



SUPERIOR *National Forest*

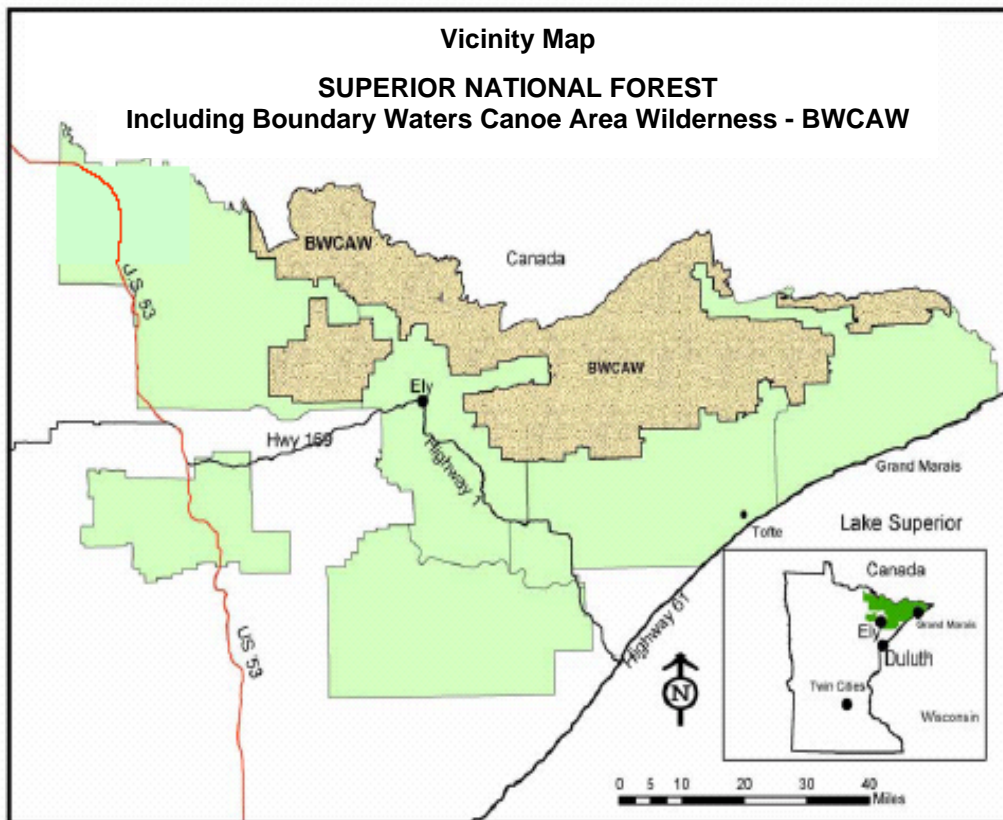
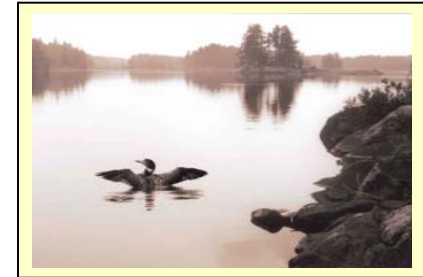


UPDATE: 2007



Three million acres of land, water, rock, and trees _____

Superior National Forest, located in northeastern Minnesota, spans 150 miles along the United States-Canadian border. This three-million-acre Forest is a rich and varied resource.



Within the forest boundaries are 445,000 acres of clean, clear, and productive surface water including almost 2,000 lakes at least 10 acres in size, more than 1,300 miles of major streams supporting cold water fisheries, and over 950 miles of major streams supporting warm water fisheries.

The northern forest community thrives with its pine, fir, and spruce trees and is home to numerous wildlife species including eagle, deer, moose, and black bear. Northern Minnesota is one of the last strongholds of the gray wolf in the lower 48 States.

People look to the Superior National Forest for many benefits. Forest lands are intrinsically connected to native peoples who live their traditions through forest products and maintain spiritual bonds to the land, water, trees, and wildlife. The Forest provides economic opportunities in the form of pulpwood and saw timber for the forest products industry, and a highly desired vacation destination for the tourism industry. Visitors can enjoy a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities year round, including travel in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.



Looking Back – Looking Forward

.....a note from Forest Supervisor Jim Sanders and Deputy Supervisor Pamela Brown

This is our update to you about the many activities we are involved in and our progress in implementing the revised Forest Plan. Implementing the new Plan involved “mid-level” analysis and interpreting the long term vision into a specific, measurable 5-year strategy that is cross-disciplinary and integrates all units on the Forest. We are well on our way with site-specific projects that address the needs identified during the mid-level analysis and in the 5-year strategy.



When we talk about management on the Forest and introduce proposed projects you will hear us use terms including “landscape ecosystems”, “vegetation management objectives”, and “management indicator habitats”. This is all part of our long term, landscape-based vision. You will also hear references to “outcomes” (what is left on the land) rather than “outputs” (what is taken from the land). References to board feet, estimated numbers of deer, etc. will be in a larger context as an output that results from achieving an outcome such as a desired percentage of tree age class in a landscape ecosystem. Our monitoring and evaluation program tracks progress towards desired conditions, objectives, goals, standards and guidelines in the Forest Plan. The section at the end of this report provides an overview of the Forest Plan and associated concepts.

We cannot ignore the national backdrop of events affecting the Superior National Forest during the past two years including a national celebration of the Forest Service Centennial, a landmark ruling from a California court regarding the use of Categorical Exclusions, a final national Planning Rule, a final Roadless Rule, and a final Travel Management Rule. The Recreation Enhancement Act was signed into law in 2005, permitting federal agencies to continue charging modest fees at campgrounds, rental cabins and other high-impact recreation areas such as the BWCAW. A 2006 ruling by a California court reinstated the “Clinton Roadless Area Conservation Rule (2001 RACR) affecting more than 61,000 acres on the Superior National Forest. Proposed re-authorization and funding of the Secure Rural Schools Act continues to be discussed in Congress. As part of a government-wide effort towards a more efficient organization, many functions in the Forest Service continued to become more centralized and other functions are under study to determine ways to “do more with less”. Homeland Security and the National Fire Plan continue to be a high priority. Recent closing of several timber products processors in Minnesota reflect large scale changes in national and global markets while the issue of climate change challenges all of us to consider the bigger picture in terms of our actions and responsibilities.

Our new Forest Plan emphasizes collaboration with others and defines the Superior National Forest as a partner in the landscape, with consideration of how our decisions affect and are affected by decisions on other lands. We believe we are well positioned to respond to the many challenges ahead as we work together to “... sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.”

