazardous fuel management, and oil and gas resources.
 3. Update the desired conditions, goals and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, rare plants, soils, and semiprimitive recreation areas.
- B. **Wildlife and Rare Plants:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have many threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species. These species require an array of ecological conditions. Other wildlife changes are proposed because areas are better suited for specific wildlife species, semiprimitive recreation opportunities, or candidate research natural areas. Based on species viability evaluation and review of the current Forest Plan, the Huron-Manistee National Forests propose to:
1. Manage the Regional Forester Sensitive Species according to the Eastern Region Regional Forester's Sensitive Species Framework.

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

2. Restore and maintain large-scale openings for grassland, prairie, savannah, and oak-pine barrens up to approximately 10 percent of the sandy hills and plains land type associations (approximately 58,600 acres). The size of openings may be up to approximately 500 acres.
 3. Restore Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat areas up to approximately 550 acres in size.
 4. Protect resource values by managing landforms such as coastal plain marshes, bogs, swales, fens, and mesic prairies consistent with ecological processes.
 5. Improve habitat conditions for species such as: American ginseng, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, red headed woodpecker, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, cerulean warbler, and common loon.
 6. Change the Nordhouse Dunes North Semiprimitive Area to a grouse emphasis area.
 7. Increase the amount of ruffed grouse emphasis areas by approximately 1,400 acres and reduce the deer emphasis areas by approximately 18,511 acres and wildlife emphasis areas by approximately 2,326 acres in order to establish candidate research natural areas and semi-primitive areas.
- C. **Research Natural Areas:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests presently have three research natural areas and four candidate research natural areas. The Forests have inventoried potential areas for candidate research natural areas and propose to add 19 candidate research natural areas (approximately 9,600 acres) to protect unique or representative areas and conduct research, observation, and education programs.
- D. **Management Indicator Species and Monitoring:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have management indicator species and conducts monitoring annually. The Forests annually prepare a monitoring and evaluation report. There is a need to identify management indicator species to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the effects of implementing the Forest Plan and to monitor in an efficient and effective manner. The Forests propose to evaluate, and revise if needed, management indicator species and monitoring requirements during the preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and Forest Plan.
- E. **Timber Management:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests Allowable Sale Quantity is 82.2 MMBF per year; Maximum Long Term Sustained Yield Capacity is 261.0 MMBF per year; and little or no timber volume was projected from lands classified as not suitable for timber production. The lands suitable for timber management have changed due to past decisions and proposed Forest Plan revision changes. The Forests are planning activities, such as stewardship contracts and timber sales, to restore old growth, create small and large-scale openings and create permanent fuel breaks on lands classified as not suitable for timber production. The Forests propose to:
1. Recalculate the maximum long-term sustained yield capacity.
 2. Add an objective/outcome for timber derived from lands classified as not suitable for timber production (non-chargeable to the allowable sale quantity volume) up to approximately 20 MMBF per year.

