



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service



THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Chequamegon-Nicolet
National Forest

2004

From the Forest Supervisor

Hello from the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest! We had many outstanding accomplishments in 2004, and it is a pleasure to share them with you.

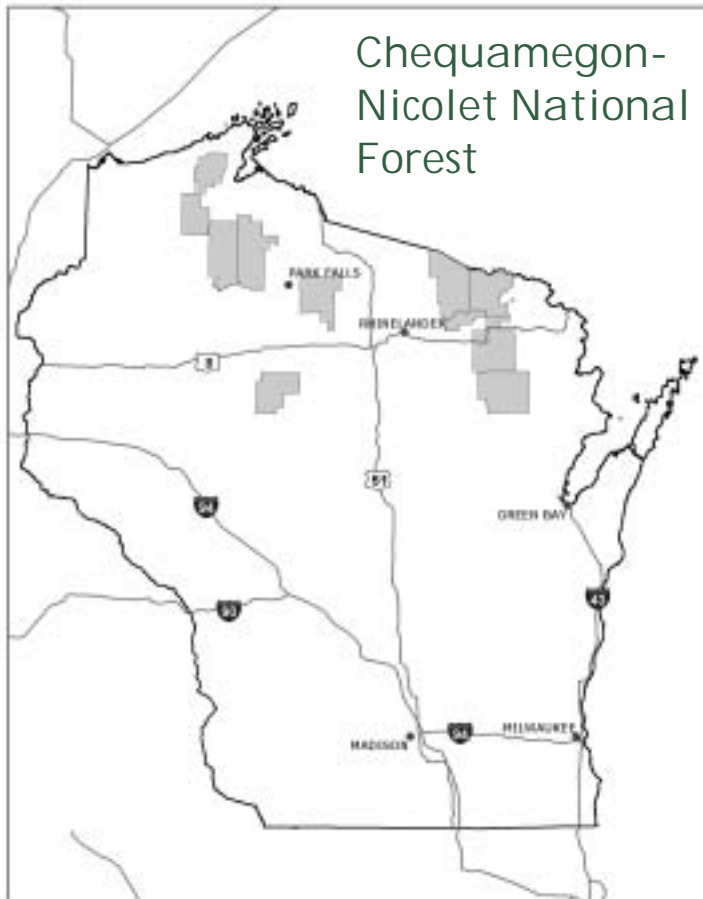
After many years of hard work by Forest employees and the public, we released our Final Revised Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in spring 2004. As a result, the Forest will continue to provide a variety of goods and services to the people of Wisconsin and the Nation. The implementation of the plan is well underway.

We also had a "winning" year in 2004. Many Forest employees were recipients of the 2004 Eastern Region Honor Awards at a ceremony in December. Employees received recognition in the categories of riparian and watershed health, plan revision, collaborative aquatic stewardship, law enforcement, public awareness, innovative workload solutions, and support and volunteer services.

As we move into the 100th anniversary year commemorating the establishment of the Forest Service, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest will continue to be managed to sustain the ongoing, dynamic relationships between people and the forest. We hope you visit us soon!



Anne F. Archie
Forest Supervisor
Chequamegon-Nicolet N.F.
1170 4th Ave. S.
Park Falls, WI 54552
715-762-2461
On the web at:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/cnnf



PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES ENTRUSTED TO US.

With a land mass of approximately 1.5 million public acres, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is home to unique cultural and ecological features.

In 2004, the Forest made considerable strides in protecting the resources. A culmination of several years of hard work resulted in a Final Revised Forest plan. Over 3,000 copies were distributed to members of the public, governments, tribes, libraries and universities.

Throughout the year, employees, partners and volunteers continued the Forest Service legacy of "Caring for the Land and Serving People" by reducing hazardous fuels, eradicating invasive species that threaten ecosystems, and participating in public meetings to share new policies developed in the revised Forest Plan.