Jim Sanders

Pamela Brown

Vegetation Management – the “Turn Key”

Vegetation management is considered the “turn key” for habitat, for timber products, for watershed, soil, and riparian health, for scenic values, and more.

“Mid-level analyses” have been used to consider vegetation conditions on large sections of the Forest and identify potential projects that will move conditions on the ground towards the desired conditions described in the Forest Plan. Site-specific management actions are decided at the project level to incrementally move towards desired conditions stated in the Forest Plan. An example is the Echo Trail project where vegetation management activities will improve the distribution of age and species as well as reduce road mileage in the project area, including fewer road miles in four Forest Plan Roadless Inventory Areas. Insect and disease infestations are also tracked across the landscape. Gypsy moth, spruce budworm, and tent caterpillar currently pose the greatest threat to the Forest.

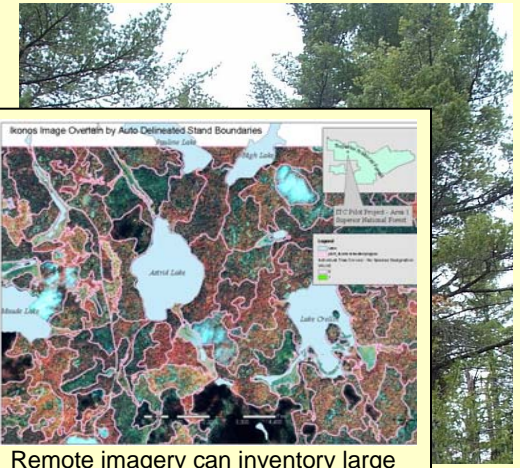


Timber management continues to be the primary tool for reaching vegetation objectives. However, on many sites, prescribed fire is the management tool of choice for fuels treatment, stand improvement, and site preparation. During 2006, the Forest offered two stewardship contracts for road decommissioning. The intent of these contracts is to exchange Forest products for services that achieve land management goals in an effective and efficient manner.

Various vegetation management tools are provided for in the Forest Plan, including fire, harvest, and reforestation. The appropriate intensity and type of management for a specific site is determined by the Management Area it is located within as well as the desired outcome. Stands are regenerated through artificial means such as applying seeds via aerial or ground operations, planting of seedlings, or by natural methods (seeding, sprouting or suckering of tree species existing on, or immediately adjacent, to the site).

The individual tree crown inventory pilot project uses a combination of high altitude satellite photos, low level helicopter photos, and computer analysis to determine an accurate inventory and assessment of forest vegetation. This approach offers the potential to update our vegetation data layer at less cost (approximately \$.50 per acre rather than \$5.00 per acre) and in less time (several months rather than more than a decade) compared to conventional stand inventory methods. Since this process can be used to conduct a complete analysis of all acreage in a large area including all ownerships, the Forest is coordinating with other agencies and organizations.

The Superior National Forest Plan lists both short and long-term Forest-wide goals for age, composition and tree species diversity based on a Landscape Ecosystem approach developed through the Minnesota Forest Resources Council. This approach facilitates cooperative management among land owners and land managers as well as to ensure biological diversity and forest health, adequate wildlife habitat, productive forests, and contribution to a vibrant timber and tourist industry.



Remote imagery can inventory large landscapes.



Lynx Links - To better understand potential effects to lynx, Superior National Forest is coordinating with other national forests, State Agencies, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service trying several different techniques to learn more about the presence and the habits of Canada lynx including four years of tracking with radio-telemetry collars. The information from these efforts is being used to plan forest management projects to avoid adverse effects to lynx.



The Superior National Forest is recognized by the American Bird Conservancy as one of 50 Globally Important Bird Areas of the United States.

Managing for Diverse Habitat

The Forest Plan sets objectives to provide habitat for a vast array of species while contributing to the conservation of sensitive species and moving toward short term (10-20 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives for habitat conditions. By tracking on the condition of Management Indicator Habitats (MIH) across the Forest, we are making progress towards the type and distribution needed to support desired populations of plants and animals. Continued recovery for bald eagle, Canada lynx and other species on the Federal threatened and endangered list is a priority as is conservation of sensitive species. Coordination with other land managers is essential to meeting Forest Plan habitat objectives.

Potential impacts to habitat are considered for all projects. A consultation agreement between the Superior National Forest and the USDI Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has stream-lined project analyses across the Forest based on a “tiered approach”. The result provides the same level of protection for threatened and endangered species and designated critical habitat without duplication of effort.

While monitoring indicated an increase in bald eagle nests on the Forest, the success of wolf recovery from the local (Forest) landscape level to the state and national level led to removal of the gray wolf from the endangered species list earlier this year.



A variety of game species flourish on the Forest, including moose, grouse, deer, and bear.

A large population of the rare matricary grapefern (*Botrychium matricariifolium*) was found growing where the parking lot was planned for the new Kawishiwi Admin Site. Transplanting occurred in the fall of 2004 followed by monitoring in the summer of 2005. Approximately 65% of transplants survived. Prescribed burning was conducted as part of the Virginia Forest Management project to improve habitat for this species.



Maintaining and Restoring Watersheds

The Forest Plan includes objectives that go beyond mitigation and best management practices to proactively manage watersheds and riparian areas for their inherent values. Maintaining the overall integrity of aquatic ecosystem provides habitat for all species while supporting sustainable populations of game fish. Maintaining, improving, and restoring watershed health, soils, and riparian areas is vitally important to maintaining ecosystem functions and meeting public demands. This requires collaboration across jurisdictions and ownerships as well as working with other agencies, governments, and organizations.

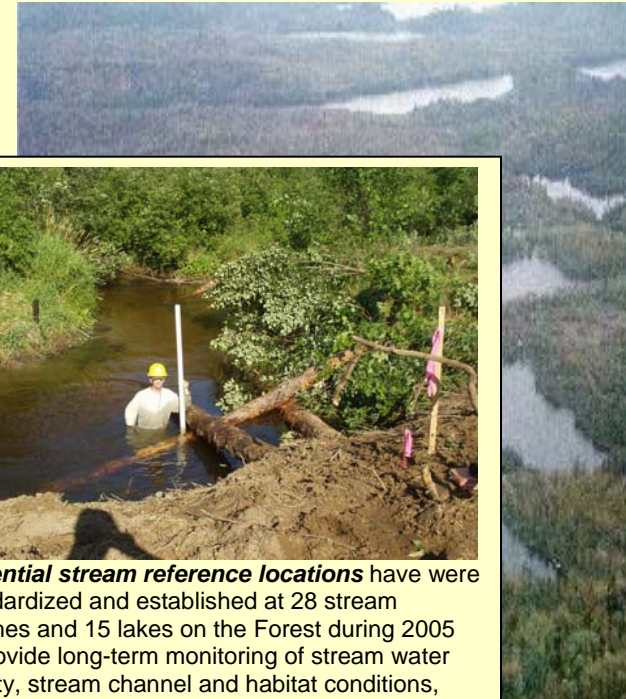
Streams on the Forest are bisected more than 1,600 times by roads that provide access for numerous resource management needs and recreational uses on the Forest. Aquatic and engineering staff are working together to make sure stream crossings do not negatively affect stream temperature, sedimentation, on-site erosion, or other stream characteristics. Over the past two years, assessments were completed at more than 200 locations and crossings were improved at 15 locations. More than 10 acres of erosion control was completed at various water access sites.