2. **Watershed Health:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests updated aquatic standards and guidelines in 2003 through Forest Plan Amendment number 24. Based on a review of the Forest Plan, the Forests propose the following changes:
 1. Incorporate Aquatic Ecological Classification and Inventory System information into the aquatics desired condition.
 2. Categorize lakes in the desired conditions, goals and objectives in terms of baseline trophic status and morphological/hydrological sensitivity in order to better manage our lakes.
 3. Incorporate by reference the terms and conditions of applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders as standards and guidelines.
 4. Update the guideline to manage vegetation attractive to beaver in riparian areas to closer mimic natural disturbance regimes.
3. **Recreation:**
 - A. **Semiprimitive:** The Forests reviewed existing and potential semiprimitive areas for suitability and propose the following changes:
 1. Add approximately 5,000 acres of semiprimitive non-motorized recreation areas.
 2. Add approximately 5,500 acres of semiprimitive motorized areas.
 3. Change the southern portion of the Briar Hills Semiprimitive Non-motorized Area to a semiprimitive motorized area.
 - B. **Aesthetics:** Visual quality objectives have been replaced by the National Scenery Management System which incorporates ecological and socio-economic considerations in scenery management. The Forests propose to incorporate the Scenery Management System visual integrity and sensitivity principles to better integrate ecological and social considerations.
 - C. **Access:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have adequate Forest Plan direction for access (roads and trails). The Forest Plan did not consider new uses such as mountain bikes. The Forests propose to allow mountain bikes on trails unless posted closed. Evaluate and incorporate into the Forest Plan, as needed, new trail uses as they occur.
4. **Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.**
 - A. **Wilderness:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have one Wilderness Area, Nordhouse Dunes, and one RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluations) area, Bear Swamp. The Forests conducted an initial roadless inventory and found no areas that qualified as roadless. Based on our initial inventory and assessment, no areas would be recommended for wilderness study.
 - B. **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have five federally designated national wild and scenic rivers. River management plans have been developed and approved for all rivers. The Forests have four study rivers. Some of the wild and scenic or study rivers boundaries need to be established or improved. Recent changes in land uses have altered the values of some of the study rivers. The Forests propose to:

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

1. Change the Au Sable River management area boundary to extend to roads on both sides of the river.
2. Place the White River, Little Manistee River, and a portion of the Pine River up to M-55 in “lands-in-holding” status until river studies are completed.
3. Drop the Little Muskegon and Muskegon Rivers from further Wild and Scenic River study because of limited federal ownership and private development along the rivers.

5. Wildland Fire and Fuels Management: The Huron-Manistee National Forests’ Forest Plan contains general guidance on fire and fuels management. The Forests are comprised of land type association and vegetative communities that are fire dependent. The Forests are also highly fragmented with private ownership and an increasing number of new homes and cabins. The Forest Service, through the National Fire Plan, is emphasizing fire and fuels management. The Huron-Manistee National Forests reviewed the current situation, new information (ecological, social and Forest Service direction) and propose to:

1. Add a standard to integrate fire and fuels management with natural resources and programs.
2. Include a description of the urban-rural interface (mixed forests and dense housing areas) and intermix (mixed forests and sparse housing areas) within the desired condition of Management Areas 2.4 and 4.4 (approximately 77,500 acres).
3. Include a description of the fire history, forest type, fuel loadings and risks, fire suppression strategy, and fire response in the desired conditions of each management area.
4. Include a guideline to manage hazardous fuels by mimicking natural fire regimes in fire-dependent ecosystems and at-risk urban-rural interface and intermix areas.
5. Add an objective/outcome to annually initiate, create or maintain approximately 2,000 acres of fuel barriers and 8,000 acres of hazardous fuels reduction.
6. Add a guideline to limit fuel barrier creation to be up to approximately 8 miles in length and temporary or permanent openings up to approximately 500 acres in size.
7. Add a guideline to conduct, as needed, project-level fuels hazard reduction effectiveness monitoring.

6. Minerals: The Huron-Manistee National Forests have a very modest oil and gas program. The Forests have identified National Forest System lands available for oil and gas development and have established adequate standards and guidelines. Regulations require the Forest Plan to include a reasonable foreseeable development of oil and gas resources and the identification of lands which may be leased. The Forest proposes to:

1. Calculate the Reasonable Foreseeable Oil and Gas Development (our interim estimate is approximately 100 wells on National Forest System lands) for the next 10-15 years.
2. Identify National Forest System lands which may be consented to lease for oil and gas developments.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US: Your comments about the Huron-Manistee National Forests proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicated that you are referencing the Huron-Manistee National Forests' proposed changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forests in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern.

The document titled "Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests" provides additional details on the revision topics and is available upon request. You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request this additional information by calling the number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forests' web page. See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation."

OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST ■ ■ Revision Topics

- 1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses:** Since the implementation of the present Forest Plan began in 1986, advancements have been made in knowledge of ecological capabilities and mapping of ecological units. This knowledge, along with field experience, will be used to reassess the suitability of lands for timber management, enhance the contribution to the viability of plant and animal species, provide for cultural, commercial and personal uses of special forest products, and adjust management objectives to better match ecosystems capabilities. Specifically, the following will be addressed:
 - A. Invasive Species:** The Forest Plan will be revised to include standards and guidelines outlining a Forest-wide program on non-native invasive plant and animal listing, inventory, mapping, treatment, and monitoring, as the current Plan direction is limited in this area.
 - B. Management Indicator Species:** The Forest will evaluate and change Management Indicator Species (MIS), as necessary, based on monitoring and new information.
 - C. Vegetation Management:** New information concerning: the suitability of lands for timber production, biological diversity, conditions that support the viability of species, cultural, commercial and personal uses of special forest products, and ecosystem capacity offer the Forest an opportunity to better align the management of the resources to ecosystem capabilities. Through the revision process the Forest proposes to:
 1. Review, and as needed, change forest-wide goals and management requirements, location and management direction for individual management areas including standards and guidelines to enhance the contribution to the viability of native and desired non-native species known to reside on the Forest, as well as other multiple use objectives, including cultural uses and values.
 2. Change Forest Plan direction as needed to contribute to a diversity of plant and animal communities, and tree species, consistent with the overall multiple-use objectives of the planning area.

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

3. Change the location and number of acres of land suited and not suited for timber production in order to maintain soils productivity and high quality water conditions.
4. Better align hardwood silviculture (management methods) with ecosystem units which favor its application. This will result in an increase in the number of acres managed uneven-aged versus even-aged.
5. Emphasize the retention and/or expansion of white pine and hemlock in northern hardwood stands to improve biodiversity.
6. Increase the number of acres managed for long-lived conifers.
7. Maintain or increase a number of acres of short rotation conifers as needed to further contribute to habitat for native species.
8. Adjust the amount and location of aspen forests to better match ecosystems capabilities, align with new suitable lands information and support conservation of the Canada lynx.
9. Change Forest Plan direction concerning the management of forest stands adjacent to old growth. In addition, old growth management direction may be changed as needed to contribute to species viability.
10. Adjust the amount of managed forest openings to better match ecosystem capabilities and opportunities.
11. Change Forest Plan direction to address the role of wildfire and prescribed fire in fire-prone ecosystems including management areas emphasizing conifer species.

It is anticipated that these proposed actions will lead to a change in species composition objectives in some management areas, and change the location and size of some management areas. As a result, the ability of the Forest to maintain its current and projected levels of timber harvest and contribution to the regional economic market will be reassessed.

- D. **Research Natural Areas:** Research Natural Areas are examples of important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics to complete the national network of research natural areas (RNAs). The Ottawa has 1 designated and 2 candidate RNAs. The Ottawa proposes to review the existing candidate RNAs using new ecological information.
- E. **Canada Lynx:** Management direction for the Forest will provide habitat and management direction that supports the conservation of the threatened Canada lynx.

2. Watershed Health:

- A. **Watershed, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat:** The Revised Forest Plan will include standards and guidelines that enhance protections and guide management decisions in riparian areas. These will address riparian function and structure which contribute to biodiversity. These will also address management to improve cold-water stream habitats.
- B. **Management of Dams:** Guidelines will be included in the Revised Forest Plan to be considered with projects involving existing dams, or additions or removals of dams on forest streams. Guidelines will address residual stream flow, habitat for sensitive species,

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

trout fisheries, and recreational values. Guidelines for hydro-power dams on the Forest managed under licenses administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission are contained within their respective licenses.

C. **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:** Incorporate by reference the terms and conditions of applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders.

3. **Recreation:** All-Terrain Vehicle/Off Road Vehicle (ATV/ORV) use on the Ottawa National Forest is rapidly changing. Current Forest Service policy is to manage ATV/ORV use. To be consistent with Forest Service policy, the Ottawa National Forest will consider allowing for a designated ATV/ORV system. Current direction on areas and roads open to use needs to be clarified to better manage this use. In addition to developing guidelines that protect natural resources in areas where these uses may occur, the Forest will look for opportunities to coordinate ATV/ORV use and access with adjoining roads, trails and lands held by private and public owners.