Funding available in 2004 enabled the Forest to purchase over 1,358 acres of additional land, adding to the already largest contiguous landbase in Wisconsin. These acres provide additional public lands that help meet our need for wild places that will benefit people now and into the future.



IMPLEMENTING THE FOREST PLAN

One of the main goals in the revision of the Forest Plan was to have a more balanced policy for all terrain vehicles. As a result, cross-country travel is no longer allowed, and an ATV Play Area was closed. New miles of ATV trails will be established.

The Forest, along with the Wisconsin ATV Association, ATV clubs, and local chambers of commerce and tourism bureaus, conducted intensive public outreach to inform riders of the new changes and educated them on the reasons for the change in policy. A public meeting at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center also gave the public the opportunity to ask questions about the changes in ATV use.



Fires AND FUELS

In 2004, the Chequamegon-Nicolet exceeded most of its goals related to hazardous fuels reduction. Several thousand acres were treated by either prescribed burning or mechanical means. Reducing the potential for catastrophic wildfires is essential to protecting the forest as well as private residences adjacent to National Forest land.



Around 200 Forest employees were dispatched to various incidents across the nation. In addition to wildfire suppression, crews were also assigned to incident teams assisting recovery efforts as a result of the hurricanes that ravaged Florida and other southern states.



Garlic Mustard is a rapidly spreading woodland weed displacing native woodland wildflowers.

Non-Native Invasive Species threaten the survival of native species and are considered the single greatest loss of biological diversity on the landscape.

The Forest continued its battle with non-native species in 2004. Working with a variety of partners and volunteers, the Chequamegon-Nicolet exceeded its weed removal goals by 348%.

If the plant juices of a Wild Parsnip come in contact with skin in the presence of sunlight, a rash and/or blistering can occur.



Working together to improve fish and aquatic habitat



Environmentally friendly fuels were used during the dam removal process.

Preliminary discussions with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that began in 2001 became a reality in 2004 as work began to improve fisheries habitat at the former site of the Hemlock Dam.

Hemlock Dam, located on the North Branch of the Oconto River, was once instrumental in creating conditions necessary for floating pine logs downstream to sawmills along the Menominee and Oconto Rivers. During the early pinery days, this was the only method used to bring logs to the mills, where they eventually became lumber used for home and industrial development. An estimated 75 logging dams were constructed on the Chequamegon-Nicolet during this time.

The remnants of this old dam, as with others, was having a negative impact on the river by constricting the channel and causing water to pond upstream. Provided it does not have historical significance, removing the remnants of the dam can result in substantial river restoration. An evaluation of the dam site determined it did not retain sufficient integrity to meet National Register of Historic Places eligibility criteria.

The Forest Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources began work on phase one of the project, which involved removing two earthen berms, rock and cribbing, in addition to developing a temporary earth pad that will act as a sediment basin.

The Wisconsin DNR paid for all costs for on the ground removal and brought in a crew that specializes in dam removals and restoration. While not financial contributors, the River Alliance of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Trout Unlimited have been very supportive of this project.

FACT: The Chequamegon-Nicolet is home to 1,255 miles of trout streams, 745 miles of warm water streams, and 2,020 lakes.

RESTORE THE LAND TO CONSERVE OUR NATURAL HERITAGE.

To continue the legacy of restoration now and for future generations, the revised Forest Plan identified areas where change needs to take place:

Access and Recreation

Change in Forest Plan direction reduces user conflicts and provides for higher quality recreation experiences. Population increases and fragmentation of other lands made access and recreation on the forest an important component of Forest use.

Biological Diversity

Ecological health was one of the primary issues leading to significant changes from the 1986 Forest Plans. These changes will continue forest restoration and change this relatively young forest towards a multi-aged, multi-layered structure.

Special Land Allocations

Part of the landscape ecological design in the revised Plan includes the allocation of land to serve as ecological reference areas, areas that provide current conditions or have high potential to provide conditions that represent the array of native ecosystems.

