



## News Release Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest

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NR 08-10

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Chequamegon-Nicolet NF recipient of "More Kids InThe Woods"  
funding for "Schoolyard Habitats Across Wisconsin"

**Rhineland and Park Falls, Wisc. – May 6, 2008.** At a speech in Denver, Colorado on April 24, Gail Kimbell, Chief of the Forest Service, announced that the Chequamegon-Nicolet will be one of 16 Forest Service project leaders and their partners from around the country to receive funding through the "More Kids in the Woods" project. Partners in these projects represent schools, environmental and youth non-profit organizations, Native American Tribes, and other federal, state and local governments. The projects will help urban and rural children connect to the land in a hands-on way.

The *Schoolyard Habitats Across Wisconsin – Sowing the seeds of Environmental Literacy and Stewardship* project was developed by Project Leader Nicole Shutt, a Biological Science Technician on the Lakewood-Laona Ranger District. Involving two Districts on the Forest, the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center (NGLVC), the Region's Urban Connections Program, and 12 other partners, this project links urban and rural kids through distance learning,



*Local students gathering seeds last fall*

and brings student-directed ecosystem restoration to communities across Wisconsin. It will occur in the northeast, northwest, and southeast regions of the state from May 2008 to October 2011. On the Lakewood-Laona District, students at the Crandon, Laona, and Wabeno School Districts will create schoolyard habitats using field trips to National Forest lands, UW Madison Arboretum's Earth Partnership for School's (EPS) curriculum, Nicolet Distance Education Network's interactive television sessions (available state-wide), and help from Arts Vitally Enrich Communities (AVEC) and the Sokaogon (Mole Lake) Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. In addition, selected students will work alongside District personnel in service-learning summer internships. On the

Washburn District, students at the Bayfield and Washburn Schools will create schoolyard habitats with the help of the District, EPS, NGLVC, and Northland College. In southeast Wisconsin, EPS, the Urban Ecology Center, and Urban Connections will be working with the Milwaukee Public Schools to restore habitats on their school grounds. AVEC will help all the students enlist support through community mural projects, and will also assist the students in creating a video program and companion book about their Schoolyard Habitat development. Meanwhile, EPS will provide teachers with training in schoolyard restorations and will start a new Facilitating Center to support the northeast part of the state. A Student Summit will occur in 2011, in which the students from the three regions will gather in the northwoods to share the results of their restorations and science inquiry projects. The Schools will donate some of the video/book sets to libraries (to encourage more people to restore natural landscapes) and will sell other sets for money to maintain the Habitats.

Forest Supervisor Jeanne Higgins was thrilled to hear this project was selected. "It is important for kids to understand the natural world and to know how important wildlands are to their quality of life. I want kids to know that forests provide clean air, clean water and multiple goods and services for their benefit and for the benefit of their future grandchildren and that the conservation of these lands is important. I want kids to experience the great outdoors, whether it is a remote wilderness or a spot of nature in the heart of a city."

According to the Forest's More Kids In the Woods Coordinator, Becky Dinsmore, "We were very honored to receive this since more than 270 proposals were considered for the awards nationally. The Forest Service sought proposals focused on underserved and urban youth; recreation and environmental stewardship; solid, broad-based partnerships; and innovative techniques. While many of the projects funded will take place on national forests, others aim to bring nature to children in their schoolyards and communities."