4. **Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers:**

A. **Wilderness:** A roadless inventory and potential wilderness evaluation will be part of the revision process. The inventory process will analyze areas for roadless qualities. Those areas that meet basic inventory criteria will be evaluated as potential wilderness study areas. Based on the results of this work, recommendations to Congress may be made for potential wilderness study areas.

B. **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The Ottawa is working to complete Comprehensive River Management Plans and finalize river corridor boundaries. Portions of six river systems were designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System with Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991. The Forest Plan will be amended in the future, as necessary, based on completion of this work.

YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US: Your comments about the Ottawa National Forest's proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicate that you are referencing the Ottawa National Forest's proposed changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forest's concern in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern. Again, please clearly indicate the Ottawa National Forest, your viewpoints, and your rationale.

Additional detail on the revision topics is available on request, in the form of the document titled "Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Ottawa National Forest". You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request the additional information by calling the phone number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forest web page listed in this notice. See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation."

RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES FOR REVISING THE FOREST PLANS: A range of alternatives will be considered when revising the Forest Plan for each of the Michigan National Forests. The alternatives will review different options to resolve the revision topics. A “no-action alternative” is required, meaning that management would continue under the existing Forest Plan.

Goals and standards and guides may be proposed to address portions of revision topics and typically will not vary between alternatives. Forest Plan objectives, management area direction, and other recommendations may vary by alternatives. Other minor changes may be made, particularly in the guidance chapter of the Forest Plan, to reflect changes made when addressing the above revision topics.

TRIBAL CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT

AGENCIES: The Michigan National Forests will continue to meet trust responsibilities with Native American Tribes by working collaboratively through the consultation process as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Tribal – USDA Forest Service relations on National Forest System Lands and with Tribes in the Territories Ceded in Treaties of 1836, 1837, and 1842 (Sec. VI.B). Treaty rights are exercised by tribes and tribal members in various ways such as hunting, fishing and gathering. The Forest Service recognizes treaty rights as a matter of national policy and consults with tribes to ensure that Agency decisions do not adversely affect these rights.

In acknowledgment of the Federal Government's obligation to consult effectively with federally recognized Indian tribes, the three Michigan National Forests will conduct government-to-government consultation with tribal governments for all tribes located near or having rights in the Forests, particularly those which retain rights through treaties. Forest Service officials will meet with tribal governing bodies, representatives, and agencies to discuss tribal interests, needs and concerns regarding National Forest management.

The Forest Service will also continue the ongoing relationships with state and federal agencies. This will be accomplished jointly between the three Michigan National Forests and the appropriate State and local agencies to provide for more consistent management and better service to the public.

INVITING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Comments and suggestions are now solicited from federal agencies, state and local governments, individuals, tribes, and organizations on the scope of the analysis to be included in the DEIS for the Revised Forest Plan (40 CFR 1501.7). Comments should focus on: (1) the proposal for revising the Forest Plans; (2) possible alternatives for addressing issues associated with the proposal; and (3) identify any possible impacts associated with the proposal based on an individual's civil rights (race, color, national origin, age, religion, gender, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status). Public participation throughout the revision process is encouraged.

With the publication of this NOI, the Forest Service will host a series of public meetings to:

1. Establish multiple opportunities for the public to generate ideas, concerns, and alternatives;

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

2. Present and clarify proposed changes to the Forest Plan;
3. Describe ways that individuals can respond to this NOI; and
4. Accept comments from the public on this proposal for revising the Forest Plan.

In the year 2004, work on alternative development and issue validation will be done. Many types of public involvement including public meetings, tribal and governmental consultation, written comments, website, and e-mail will be conducted.

In the year 2005, the proposed Revised Forest Plans and DEISs will be released. Many types of public involvement including a 90-day formal comment period, public meetings, tribal and governmental consultation, and written comments will be conducted.

