



Forest Plan Revision News

Volume 4, issue 1

May 2006



Message from the Forest Supervisor

It's springtime in the Upper Peninsula and we've had a busy winter on the Hiawatha National Forest! I am pleased to announce that the 2006 Forest Plan, the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Record of Decision and the Executive Summary have been published.

Revising a forest plan is not easy. Creating one that is supported by most members of the public is even more difficult. The American people, for whom these forests are managed, often have divergent views and values when it comes to what they want the Hiawatha National Forest to provide, to look like and to be managed for. I am pleased with the outcome of the 2006 Forest Plan because it provides for long-term ecosystem sustainability while providing access to a wide range of recreation activities designed to meet the needs of the public.

I want to thank you for your involvement in this process. Your interest, participation and comments helped create the documents that will guide the management of Hiawatha National Forest for the next 10 to 15 years. We look forward to your involvement as we implement and monitor the 2006 Plan.

Finally, I want to thank the employees on the Hiawatha National Forest for their contributions to the forest plan revision process. These documents are a culmination of more than three years of hard work and wouldn't have become a reality without the participation of every employee on this Forest.

Tom Schmidt

In this issue.....

PAGE 1

- Forest supervisor's message
- Overview of the decision process

PAGES 2-3

- Changes between draft and final forest plans
- Where to find copies of the FPR documents

PAGE 4

- About this newsletter
- Contacting the Hiawatha

Overview of the Decision Process

From the very start of the revision effort, the Hiawatha National Forest sought to create a Forest Plan that is strategic rather than prescriptive and incorporates a landscape-based management perspective. The 2006 Plan reflects the understanding that the Forest does not exist in isolation, but is part of a larger landscape that is influenced by many stakeholders who have a wide variety of interests.



The Regional Forester selected Alternative 2, as modified, as the 2006 Forest Plan. He feels it maximizes the net benefit to the public because it:

- ▶ Maintains or enhances biodiversity and the long-term health of the Forest
- ▶ Contributes to the economic and the social needs of people, cultures and communities

- ▶ Provides sustainable and predictable levels of products and services from the Forest

- ▶ Emphasizes adaptive management
- ▶ Provides the best mix of benefits to address the needs for change identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement

- ▶ Provides direction at the Forest level that will assist managers in making future project decisions



Changes between the Draft Plan and Final Plan

The 2006 Forest Plan will continue to ensure the long-term health of the land by providing a balance between ecosystems that will be actively managed through practices such as timber harvest, prescribed burning and wildlife and watershed enhancement projects, and ecosystems where natural processes will predominate. The Plan also provides for a mix of motorized and non-motorized recreation activities designed to meet the needs of our citizens.

This section provides a brief description of the significant changes between the draft and final Forest Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

■ **Vegetation Management Goals were Adjusted.** The Forest received comments regarding the predicted decline of aspen over time and completed further analysis. The analysis found that aspen levels will still decline under the 2006 Plan due to forest succession. In the Plan, aspen goals were raised to minimum goals similar to the 1986 Plan. This change results in a prediction of about 76,400 acres (9%) of the Forest in aspen at year 100. This is about a 7,500 acre increase in the amount predicted for Alternative 2 in the DEIS. This change will ensure a minimum level of aspen to provide species habitat and to supply fiber to mills.

Jack pine vegetation goals were also adjusted after the model outputs were reviewed and revised. This change will aid in providing opportunities to manage habitat for Kirtland's warbler and other associated species such as sharp-tailed grouse.

■ **Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ).** Forest staff refined assumptions that relate to the timber yields used to model timber harvest, and adjusted some vegetation goals in response to the comments received. The estimated ASQ for Decade 1 decreased from an average 114 million board feet per year in the DEIS to 108.5 MMBF per year in the FEIS.

■ **Wildlife, Fish and Sensitive Plant Habitat Management.** The Hiawatha is home to 11 federally-listed threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species and 91 Regional Forester sensitive plant and wildlife species. The Forest worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide management direction to aid in the recovery of all federally-listed species. Management direction for the endangered Kirtland's warbler was refined based on discussions with USFWS and recommendations from the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team and includes:

- Providing for Kirtland's warbler management opportunities within MA 4.2

- Changing the maximum size of an opening from 550 acres to 1,100 acres
- Removing references to specific desired age classes and stem densities for KW nesting habitat

■ **Motorized and Non-Motorized Trails/Routes.** Based on the release of the Forest Service 2005 Final Travel Management Rule (Rule), the management direction and effects analysis in the FEIS and 2006 Forest Plan were modified to incorporate the Rule's requirements. The Rule's specific terminology and definitions were also incorporated into the glossary.

■ **Cross-Country Travel.** Alternative 2 was modified to allow cross-country snowmobile use to continue and a standard was added. Prohibition of cross-country OHV travel will continue in the 2006 Forest Plan. The Draft Plan prohibited cross-country snowmobile travel and continued the prohibition on cross-country OHV travel. Based on comments received, additional analysis on the environmental effects of allowing cross-country snowmobile travel was completed. The Hiawatha determined that the effects on the forest under current or anticipated future use levels would not increase risks to species viability or result in other potential environmental harm.