Timber Production

Direction in the revised Forest Plan provides for a sustainable timber harvest to be applied on the landscape, blended with ecological restoration and achieving biological diversity on a landscape level.

It's all about PEOPLE and the FOREST...

Threatened, endangered and sensitive species: What We're doing to help

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eastern Timber Wolf | Protecting wolf den and rendezvous sites utilizing the "Wisconsin Timber Wolf Recovery Plan" |
| Bald Eagle | Restricting activity within 330 feet of nest tree sites. |
| Fassett's Locoweed | Protecting and managing all known plant sites. |
| Red-Shouldered and Northern Goshawk | Protecting active and historic nest sites; limiting activities that do not reduce canopy closure to protect the nest site. |
| Wood Turtle | Protecting known nesting sites from predator impacts. |
| Black Tern | Emphasizing purple loosestrife eradication on water bodies with active colonies. |
| Sharp-tailed Grouse | Expanding habitat close to large open areas with known sharp-tail grouse populations. |

Making a Trail Accessible

Morgan Falls, a 70-foot high waterfall cascading down canyon walls, was once a secluded water feature with a narrow footpath that saw few visitors. Over time, the popularity of this unique area has increased drastically.

Increased use at the narrow path was taking its toll on the area. The path was widening and having a negative effect on the streambed of Morgan Creek that is home to numerous sensitive plant species. The existing parking area was becoming inadequate due to the volume of visitors.



After determining what could be done to improve the situation, crews relocated the trail and constructed bridges that span streams and cross wetlands. Now, the trail to Morgan Falls is an easy 1.2 mile round trip walk on a dry, firm accessible trail.

Sharing technology to learn about those who came before us

At an annual Heritage Program refresher in Spring 2004, Forest employees and tribal members visited some historic sites and were given a demonstration on the use of global positioning technology as a means of documenting and mapping their exact locations for future study.

Forest employees were chartered to develop a technology sharing Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest County Potawatomi, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, and the Keeweenaw Bay Indian Community.

The MOU establishes a line of communication between the Forest and the Tribes that sets forth direction on providing technical guidance in the application of global positioning systems (GPS) and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This will be accomplished by Tribal representatives working directly with Forest resource specialists who have expertise in these technologies, which can occur in the form of shadowing a specialist as they conduct GPS and GIS activities.



Forest employees explain how global positioning technology can pinpoint exact locations of historic sites for future evaluation and preservation.

Both the Forest and the Tribes are responsible for the management and protection of historic and cultural resources. This MOU will continue successful execution of those responsibilities, resulting in learning more about past generations that have been drawn to the Forests' rich aquatic and forest resources for thousands of years.



FACT: There are over 2,400 cultural resources that have been recorded within the Forest boundaries.

Visitor centers educate the public

The Chequamegon-Nicolet is home to two unique visitor centers that provide the public with information about past, present and future restoration of our natural resources.



The Florence Wild Rivers Interpretive Center has several impressive displays, and presents programs and events throughout the year that focus on environmental education. Partners are the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin Extension, and the Florence County Forestry and Parks Department.

In 2004, over 160,000 people passed through the doors of the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center near Ashland. The center provides a variety of historical and wildlife displays, as well as interactive kiosks that teach people about the rich history of northern Wisconsin and the Great Lakes. Partners at the Center include the National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and The Friends of the Center (and cooperators).



provide

For people, now
and into the future.

The revised Forest Plan was developed in response to comments from the public regarding management of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, as well as in response to results of monitoring and evaluation of the 1986 Forest Plans. The revised Plan provides for human uses of the environment as well as preserving the wildness of some areas on the Forest.

The Forest continued to provide goods and services to the public in 2004 that contributed to the social and economic well-being of the public that live and work here. In addition to timber harvest, recreation opportunities are plentiful on the Chequamegon-Nicolet.

