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Cover picture is of similar tree
cooler plans in Walker, MN.

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1.0 Introduction, Purpose and Need, Public Involvement, and Issues

1.1 Document Structure

The Forest Service has prepared this EA (Environmental Assessment) in compliance with NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and other relevant Federal and State laws and regulations. This EA discloses the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental effects that would result from the proposed action and alternatives. The document is organized into four parts:

- *Chapter 1: Introduction, Purpose and Need, Public Involvement, and Issues:* This section includes information on the history of the project proposal, the purpose of and need for the project, and the agency's proposal for achieving that purpose and need. This section also details how the Forest Service informed the public of the proposal and how the public responded.
- *Chapter 2: Alternatives, including the Proposed Action:* This section provides a more detailed description of the agency's proposed actions as well as alternative methods for achieving the stated purpose. These alternatives were developed based on key issues raised by the public and other scoping efforts including contacts with the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, and other government agencies. This section also includes discussion for possible mitigation measures. Finally, this section provides a summary table of the environmental consequences associated with each alternative.
- *Chapter 3: Environmental Consequences:* This section describes the environmental effects of implementing the proposed action and other alternatives. This analysis is organized by resource area and related key issues. Within each section, the affected environment is described first, followed by the effects of the No Action Alternative that provides a baseline for evaluation and comparison of the other alternatives that follow.
- *Chapter 4: List of Preparers Agencies and Persons Consulted:* This section provides a list of preparers and agencies consulted during the development of the environmental assessment.
- *Appendices:* The appendices provide more detailed information to support the analyses presented in the environmental assessment.

Additional documentation, including further detailed analyses of project-area resources, may be found in the project planning record located at the Deer River Ranger Districts Office in Deer River, Minnesota.

1.2 Background

The Deer River District plants approximately 30,000-50,000 tree seedlings (on 300+ acres) annually. The current tree seedling planting stock storage and transportation condition is to use a tree cooler located at Blackduck Ranger District for storage and perform extensive roundtrip transportation traveling of seedlings to Deer River Ranger District planting sites.

1.3 Purpose and Need for Action

There is a need to construct a tree cooler at the Deer River Ranger District site in order to provide for adequate local tree seedling planting stock quality control due to the lack of proper storage using a rented refrigerated trailer at Deer River and to reduce the time and energy lost (and increase travel safety) due to inefficient and unsafe high round trip vehicle travel distances when using the Blackduck tree cooler.

1.4 Proposed Action

This section briefly lists the actions included in the Proposed Action.

One tree cooler would be constructed on the Deer River District administrative site.

Summary of activities:

- Construction – one tree cooler building. Appendix A includes site maps of the building locations on the District administrative site in Deer River of the Chippewa National Forest. The tree cooler is approximately 2,305 square feet total (Appendix A).
- Site Work – Includes all site preparation, connection of all utilities (city water, electric, gas, telecommunication service from local servicing utility).

1.5 Decision Framework

The District Ranger from Deer River will be the responsible official. The decision to be made is to determine whether or not to construct one tree cooler.

The Proposed Action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Chippewa National Forest Facility Master Plan (FMP) approved on February 8, 2012 as amended with Appendix_FMP_disposition (project record). The project is consistent with the Forest Plan and other relevant laws.

Consultation is required with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Consultation will be completed as part of this EA prior to decision.

Consultation with the Tribal Preservation Office (THPO) will be completed as part of the EA prior to decision.

This EA also complies with and addresses the following list of laws and regulations: Sensitive Species (Forest Service Manual 2670); Archaeological Resources Protection Act; Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act; Wetlands (Executive Order 11990); and Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898).

This EA discloses the effects of the proposed alternatives; it is not the decision document. Based on the analyses in this document, the Deer River District Ranger will decide

whether or not to proceed with the Proposed Action and under what conditions. All Federal, State, and local permits as required for site development and building construction and communications will be obtained prior to initiating construction activities.

1.6 Public Involvement

The proposal will be listed in the Chippewa National Forest NEPA Quarterly starting April 2012, and has been posted on the Chippewa National Forest website, www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/chippewa/projects. Scoping was initiated with a legal ad briefly explaining the Proposed Action and specifying a contact for further information was published in the paper of record, *The Western Itasca Review*, on June 14, 2012.

1.7 Permits and Agency Approvals Required

The Project's design and construction will comply with:

FSH 7309.11

USDA Space Management Policy (DR 1620-2)

Energy Conservation Standards for New Federal Commercial and Multi-Family High-Rise Residential Buildings and New Federal (10 CFR Pars 433, 434, and 435)

USDA Sustainable Building Implementation Plan

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Codes

Accessibility Guidelines and Standards, ABA

Universal Design

Built environment Image Guide

USDA Physical Security Handbook

International Code Council

EM-7100-15 Sign and Poster Guidelines for the Forest Service (2005)

1.8 Issues

Based on internal scoping and previous actions, there are no known issues.

2.0 Alternatives

Two alternatives were considered for the Tree Cooler Project: the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action Alternative. Table 1 compares these two.

Table 1 – Detail of Alternatives

Activity	No Action	Proposed Action
Construction	None	Deer River Tree Cooler – anticipated 2,305 square feet modular structure.
Site work	None	Includes all site preparation (removal of fill and seeding of lawn when construction is complete). Connection or modification of all utilities (city water, electric, gas, telecommunication service from local servicing utility).

2.1 No Action alternative

Under the No Action alternative, current use of the tree cooler at Blackduck and/or a rented refrigerated trailer would continue. No new construction would be implemented to accomplish project goals. There would continue to be a tree seedling planting stock quality control issue due to lack of proper storage needs using refrigerated trailer. There would continue to be time and energy lost due to inefficient high round trip vehicle travel distances using the Blackduck tree cooler.