Dark River's Future is looking brighter thanks to Centennial Project funding that enabled the Forest and partners to plan, design, and implement a project in the Dark River watershed in northeastern Minnesota. The project will move watershed conditions towards desired conditions identified in the Forest Plan and implement a portion of an interagency, watershed-wide restoration plan for the Dark River. In addition to placement of 94 large cover logs and planting of 3,000 spruce seedlings, six miles of angler access trail were improved and parking facilities and interpretive signs were improved to recognize the project and guide visitor use.



Interpretive display at Dark Rr.

Approximately 700 square miles of the Superior National Forest is classified as some form of water body. Clean, clear, and productive waters are a big reason that people come to the Superior National Forest to fish, swim, boat, camp, and view scenery. These waters also provide important ecological functions that contribute to biodiversity and support fish and wildlife habitat.



Essential stream reference locations have been standardized and established at 28 stream reaches and 15 lakes on the Forest during 2005 to provide long-term monitoring of stream water quality, stream channel and habitat conditions, Regional Forester Sensitive Species (RFSS) populations, and important game and non-game fish species. As part of ongoing program coordination, the Forest is continuing to refine lake habitat, fish populations, and water quality monitoring protocol in conjunction with ongoing cooperative lake and stream surveys with the State and Tribal governments.

Battling Aliens- Managing Non-Native Invasive Species

The Forest Plan emphasizes management for native species while monitoring and controlling non-native invasive species (NNIS). NNIS also known as exotic species, noxious weeds, or “pests”. NNIS are a vital concern for natural resource managers because they can be very aggressive and difficult to eradicate, and they have the ability to invade natural ecosystems, degrade wildlife habitat, displace native species, contribute to the decline of threatened and endangered species, increase erosion, reduce recreational quality and enjoyment, and cost taxpayers money.

Compared to many other national forests in the region, the Superior National Forest has a unique opportunity to catch invasive species before they become established.

The current inventory for non-native invasive plants on the Forest indicates scattered, small infestations of priority exotic species such as Canada thistle, leafy spurge, common buckthorn, common tansy, and purple loosestrife. Rusty crayfish, Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussel, and spiny water fleas are aquatic species of concern.

In 2005, the Forest implemented a Forest-wide non-native invasive plant management project, beginning with treatments on a total of approximately 146 acres in 2006 and plans to expand to 219 acres over the next ten years. Public education is a key component of our management strategy and includes an identification guide that was developed in partnership with the Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness.



Gypsy moth larva

Partnerships are a key element in our efforts. The Forest is cooperating with the University of Minnesota-Duluth, Voyageurs National Park, and Quetico Provincial Park to initiate spiny water flea early detection surveys in the Rainy River Basin as well as to refine lake sampling and monitoring methodology. The Forest collaborated with the national Slow the Spread Foundation, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR), U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA Forest Service- Northeast Area State and Private

Forestry to treat over 133,000 acres in mixed ownerships to slow the spread of the gypsy moth in the State of Minnesota.

We are also coordinating management and monitoring activities with these agencies regarding restricting movement of firewood which can carry gypsy moth and emerald ash borer as well as deadly tree diseases.



The Forest is an active member of the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Council and actively manages and monitors NNIS populations in coordination with other agencies, governments, universities, and non-governmental organizations. Activities include early detection and rapid response, control, integrated pest management, education and awareness, and rehabilitation and restoration.



Purple loosestrife is a particular threat to wetlands and riparian areas.

Protecting Forest Resources by Managing Air Quality

The Forest Plan directs management to maintain air quality so that ecosystems are not impaired; health of visitors, residents, and employees is not impaired; visibility of scenic resources is not impaired; new or modified industrial facilities do not degrade Forest resources or uses; and air emission from national forest management activities do not degrade Forest resources or uses.



All proposed burning activities on the Forest are screened during the planning phase for possible air quality impacts. Actual outcomes are evaluated through the use of portable air quality monitors.

The Forest collects air and precipitation chemistry data to meet Forest-level monitoring needs while contributing to national monitoring networks. The Fernberg monitoring site on the Kawishiwi Ranger District is a fully operational component of the State's Air Quality Information network and provides the Forest free access to data analysis done by outside parties. Overall, air quality monitoring at the Fernberg site has detected no major changes over the past five years. The data record for some pollutants at the site goes back to the 1970s.

In continuation of the partnership initiated in 1989, the Forest worked with the State to capture and analyze fish from more than a dozen lakes as part of the statewide monitoring program.

Some work was accomplished as part of a study funded through the Joint Fire Sciences Program that focuses on determining if and how prescribed burning in the BWCAW affects lake chemistry and whether any associated change occurs in the amount of mercury in fish in those lakes. An additional ten lakes are also being sampled to track long-term trends across the Forest. A preliminary report indicated a decrease in mercury levels in approximately half of sampled lakes. Levels have increased in a quarter and stayed the same in the rest of the lakes sampled since cooperative monitoring began in 1989.



While the Forest is not the decision-maker regarding air quality permits, we work proactively with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and other state and federal agencies as well as the Environmental Protection Agency to identify options to address potential impacts to air quality from sources inside and outside the Superior relating to two issues: visibility and mercury. Visibility is an issue in terms of potential impacts to the Class I airshed over the BWCAW. The forest has a number of lakes with fish advisories due to mercury contamination.



In July of 2005, a crew captured and released 34 adult and chick loons from at least 16 selected lakes across the Superior National Forest as part of a national cooperative effort to determine the amount of mercury in loons throughout North America. This effort is being led by the Biodiversity Institute and supported by the US Geologic Survey, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, States and private organizations as well as the USDA Forest Service. Because loons primarily feed on fish, body, blood and feather samples collected from chicks and adults are tested for mercury and lead as an indication of contamination in the lakes they frequent.

Mineral Resources

Operations on the Forest involve rock quarries, metallic mineral prospecting, and sand/gravel operations. All of these resources are a basis for current and future employment and receipts in local communities as well as returns to the federal government. All must be conducted consistent with Forest Plan direction in an environmentally sound manner that contributes to economic growth and national defense.

