



News Release Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

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Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Improves Environmental Analysis Methods for Timber Sales

Park Falls and Rhinelander, WI – January 20, 2006. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest staff has developed new models and methods to improve the way the Forest analyzes the cumulative impacts of its projects on certain sensitive species. “The methods and models enable us to more systematically determine the effects to sensitive species”, said Dr. Matthew St. Pierre, an ecologist employed by the Forest Service.

In Fall 2003 and Spring 2004, lawsuits were filed against the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest alleging a variety of inadequacies with the Forest’s environmental analyses of three vegetation management projects involving timber sales. In the Spring and Summer of 2005, Federal Judge Lynn Adelman, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, ruled in favor of the Forest Service on all but one item in each of the three lawsuits.

Adelman decided that the cumulative impacts analysis described in the documents for each of the projects lacked sufficient detail to demonstrate that the Forest Service had taken a “hard look” at the cumulative effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects on certain sensitive species. This “hard look” is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regulations. Adelman ordered that the Forest Service not implement these projects until the Forest Service’s analyses met the requirements of NEPA.

Rather than appeal Judge Adelman’s decision, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest staff set out to remedy the situation by supplementing the original Environmental Impact Statements (EIS’s) with more descriptive and rigorous analyses for these species. Two of these supplemental analyses, referred to as *Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (SEIS’s)*, are contained in new documents that will be released to the public in draft form at the end of this month for a 45 day review and comment period.

“We appreciated the public’s input last summer when we were determining the scope of these SEIS’s, and we welcome their feedback now on these draft documents”, Forest Supervisor Anne Archie said. “People will find that our analysis of effects is more quantitative and our writing more explanatory.”

In formulating the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statements (FSEIS’s), the Chequamegon-Nicolet will consider the public’s comments. Archie will use the FSEIS’s to inform her decision making about how to proceed with the Northwest Howell Project in northern Forest and Florence Counties Wisconsin, and the McCaslin Project in Oconto and southern Forest Counties. Archie’s decisions for these two projects are expected this Spring.

Copies of the draft documents can be found on the Forest’s web site at:

www.fs.fed.us/r9/cnnf/natres/index.html

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