2.2 Proposed Action

The proposed action is to construct one tree cooler on the Deer River District of the Chippewa National Forest. Two categories of activities were identified: site work and construction. Please refer to Table 1 for a detailed description of these activities.

2.4 Comparison of No Action and Proposed Action

Resource	No action Alternative	Proposed Action
Wetlands and Soils	No effect	No effect at administrative site.
Transportation	No effect	No effect – no additional roads, no roads removed.
Noxious Weeds	No effect	No effect
Threatened or Endangered Species	No effect	No effect
Regional Forester Sensitive Species	No impacts	No impacts
Economics	Increased costs due high round trip vehicle travel distances.	Construction cost of approximately \$450,000.
Cultural Resources	No affect	No effect - new construction, at Deer River
Environmental Justice and Civil Rights	No Effect	No Effect
Air Quality	No Effect	No Effect
Water Quality	No Effect	No Effect

3.0 Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This section summarizes the physical, biological, social and economic environments of the affected project area and the potential changes to those environments identified by the interdisciplinary team. It also presents the scientific and analytical basis for the comparison of alternatives presented in Table 2.

The area of analysis for direct and indirect effects and cumulative effects is the administrative site at the Deer River District.

3.1 Wetlands and Soils

Affected Environment

There are no adjacent wetlands to the existing administrative property in Deer River. The soil at the Deer River site is fill material as a result of the construction of the current District Administrative site.

Direct and indirect Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action alternative would have no direct or indirect effects to wetlands or soils.

Proposed Action Alternative

There would be no effects on the administrative site in Deer River.

Cumulative Effects

There are no direct and indirect effects so there are no cumulative effects.

3.2 Threatened, Endangered or Sensitive Species

Affected Environment

It is expected that the tree cooler in Deer River will be placed within a mowed area of the administrative site which is currently used as a parking lot.

There are no known federally listed threatened, endangered species, specifically, Canada lynx within the existing site.

There are no known Regional Forester's Sensitive Species (RFSS) in the project area.

(Project File, Biological Review May 1, 2012)

Direct and indirect Effects

The Deer River District Biologist determined there would be no effect to threatened/endangered species. Therefore, no consultation is required with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Project File, Biological Review May 1, 2012)

The Deer River District Biologist determined there would be no impacts to the RFSS species in the project area.

Cumulative Effects

There are no direct and indirect effects so there are no cumulative effects. (Project File, Biological Review, May 1, 2012)

3.3 Economics

Affected Environment

The affected area may encompass several northern Minnesota counties due to the location of the potential contractors and anticipated length of the project is one year.

Direct and indirect effects

No Action alternative

There would be no change in costs of the existing facility. Maintenance and utility costs would likely remain about the same.

Proposed Action Alternative

The cost of the proposed action is approximately \$450,000 for the project. With construction of an energy efficient building, cost for utilities and other services would be similar or less than current costs for these services. There would be a short-term, indirect affect to the local economy from construction workers and contractors buying goods and services.

Cumulative Effects

When considered with all past, present, and foreseeable future activities, there would be no change under the No Action alternative. The Proposed Action would add dollars to the community and surrounding area through construction workers and contractors purchasing supplies while working on and travelling to the project.

3.4 Cultural Resources

Affected Environment

Traditional resources are not gathered at this administrative site.

Direct and Indirect Effects

No Action Alternative

The No Action alternative would have no direct or indirect effects to cultural resources.

Proposed Action Alternative

The new construction at Deer River, will not affect cultural resources.

Cumulative Effects

There are no cumulative affects to cultural resources.

3.5 Other Disclosures

In the context of all applicable laws, the Proposed Action is deemed to present minimal to no change from the No Action condition for Cultural Resources, Environmental Justice, Air Quality, and Water Quality. Absent any reasonably foreseeable direct or indirect effects, cumulative effects analysis is not required by law.

There would be no effect to the transportation systems of the Chippewa National forest or surrounding area. No new roads would be created and none removed.

The area around the new tree cooler will be seeded with grass and mowed which would control the non native invasive species.

3.5.1 Environmental Justice

Neither alternative would affect the civil rights of any landowner near the project area, employee, or other individual. The proposed activities treat all groups and people fairly and equally under the provisions of the Forest Plan. There are no disparate risks or effects for any given group of people.

3.5.2 Air Quality

The 2004 FEIS air quality standards and guidelines were developed to be consistent with the Clear Air Act. The Chippewa National Forest is in a Class II Air shed, which allows some temporary air quality impairment.

There are no known air quality problems in the Project area. Air quality and visibility in the area is good to excellent. Dust is associated with use of roads and construction or

maintenance activities. This impact would be short-term and seldom drift more than 100 feet, to effects would be mainly contained onsite. Dust abatement procedures would be implemented during construction to minimize any escape from the site.

3.5.3 Water Quality

There would be no effects on water quality related to construction under the proposed action alternative. No ground disturbing activities related to construction will occur in or adjacent to wetlands, streams, lakes or ponds.

4.0 List of Preparers, Agencies and Persons Consulted

4.1 Forest Service Interdisciplinary Team

Greg Van Orsow	IDT Leader, NR Operations Team Leader
Kelly Barrett	Wildlife Biologist
Bill Yourd	Forest Archeologist

4.2 Other Forest Service Contributors

Barbara Knight	Planning Team Leader
Eric Raitanen	Fisheries Biologist
Dave Morley	Hydrologist/Soil Scientist
Ann Long-Volkner	Recreation/Facilities Team Leader
Millie Baird	Civil Engineer
John Hodgeson	Forest Engineer

4.3 Tribal Consultations

Tribal Historic Preservation Office

4.4 Other Agencies Consulted

Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office