Exploration for metallic minerals within the Superior National Forest boundaries has increased the past five or six years. At least seven companies with reserved mineral rights are currently active on the Forest. The decision to issue hard rock prospecting permits is made by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) based on Forest Service analysis of potential environmental effects. There are currently 29 prospecting permit applications, three proposed plans of operation and one preference-right lease application on hold pending completion of environmental analysis. The Forest is pursuing collaborative opportunities with the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Minnesota DNR that will improve efficiency and quality of the minerals program to meet permit requirements in a timely fashion.



In addition to a direct disbursement of 30% of sand and gravel receipts from sites on Forest System land, the counties also depend on these resources for public road projects in their jurisdictions.



BEFORE

AFTER

When the decision is made to decommission a road segment, the intent is to make the road disappear to a casual viewer and to render it not drivable from the beginning of the road to the furthest point seen from a Forest system road or other public road.

Transportation Management

Forest Plan desired conditions describe a transportation system that, in coordination with neighboring public road agencies, provides the minimum safe, affordable, minimum impact road system needed for administrative and public use.

Nearly every resource and use on the Forest is impacted by transportation decisions. A Forest-wide inventory of roads and trails was updated as part of Plan revision and, as part of Plan implementation, the Forest is continuing to update and evaluate use levels, identify segments that are no longer necessary as well as where improvements or additional access is required. All roads included in the Forest Road system are assigned an operational management level (OML) indicates how intensely these roads will be maintained. During mid-level analysis and project planning, a focused survey is conducted and site-specific proposals regarding future management of a road are

identified and integrated into the decision process. As a result of project decisions implementing the Forest Plan to-date, the OML has been reclassified for 45 roads, 5.3 miles of new road has been added to the system and 66 miles have been or are planned to be decommissioned.

Providing High Quality Recreation/Wilderness/Trails

The Forest Plan emphasizes semi-primitive recreation while maintaining wilderness values, developed and dispersed recreation activities, and the contribution to local economies. All existing developed and dispersed recreational sites will be retained.

Travel Management Rule/ Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Planning- In collaboration with the Minnesota DNR, counties, and tribal governments, the Forest developed a proposal and is currently seeking public comment regarding ATV routes on the east zone of the Forest. A proposal for the west zone will soon be available. The objective is to provide a seamless public system of ATV trails and loops that include existing and new sections, regardless of ownership. Public involvement began in February 2006 and has continued as specific proposals are developed. The ATV trail planning effort on the Forest will be integrated with the requirements of the national Travel Management Rule. Maps are available showing where ATVs are currently allowed on the Forest.



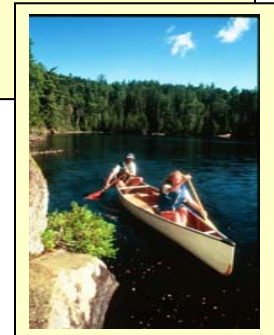
Cross-country OHV use is prohibited. Approximately 1,350 miles of road continue to be available for riding. The Plan allows for an additional 90 miles of ATV trail.

National Visitor Use Monitoring (NVUM) occurs on every national forest approximately every five years. This on-going national forest survey is conducted on every

National Forest in the country. In 2006, a new survey was conducted on the Superior National Forest to update the information previously gathered as well as to look at recreation trends over time. The recreation survey will provide managers with an estimate of how many people recreate on the Forest and what activities they engage in while there and help to improve estimates of the effects of visitor use. It will also provide information about how satisfied visitors were and economic impacts of their visit. This will be important information for tourism planners and many small towns who are looking to tourism as one way to help strengthen their communities.



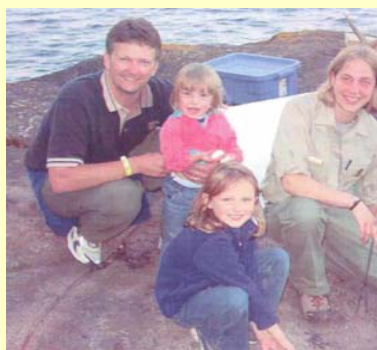
As the eighth most visited national forest in the country, the Superior National Forest is known locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally for providing a variety of quality recreation opportunities, including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The BWCAW is the most heavily used wilderness in the country with approximately 200,000 visitors annually staying for 1.5 million "recreation visitor days". Wilderness management includes maintaining portages, trails, and campsites in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness as well as managing a contract for the quota-permit reservation system. In order to continue to maintain a high quality wilderness experience, under authority of the Recreation Enhancement Act, the Forest is proposing the first increase in user fees in 10 years.



Connecting with Citizens through Education - Interpretation

Connecting people to the land is at the very top of the agency mission statement: “Advocating a conservation ethic in promoting the health, productivity, diversity, and beauty of forests and associated lands.” and “Listening to people and responding to their diverse needs in making decisions.” We continue to achieve these objectives through partnerships, education, interpretation, urban outreach, and public involvement in Forest Plan implementation.

Active outreach to local schools, universities, and other organizations as well as community events throughout the year are an ongoing part of the Forest education and interpretation programs. Successes the past two years include several focused projects.



The North Shore Resort Naturalist Program on the Superior National Forest pools resources with local businesses for mutual benefits. For more than 10 years this program has annually reached about 2,500 visitors during the summer with timely educational messages.

Leave No Trace –Every year, the Superior National Forest utilizes concepts developed by the national Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics in a variety of ways. During 2005-2006, the Superior National Forest used the LNT principles in schools, with hunters, to train out-of-state and/or out-of-area firefighters, seasonal workers, volunteers, other permanent Forest Service employees, girl scout and boy scout camps, private businesses, education conventions, fairs, nature centers, and other organizations. Leave no trace ethics were the focus of the recently completed update to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) user education video which received a national wilderness education award. As a result of this partnership, LNT messages will be viewed by up to two million BWCAW visitors over its expected lifespan of ten years. A number of the youth that appear in the videos were involved through an agreement with a youth programs from the intercity Minneapolis/St. Paul area.



Forest staff traveled to southern Minnesota with their LNT presentation as part of a partnership with Wenonah Canoes & REI.



Pro Video staff work with youth from Urban Ventures

Lands and Facilities Management

In addition to direction for managing Forest System lands on the Superior National Forest, the Forest Plan sets priorities for disposing of facilities and lands that do not meet management objectives and guidance for acquiring new properties.

The Facility Master Plan provides an overall strategy consistent with the Forest Plan and remote recreation opportunities highlighted in our “niche statement”. The Forest developed this overall strategy for future management of administrative and recreation facilities to better serve the public and maximize our operating efficiency. The strategy focuses on conveyance of facilities no longer needed and providing proceeds for office modification and crew quarters construction, reducing the deferred maintenance backlog, and altering, acquiring, or decommissioning developed recreation sites. The Forest is informing key contacts about this strategy and will conduct focused public involvement during site specific analysis of actions recommended in the plan.