Other Issues:

■ **Management Indicator Species (MIS).** Many people expressed concern that four MIS were not enough to adequately monitor the range of habitat types on the Hiawatha. The Forest determined the four MIS were adequate because of the importance of these habitats and the associated species they represent. The four MIS and their habitats are:

1. Ruffed grouse to represent the early-successional stage of the aspen community
2. American marten to represent the late-successional northern hardwoods and conifer-dominated forests
3. Sharp-tailed grouse to represent the open land savannahs and early successional stages of jack pine ecosystems
4. Brook trout to represent species that reside in coldwater streams

■ **Watershed Management.** Minor adjustments were made to Forest Plan management direction for soils and riparian areas. In response to comments, the Final EIS discloses the beneficial effects of beaver impoundments on the landscape.

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

- **Old Growth.** The 2006 Plan will continue to provide for developing old growth conditions on nearly 52,000 acres. Some locations have been changed to provide for better ecological representation and connectivity between future old growth areas. These lands have been reclassified as unsuited for timber production. The old growth system will also be complemented by about 158,000 acres of other forested unsuited lands.
- **Research Natural Areas/Candidate RNAs.** The 2006 Plan made no changes to established RNAs. Boundary adjustments were made to several

candidate RNAs and two candidate areas were merged into one. The acreage of cRNAs changed from about 18,500 to 20,370 acres.

- **Wild and Scenic River Management Plans** and final river corridor boundaries for the Whitefish, Sturgeon and East Branch Tahquamenon Wild and Scenic Rivers were developed.
- **Roadless Inventory/Wilderness Evaluations.** After reviewing public comments both for and against more wilderness on the Hiawatha, and after an additional field review, no areas were recommended for wilderness study.

Implementation. The Notice of Availability will be published in the *Federal Register* in early May. A legal notice will also publish in *Milwaukee Journal* about the same time. We will begin implementing the Plan 30 days after the NOA is published.

Appeals. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the date that legal notice appears in the *Milwaukee Journal*. Appeals must be sent to:

- **By mail:** USDA Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination, 1400 Independence Ave, SW, Mailstop Code 1104, Washington, DC 20250-1104
- **By express mail:** USDA Forest Service, Ecosystem Management Coordination, 201 14th St. SW, 3rd Floor, Central Wing, Washington, DC 20024
- **By Electronic Mail:** appeals-chief@fs.fed.us

A copy of the appeal must simultaneously be sent to the deciding officer: Randy Moore, Regional Forester, USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region, 626 E. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53202.

Simultaneous electronic filing to the deciding officer should be sent to: appeals-eastern-regional-office@fs.fed.us.

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217
- The name, address and telephone number of the appellant
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and by subject
- Date of the decision and name and title of the Deciding Officer
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made
- The reason for the appeal including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy
- Identification of the specific change (s) in the decision that the appellant seeks

Locations of Forest Plan Documents

Copies of the final forest plan revision documents can be found on the Hiawatha's web site: http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha/revision/rev_welcome.html.

CDs and printed copies of these documents are available at:

Supervisor's Office

2727 N. Lincoln Road ■ Escanaba

Manistique Ranger District

499 E. Lake Shore

Munising Ranger District

400 E. Munising Ave.

Rapid River Ranger District

8181 U.S. Highway 2

St. Ignace Ranger District

1498 W. U.S. Highway 2

Sault Ste. Marie Ranger District

4000 I-75 Business Spur

CDs and printed copies of the FPR documents can also be found at the following Upper Peninsula libraries:

- Bay De Noc Community College
- Bay Mills Community College
- Bayliss Public Library
- Big Bay De Noc School Library
- Brevort Township Community Library
- Clark Township Library
- Curtis Library
- Detour Area School Library
- Drummond Island Library
- Engadine Library
- Escanaba High School Library
- Escanaba Public Library
- Gladstone School & Public Library

- Gwinn High School Library
- Ishpeming Carnegie Public Library
- Lake Superior State University
- Manistique School & Public Library
- Marquette Senior High School
- McMillan Township Library
- Michigan Technological University
- Mid-Peninsula High School Library
- Munising School Public Library
- Negaunee Public Library
- Northern Michigan University
- Peter White Library
- Rapid River Public Schools Library
- Richmond Township Library
- Rudyard School Public Library
- Sault Ste Marie High School Library
- St. Ignace Public Library
- Superior Central High School
- Superiorland Library Cooperative
- Tahquamenon Area Library
- Whitefish Township Library

Hiawatha National Forest

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About this newsletter...

This newsletter has been produced by the Hiawatha National Forest to update you on the Forest Plan Revision process.

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Hiawatha N.F. Web Site:

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha/welcome.htm>

Forest Plan Revision Web Site:

[http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha/revision/
rev_welcome.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha/revision/rev_welcome.html)

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