During 2006, the final Revised Forest Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision will be released. Informational meetings to explain the decision on the final Forest Plan will be held.

General notices on opportunities to participate through mailings, news releases, public meetings, consultations and website will be provided. In addition to formal opportunities for comment, comments will be received and considered at any time throughout the revision process.

A representative from each of the three Michigan National Forests will be in attendance at the series of meetings listed below in the schedule titled "Michigan National Forests."

MICHIGAN NATIONAL FORESTS (Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha and Ottawa)			
Date	Time	Comment	Location
10/20/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Muskegon, Michigan Comfort Inn 1675 E. Sherman Road
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	
10/21/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Grand Rapids, Michigan Howard Johnsons 255 28 th Street, SW
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	
10/22/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Lansing, Michigan Clarion Hotel/Conference Center 3600 Dunckel Drive
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	
10/23/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Livonia, Michigan Embassy Suites 19525 Victor Parkway
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	

Each of the Michigan National Forests will host open house meetings to: (1) answer specific questions relative to the NOI and (2) to provide information on how to comment on the NOI and to accept written comments from the public. Following is a schedule of the meetings:

HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST		
Date	Time	Location
10/20/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan Lake Superior State University

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

		Cisler Center
10/21/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	St. Ignace, Michigan Little Bear East Arena & Community Center 275 Marquette Street
10/22/2003	6:30 – 9:00 p.m.	Marquette, Michigan Northern Michigan University University Center, Michigan Room
10/23/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Escanaba, Michigan Bay de Noc Community College M-tech Building, 2000 N 30th Street
10/27/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Munising, Michigan Munising Community Credit Union Community Center, Main Street & M-28

HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS			
Date	Time	Comment	Location
10/14/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Baldwin, Michigan Pleasant Plains Township Hall 885 8 th Street
	6:30- 9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/15/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Wellston, Michigan Chittenden Environmental Ctr. The Conifers Building 1070 Nursery Road
	6:30 -9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/16/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Oscoda, Michigan Warrior’s Pavilion on Van Ettan Lake, 6288 F-41
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/21/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Cadillac, Michigan McGuire’s Resort 7880 Mackinaw Trail
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/22/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	Mio, Michigan Mio Community Center 305 East Ninth St.
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	

OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST		
Date	Time	Location
10/06/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (EST)	Ontonagon, Michigan Ontonagon Area High School 701 Parker Ave.
10/08/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	Ironwood, Michigan Gogebic Community College Room B21/B22 E4946 Jackson Road

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

10/09/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	Iron River, Michigan Iron River City Hall 106 West Genesee Street
10/15/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (EST)	Baraga, Michigan Best Western Lakeside Inn 900 South US-41
10/18/2003	1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (EST)	Ewen, Michigan Ewen-Trout Creek School 144 Airport Road
10/20/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	Watersmeet, Michigan Watersmeet Visitor Center Hwy. US-2 & Hwy. 45

AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC COMMENT: Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this proposed action and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered. Those who submit anonymous comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decisions under 36 CFR parts 215 or 217.

Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets.

The Forest Service will inform the requester of the Agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality and if the requester is denied, the Agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within 90 days.

RELEASE AND REVIEW OF THE DEIS: The DEISs are expected to be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and to be available for public comment in 2005. At that time, the EPA will publish a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*. The comment period on the DEIS will be 90 days from the date the EPA publishes the Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*.

The Forest Service believes it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of DEISs must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions [Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDS, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978)]. Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the DEIS stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final EIS may be waived or dismissed by the courts [City of Angoon v. Hodel, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th cir. 1986) and Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980)].

Ottawa National Forest Need for Change

Because of these court rulings it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 90-day comment period so substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final EIS.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the DEIS. Comments may also address the adequacy of the DEIS or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council of Environmental

Quality Regulations (<http://ceq.eh.doe.gov/nepa/nepanet.htm>) for implementing the procedural provision of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

/s/ Randy Moore

Randy Moore
Regional Forester

August 28, 2003

Date