Conveyance - Phase I: The Superior was given authority to sell four parcels (12 sites) with land and buildings through the Pilot Conveyance Project in 2003. As a result, the project will generate \$1.2 million which will be used to construct crew quarters at the Grand Marais administrative site, construct additions to the Tofte District Office and also build additions and improvements at the Laurentian District administrative site.



Phase II and III - The Facility Realignment and Enhancement Act of 2005 (H.R. 2361) provides authority for the conveyance of other facilities as the new administrative site in Ely is completed and crew quarters are built in Grand Marais. Phase II includes conveying two dwellings in Grand Marais (planned for 2007) and Phase III includes conveying the Ely Service Center (planned for 2008).



Major renovations at Fall Lake Campground on the Kawishiwi Ranger District were completed in 2005 including accessible site furnishings at every campsite, wheelchair access at nearly every parking spur; new, accessible playground equipment, new picnic sites, and improved swim beach with the addition of a pedestrian and bike trail to link up the features within the facility to improve visitor safety. This successful project resulted from close coordination with partners and contractors including the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) Community Work Program, Recreation Resource Management, Vermilion Community College, Boy Scouts of America (Northern Tier High Adventure Base) along with input from local residents and user groups. The campground renovation project received a regional Forest Service award in 2005 and Reserve America rated Fall Lake Campground among the “Top 100 Family Campgrounds” in the nation.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (REA)

The REA was signed into law in December, 2005 as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Bill and permits federal agencies to continue charging modest fees at campgrounds, rental cabins and other high-impact recreation areas (such as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness) on federal lands for a ten-year period. The new program replaces the 1996 Recreation Fee Demonstration Act and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) authority. User fees generated through this program come directly back to the Forest and are essential in supplementing allocated funds, allowing the Forest to accomplish work that would not otherwise be possible.



Under the REA, the Secretary of Agriculture has established Recreation Resource Advisory Committees (RRAC) in the Pacific Northwest, Pacific Southwest, Alaska, Eastern and Southern Regions of the Forest Service. The role of the RRAC in each of the regions is to provide recommendations to Forest Service (and BLM) officials on establishing, changing or eliminating user fees. Each RRAC is comprised of 11 members with representatives from recreation users, special interest groups, and government officials (Indian tribes, state tourism, and local). Members serve for 2 or 3 years and may be reappointed to a subsequent 3-year term.



While permit fees are likely to increase substantially as the result of new property appraisals, it is important to note that permittees on the Forest are currently paying fees based on 1978 appraisals.

The Superior National Forest has submitted a proposal to the Eastern Region (R9) RRAC to increase overnight user fees for the BWCAW from \$10.00 per person per trip (adult) and \$5.00 per person per trip (youth) to \$ 16.00 per person per trip (adult) and \$8.00 per person per trip (youth). This fee has not changed since it was initially established ten years ago. The basis for the increase is an adjustment for inflation (using the Consumer Price index) over the past ten years with forward projections over the next five to ten years. This increase is intended to be implemented in 2008.

Reissuing of Recreation Residence Permits

There are 173 recreation residence sites under a 20-year special use permit on the Superior National Forest. These permits expire on December 31, 2009. Before a new permit can be issued, all sites must be brought into compliance, environmental analyses conducted and re-appraisals and inspections completed. In order to protect water resources, permit renewals are contingent on the recreation residence having a fully functioning septic system. Each permittee must have their septic system inspected and passed by a licensed inspector. We expect NEPA analysis of permit sites to be completed in late 2007 or early 2008.

Managing Fire and Fuels

Fire is used as a tool to move towards desired conditions regarding reduction of fuel, forest regeneration, or other management objectives described in the Forest Plan. Unwanted wildfire may trigger suppression actions when lives or property are at risk. Partnerships are essential to successful fire management on the Forest as we continue to coordinate closely with our partners at the tribal, state, county, and community level as well as with Canadian counterparts.

More than 200 wildfires were reported from fall 2004 through fall 2006. During 2006 alone, there were a total of 119 wildland fire starts on the Forest mainly as a result of lightening and dry conditions. This is compared to an average of 70 fire starts in a typical year. Fires ranged in size from less than an acre to the Cavity Lake Fire which burned 31,830 acres, including areas of intense blowdown fuels adjacent to the Alpine Fire which burned 1,335 acres in 2005. The Famine and Red Eye Fires triggered an evacuation of a portion of the Gunflint Trail in September 2006. Throughout the summer of 2006, the Forest hosted six overhead fire management teams including the first visit from a national team. The 2007 fire season began when a small fire near Ham Lake grew to more than 75,000 acres, triggered a national team, and involved agencies and evacuations on both sides of the border.

Wildland fire use, when a naturally started fire is burning within pre-determined areas to meet specific objectives, is sometimes an appropriate management response. During the last two years, 2,127 acres on the Forest were managed for Wildland Fire Use (WFU). These fires were managed as WFUs because they were meeting management objectives and continued to burn within the pre-determined parameters. The 2006 Turtle Lake WFU alone burned 2,085 acres with the result of reducing the risk of future wildfires escaping the Wilderness. While the Turtle Lake fire was managed as a WFU, valuable suppression resources were able to focus on the Cavity Lake wildfire.

More than 1,800 acres were prescribe burned between the 2005 and 2006 fire seasons, outside the BWCAW and approximately 20,000 acres were treated inside the Wilderness. For the majority, the purpose was to reduce fuels and fire risk but for others, the primary purpose was site preparation for regenerating the forest and wildlife habitat improvement.



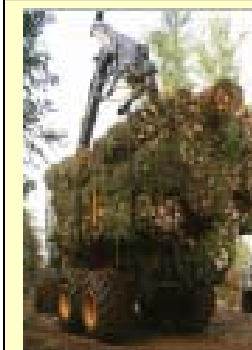
Whether fire occurs as a result of natural causes or human activities it is an important factor in the region's landscape.



