



News Release Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

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Twentymile Restoration Project to improve forest vegetation, wildlife habitat, and trout streams

Forest managers on the Great Divide Ranger District recently completed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Twentymile Restoration Project. This restoration project involves a series of treatments designed to improve habitat for a variety of wildlife species; fisheries habitat in trout streams; health and growth of tree species in a variety of forest community types; soil productivity and water quality; and modify the road system to create fewer disturbances to wildlife.

The Project area is located about 30 miles northeast of Hayward between Grand View and Clam Lake in the northwest corner of the Great Divide Ranger District in Bayfield and Ashland counties.

The EIS discloses and evaluates the impacts, both positive and negative, of the project. Four alternatives, including *No Action*, were analyzed to address several wildlife habitat, forest health, and transportation system needs.

Forest Service officials are considering choosing *Alternative 3*, which proposes harvesting 8,870 acres of timber to meet the objectives, yielding 41 million board feet (MMBF) of timber volume. 7,500 acres of this harvest volume would result from selectively harvesting hardwoods to achieve the objective of re-establishing an uneven-aged character. About 550 acres of clearcutting, 800 acres of thinning and 20 acres of opening improvement would also be conducted. Other proposed activities include 10.8 miles of new permanent road construction, 1.75 miles of temporary roads, 3.9 miles of road reconstruction, and 18.4 miles of road closures. On another 28.2 miles of existing roads which are either poorly located or in ill repair, the Forest is proposing to eliminate the road bed and rehabilitate the site to a productive vegetative condition.

Practicing sound forest management and reducing road densities are the primary reasons for the expected benefits. Forest management can be used effectively to speed up the process of succession within hardwood forests. Small gaps would be created to open up the canopy just enough to provide sunlight needed to trigger the growth of understory shrubs needed by songbirds, and to help trees left behind to increase in size more quickly than they would otherwise. Hemlock and white pine would be underplanted and protected from deer browsing to restore conifers largely removed at the turn of the century, before the National Forests in Wisconsin were established. The large woody debris component (snags or down logs) of northern hardwood stands would also be increased, providing habitat for a variety of small mammals, and the American marten.

Aspen would be managed differently than in the past. Stands near trout streams and within larger blocks of northern hardwood forests would be converted to longer-lived species such as northern hardwoods and/or conifers to improve the quality of hardwood patches and reduce impacts of beaver on trout streams. A variety of age classes of aspen would be encouraged in stands outside of the trout stream corridors and hardwood blocks by harvesting mature stands and regenerating the young stands.

Species realizing the greatest long-term benefit include northern goshawk, American marten, red-shouldered hawk, wolf, trout, and a number of Neo-tropical migrant and resident songbirds. Minor localized benefits would be provided to species such as ruffed grouse, deer and elk.

The environmental analysis identified no significant effects to any resource, as a result of the proposed activities. The DEIS is available for review at the Hayward or Glidden District offices, or on the Internet at www.fs.fed.us/r9/cnnf/natres/. Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from Debra Proctor, 715-634-4821.