A visitor to the Forest back in the 1930's when they were established would be amazed by the remarkable restoration and abundance of experiences they can enjoy today:

- Over 800 miles of snowmobile trails, 285 miles of developed ATV trails, 11,500 miles of roads for nature and wildlife viewing
- Camping opportunities in 41 campgrounds, most with picnic areas, boat landings, fishing piers, and swimming beaches
- The solitude of 20 ski trails, 49 hiking trails, 3 horse trails, 56 hunter walking trails, 6 bike trail loops and over 68,000 acres of remote Wilderness areas

Stewardship contracts produce favorable results in the control of oak wilt disease

Pockets of areas contaminated with oak wilt disease were discovered on the Forest as early as 1997. The problem continued to escalate and in 2004, it became evident that a more streamlined and efficient process would be needed to treat the disease and provide net economic benefits to the public. Stewardship contracts proved to be the answer.

Unlike timber sale contracts, primarily used for the harvest and removal of timber, stewardship contracts provide for both the removal of timber and service work to treat the remaining stumps so they are no longer capable of spreading oak wilt disease to other oak trees in and around the area. The disease is primarily transmitted to uninfected trees through underground root grafts.

Utilizing these types of contracts, 1.2 MMBF of timber was harvested, and 6,617 stumps were broken and severed from roots remaining in the ground. The total bid value of the timber was nearly \$160,000, and the services performed cost over \$90,000. This resulted in a net return to the Forest of nearly \$70,000.



Signs in quarantined areas alerted firewood gatherers of the risks associated with transporting diseased oaks.

From behind the scenes . . .

The Chequamegon-Nicolet continues to provide excellent external and internal customer service. Office services, human resources, and manpower programs were recognized as being highly successful and effective in 2004. These individuals are an invaluable part of our workforce we could not function without.

In 2004, employees were recognized for commendable innovative approaches to workload solutions during a transitional time.

The Forest was also successful increasing small business participation for contracting services to the government. In addition, a Law Enforcement Officer on the Forest was recognized for outstanding leadership.

RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM IN 2004

In 2004, over \$620,000 of fees collected at campgrounds, day use sites and dispersed campgrounds were used to improve a variety of recreation opportunities:

- ⌄ Constructed and installed 24 new SST vault toilets
- ⌄ Constructed 20 new picnic tables
- ⌄ Maintained and repaired of 8 wells with hand pumps
- ⌄ Purchased and installed 10 accessible fire grates
- ⌄ Purchased and installed 10 campsite signs
- ⌄ Constructed 3 miles of new bike/ski trail
- ⌄ Provided 48 interpretive programs
- ⌄ Groomed 4 cross-country ski trails
- ⌄ Constructed a new water well with a solar pump
- ⌄ Purchased and installed new playground equipment
- ⌄ Expanded and improved an ATV trailhead
- ⌄ Provided additional law enforcement at recreation sites



SMOKEY TURNS 60

Smokey Bear was the guest of honor at many locations on the Forest during 2004 as he celebrated his 60th Birthday.

Smokey was even a guest on a local TV news program, and Smokey's "helpers" gave interviews at local radio stations. His message, "Only You Can Prevent Wildfires", was relayed to many visitors at recreation areas, fire departments, parades, and other local events.

Kids Fishing Day I and the big ones

Every spring, the Forest, along with cooperators, hosts kids fishing day events. This gives young and old alike the opportunity to learn some new skills, catch some fish, and enjoy telling those stories about "the one that got away."

The 15th annual Kids Casting and Fishing Contest was held at the Mondeaux Dam Recreation Area on the Medford-Park Falls District. The contest was hosted by the Westboro Conservation Club, along with donations from the Weathershield Light Foundation, Silver Creek Sportsman's Club, and the Taylor County Sportsman's Club. Additional donations were provided by the Forest Service, Wal-Mart, Zebco, Band-Aid, Purell, and Repel.



Credits: Sharp-Tailed Grouse photo, p. 5: Scott Nielsen



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