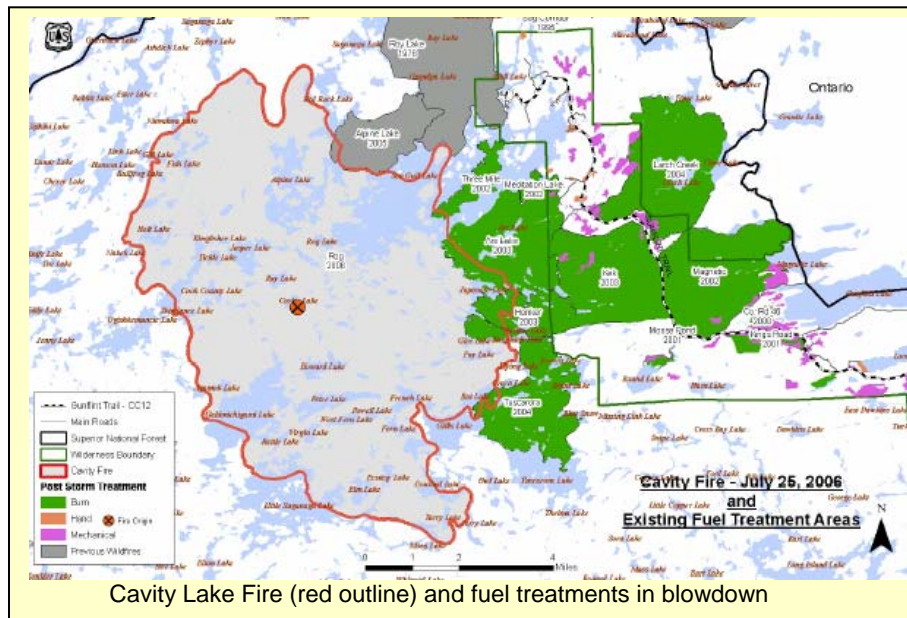
Soil and vegetation data is collected in prescribed fire units before and after treatments. This information is used to guide subsequent burns. Post-fire monitoring comparing conditions inside Cavity Lk. Fire area and prescribed burns validated effectiveness of prescribed mitigations to protect soils, old growth trees, and eagle nests. Monitoring in the 2007 Ham Lk. fire area will provide additional information.

Healthy Initiative (HFI) and the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) authorizations have been used to achieve desired conditions for a healthy forest. Following HFRA guidelines, the Forest is cooperating with partners to prepare Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP)s that maximize reduction of fire risks by prioritizing and coordinating efforts across large areas. In the CWPP planning process, partners inventory all ownerships; then designate and prioritize individual wildland urban interface (WUI) areas each of which crosses administrative boundaries and property lines. Since each Wildland/Urban Interface area presents its own set of unique circumstances within the landscape, partners must work together to identify specific actions to mitigate fire risks for each WUI.

Community plans for Cook and Lake Counties are final and being implemented. Planning is underway in St. Louis County. In 2005, the Forest and several partners were successful in obtaining a grant of \$250,000 to study where, when, by what methods and what costs, the removal and utilization of biomass helps the Forest achieve Forest Plan vegetation objectives for restoring healthy Forest conditions and reducing fuel loading.



An assessment of ecological conditions will be made before and after biomass is collected from approximately 200 acres in three project areas on the Forest to help determine "Best Management Practices (BMPs)" for biomass removals. Environmental analysis required under NEPA is complete and two three projects are complete. Where utilization of biomass is economically viable and follows BMPs, such removal could help turn unhealthy, dead, and diseased stands into healthy stands as well as reduce wildland fire risks.



Storm Recovery continues after a July 4th 1999 windstorm affected more than 470,000 acres of trees on the Superior National Forest and created extreme risk for wildfire to start and spread in the intense fuels. Fuel reduction has been part of an integrated recovery plan. To-date, more than 63,000 acres of National Forest land affected by the blowdown have been treated to reduce fuels. This includes more than 43,000 acres of prescribed burning inside the BWCAW. The intent of reducing the potential for a fire to exit the Wilderness and threaten people and property outside the BWCAW was validated in summer 2006 when the Cavity Lake fire began to burn in a large area of blowdown inside the BWCAW. The fire response included a national fire management team. Well in advance of the 2006 fire season, several fuel treatment units had been completed, both inside and outside of the BWCAW directly east of the Cavity Lake Fire. Despite the severity of the fire, these fuel treatments were instrumental in checking fire spread in the direction of the Gunflint Trail corridor and threatening lives and property outside the Wilderness.

Contributing to Sustainable Communities

In terms of projected outputs and services the Forest Plan desired condition is for the Forest to provide commodity resources in an environmentally sustainable and acceptable manner to contribute to the social and economic sustainability and diversity of local communities. In addition to direct expenditures, the Forest generates revenues in local communities, and society at-large, in a variety of forms including recreation special uses, timber harvest, mineral leases and permits, campground user fees, and Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness user fees. The Forest also works with partners to explore new opportunities for sustainable economic development.



The Forest co-sponsored a tour of the Madison Forest Products Laboratory in February of 2005. Representatives from the local counties, State, and University of Minnesota, along with key economic development entities came to learn what the Laboratory is currently working on in wood products utilization and marketing; technology transfer; and technical assistance that may be beneficial to expanding local economies. Follow-up meetings have continued to build on opportunities to link land managers and USDA Forest Service researchers.

Over the past several years, annual payments to local counties averaged more than \$3 million. These included payments under provisions of the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) Act of 1976 which are based on federal land ownership in the county, independent of production of outputs or receipt sharing. Over the past several years the total annual PILT payment to Cook, St. Louis, and Koochiching counties has amounted to slightly over \$1 million. Also, in accord with the Thye-Blatnick Act (Sec. 5 of PL 733, Act of June 22, 1948), counties with BWCAW lands receive an annual payment equal to 3/4 of 1% of the average appraised fair market value of the federal land within the wilderness. Payments are split between Lake, Cook and St. Louis counties, based on the federal wilderness acreage in each county. Every ten years, in accord with the Act, the BWCAW is reappraised and the payment adjusted. The Forest plans to complete a new appraisal by the fall of 2007 with review and approval occurring in FY 2008.

Timber harvest is the dominate income source averaging \$2.8 million in economic activity in local markets. Timber products become available as a result of treatments to achieve desired vegetation conditions. Agency timber sale contracts reflect federal policies and regulations as well as Forest Plan objectives identified during project analysis and decisions. Approximately 945,000 acres of national forest system lands are classified as suitable for timber production by the Forest Plan. Between October 2004 and November 2005, the Superior National Forest awarded timber sale contracts to harvest 49,333 MMBF on 5,076 acres. In 2005, the Forest experienced a significant interest and increased bid prices on timber offered in 2005. However, in FY2006 approximately 23 MMBF (8 sales) received no bids. The Forest currently has approximately 164 MMBF under contract and anticipates maintaining a steady timber program with a projected offering of 65 MMBF in 2007. Recent closing of several timber products processors in Minnesota reflect large scale changes in national and global markets. In response to declining markets, we are adjusting advertised minimum bid rates, re-offering no-bid sales, and extending contract term lengths in accordance with Forest Service policy, where appropriate. We will continue monitoring sale offerings and market conditions, adjusting advertised rates as appropriate.

Heritage Resources – Maintaining Windows to Our Past

In compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and guided by Forest Plan direction, the Forest monitors known sites and reviews projects involved in the ongoing land management process, such as timber treatments, campground/campsite rehabilitation and maintenance, trail construction, etc. in terms of potential impacts to surface and subsurface historic properties. The Forest conducts several programs and activities each year, including Passport in Time (PIT) projects, public presentations, archaeological field schools, and para-professional classes, as well as loan agreements for public displays, historical societies, and research purposes.

At least seven new historic properties were identified and more than forty new sites were documented on the Forest over the past two field seasons.

In 2005, volunteers and archaeology field school students completed the final phase of testing at the Gordon site in Cook County, Minnesota. As a result of field testing and evaluation two sites on the Forest were determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Partners play an increasingly important role on the Superior National Forest as agency budgets continue to shrink. With the addition of a full-time partnership coordinator on staff since 2004, the Forest signed a total of 71 agreements in fiscal year 2005 alone. This has resulted in agreements bringing more than \$600,000 of added value in terms of cash and non-cash contributions to a range of projects from stream improvements to reduced fire risk to a biomass study.



Visitors of all ages are welcome at PIT projects which are staffed, partly, by volunteers that come from all over the country. The PIT program originated on the SNF.



In 2006, the Forest initiated a partnership project with the Gunflint Trail Historical Society and the U.S. Forest Service Passport in Time Program (PIT) to rehabilitate and convert the historic Chik Wauk lodge into a public history museum, with the goal of interpreting the historic narrative of the Gunflint Trail region through the use of artifact displays and other interpretive media. The society, in partnership with the Forest, will continue to plan and implement rehabilitation projects to ready the museum for its planned opening in 2009. (photo of lodge ca. 1936)

Partner in the Landscape

Partnerships are a key element for successful implementation of the Forest Plan. The national forests do not exist within a vacuum but are part of a larger social and natural resource picture. Forest ecosystems, air, and water resources cross political boundaries. During project development we proactively seek site specific feed back from the public. On an ongoing basis we consult with tribal governments, the State, the counties and coordinate with other land managers and land owners. We participate as an active member of the Minnesota Forest Resource Council and the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center.



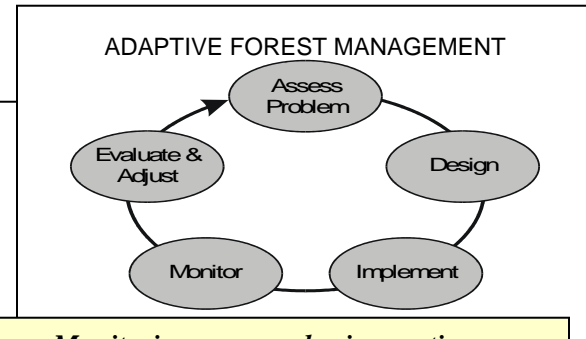
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MONITORING and EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluating projects at the landscape level in terms of realizing desired conditions, meeting objectives, and complying with standards and guidelines is part of implementing the Forest Plan. Monitoring and evaluation keep the Plan up to date and responsive to changing conditions and issues. The results help to identify if and when changes are needed to either the Plan itself or the way it is implemented and provides the feedback for adaptive forest management.

This "Update" only highlighted some of the accomplishments towards Forest Plan implementation that occurred during 2005 and 2006. More complete information is contained in the official Superior National Forest Monitoring and Evaluation Reports. The full report for FY 2005 is now available. Completion of the FY 2006 report is expected by fall of 2007. Reports are available, upon request, in hard copy and are posted in the "Projects and Plans" section of the Superior National Forest website: www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior.



Purpose of monitoring – Monitoring answers basic questions:

1. Are we doing what we said we would do?"
2. Are our actions having the desired outcome?
3. Is reasonable progress being made towards Forest Plan objectives?
4. What is happening around us (context)?
5. Do we need to adjust our actions?

As historian Char Miller put it: "We (the public) own them! So, of course, we are going to disagree about how they (national forests) should be managed."

Litigation...

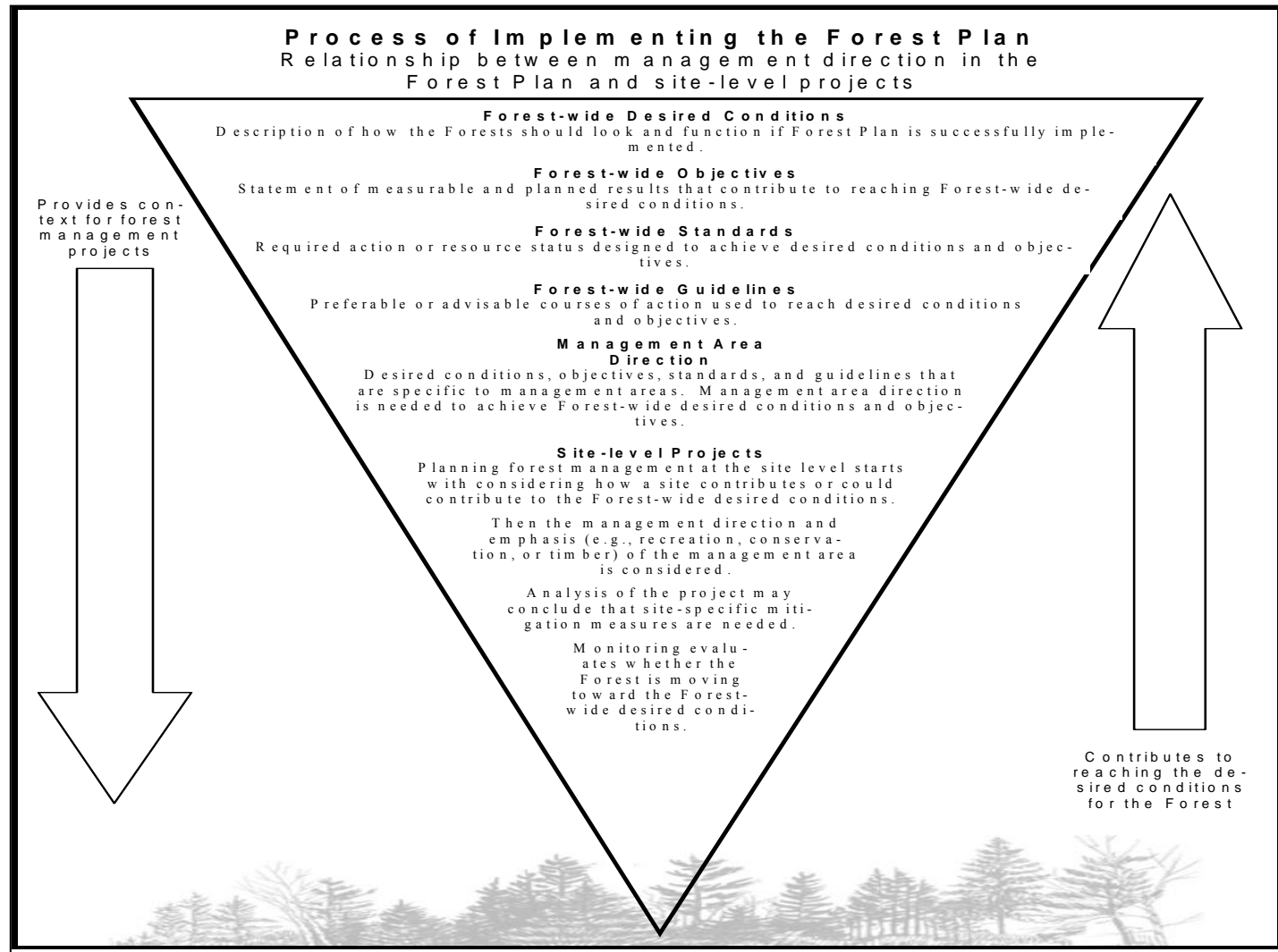
Conflict is inherent to the management of public lands in a democracy.

Because so many people care about the Superior National Forest, management decisions have been a source of controversy and debate from the beginning. Forest Service policy and procedure provides several opportunities to express and evaluate differing ideas about managing Forest resources. At times, this leads to litigation involving a range of issues:

South Fowl Snowmobile Trail - After the project decision was upheld through the appeal review, the Izaak Walton League, Sierra Club, Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness, and Wilderness Watch filed a lawsuit against a decision to re-route the snowmobile route known as the South Fowl Trail. A hearing was held in December 2006 with a follow-up hearing in January 2007. Construction of the trail is on-hold pending a court decision.

Forest Plan - In August of 2006, the Sierra Club, Friends of the Boundary Waters Wilderness, Defenders of Wildlife, and the Northeastern Minnesotans for Wilderness filed suit against the Forest Service challenging the revised Forest Plan. A court hearing was held in January 2007.

Chain of Lakes - This suit was filed by a coalition of environmental groups challenging the calculation of motor boat quotas in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The U.S. District Court issued an original decision regarding this case in August 2004 with instruction which the Forest complied with. The District Court decision was appealed and the Eighth Circuit Court issued a decision in February 2006. The judge remanded the matter back to the Forest Service in August, 2006 "for a recalculation of the base period use and motorboat quotas consistent with the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness ("BWCAW") Act and the Eighth Circuit's opinion....." The Forest is moving ahead to comply with the remand and will involve affected parties as well as the general public.



People...the most valuable resource

As you can see, the Superior National Forest is a place of variety with a great deal of activity. All of the accomplishments across the Forest have one thing in common – the most valuable resource of all – people.



Students from local college learned practical aspects of campground management through a cooperative project.

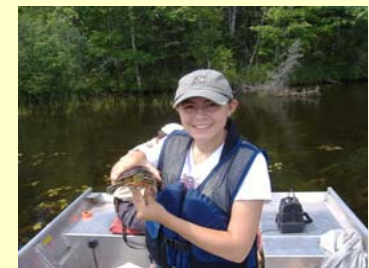
People contribute to management of the Superior National Forest in many different ways with a rich variety of experience, skills, and training. Whether conducting field surveys to writing analyses to firefighting to administrative tasks, they perform the thousands of day-to-day tasks required to manage a three-million acre piece of public trust. Over each of the past three years, approximately 240 people were employed on the Superior National Forest in permanent full-time or part-time positions and at least 150 were temporary or seasonal employees. In addition, the Forest mentored students and interns. Many employees have worked on other national forests. Some have military background. Some are new graduates, while others are approaching retirement. The high caliber of these people is evidenced by regular recognition from local communities as well as local, regional and national awards.

Every year, volunteers step up to make it possible for us to accomplish projects that otherwise would be difficult to accomplish. Volunteers include a very diverse group in terms of gender, background, and age but they all tend to bring a cheerful willingness to do what ever needs doing and a positive attitude.

Another significant way that many members of the public choose to participate in management on the Superior National Forest is by reviewing and commenting during project planning. This involvement helps decision-makers by providing important insights into issues, values and concerns that people have about this national forest that belongs to all of us.

How you can become involved...

- To find out more about current activities on the Superior National Forest, check out the **Plans and Projects** section on our website or you may also contact one of our Forest offices listed on the back page.
- For information regarding volunteering and employment see the **Employment** section of our website.



Student intern worked with the Forest aquatics program.



Volunteers work with our Heritage staff on archaeological excavation and site interpretation as well as donating many hours to historic building rehab, artifact processing in the lab, data entry, artwork and completion of non-public site evaluations. Some young volunteers have gone on to professional careers in Heritage Resources. Some have put in full work lives doing something else but always wanted to do archaeology while others may be retired professional archeologists.



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Did You Know that the Superior National Forest...

- is the eighth most visited Forest in the National Forest System?
- is the fourth largest Forest in the Nation when considering total area within the proclamation boundary and purchase units? (the three larger are: Tongass, Chugach, and Toyabe)
- has the highest and lowest elevation point in the State of Minnesota? (Eagle Mountain at 2,301 ft. and Lake Superior at 602 ft.)
- contains more than 2,000 lakes which total 440,000 lakes acres (46% of R9, 20% of the National Forest System) and 3400 miles of stream (22% of R9)?
- contains one of the top ten hiking trails in the United States as rated by Backpacker Magazine? (Superior Hiking Trail)
- is named as one of 100 globally important bird areas by the American Bird Conservancy?
- had one of the largest “blow down” events ever recorded in North America? (477,000 acres)
- was the origination of the Forest Service Passport in Time (PIT) Program and has 3,886 heritage resource sites recorded, representing human occupation of the Forest for over 10,000 years?
- has a federally designated wilderness area (BWCAW) that:
 - √ is the largest and only wilderness of substantial size east of the Rocky Mountains and north of the everglades?
 - √ is the most heavily used wilderness in the US (less than 1% of the acreage of the NWPS, but receives 10% of the use) and ties with the Mall of America as Minnesota’s #1 tourist attraction?
 - √ is a Class I Airshed as defined by the Federal Clean Air Act?
 - √ is listed as one of the 50 greatest places to visit in a lifetime (along with places such as Antarctica, Amazon, Grand Canyon, Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal) by the National Geographic Society and is included in “1,000 Places to See Before you Die” – a gift book that provides an around-the-world listing of “must see” places off the beaten track?



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