

# Chapter 1

## Purpose, Need, and Forest Plan Revision Issues



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



**Chequamegon-Nicolet**  
**National Forests**



## Chapter 1

# Purpose, Need, and Forest Plan Revision Issues

---

### Introduction

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) documents the effects of applying alternative ways of managing the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests (CNNF). The DEIS provides information that helps determine what aspects of the current Forest Plans need change, alternatives to how they may be changed, and the effects of implementing each of the alternatives. The companion document to the DEIS is the Proposed Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Proposed Forest Plan). The Proposed Forest Plan is developed in accord with the Regional Forester's identified "preferred alternative," which is based on public input, legal requirements, and resource needs. The final Forest Plan guides all natural resource management activities and establishes management goals and objectives, allocation of lands to different management emphases, and standards and guidelines for Plan implementation. Many forest management issues cross administrative boundaries and need to be addressed on a scale that spans an area much larger than an individual forest. Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests' planners worked with northern Wisconsin Indian Tribes, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, other natural resource management agencies, and adjacent counties to ensure a broad vision in proposing and analyzing potential changes to resource management on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests.

The DEIS is divided into the following five chapters: Chapter One (Purpose, Need, and Forest Plan Revision Issues) describes the reasons for revising the Forest Plans; Chapter Two (Alternatives) describes and compares alternatives for meeting revision goals on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests (the alternatives display a reasonable range of responses to the 10 Forest Plan revision issues described in this chapter); Chapter Three describes the Forests' and surrounding area's physical, biological, and social environments and the effects of the alternatives on these environments; Chapter Four lists those who participated in preparing the DEIS; and Chapter Five lists distribution of DEIS copies to federal, state and local agencies, tribal governments, organizations, businesses, and individuals.

---

### Proposed Action

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests propose to revise and combine their 1986 Forest Land and Resource Management Plans to address the needs identified below. Current Forest Plan management direction not needing revision will be affirmed by the revised plan.

---

## Purpose and Need for Forest Plan Revision

The purpose of this proposed action is to revise the Forest Plans that provide management direction for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. The Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests were separate units when their 1986 plans were approved. Since they are now combined into a single administrative unit (Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests), one Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and one revised Forest Plan will be issued. The Proposed Forest Plan must address current federal laws, regulations and policies, and it will address new and changing information about the forests and their uses.

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) of 1976, requires the management of each national forest be guided by a land and resource management plan. Forest plans provide direction for all resource management activities. The Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 219.10 (g) Revision) and NFMA require that forest plans be reviewed every five years and revised at least every 15 years, or more frequently when forest conditions significantly change. Through monitoring and evaluation the Forest Supervisor may recommend the revision of a Forest Plan at any time. Such recommendations may be based on changing local conditions and new or evolving agency policies.

The current Forest Plans were approved in 1986. Several individuals and organizations appealed the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans upon their approval. Some appeals were withdrawn and the Chief of the Forest Service dismissed several others. Appellants believed the plans failed to adequately address biological diversity and timber wolf recovery in the remaining appeals filed by several environmental organizations. They also alleged the forests violated several federal laws. The Chief's decisions on these appeals generally upheld both Forest Plans, but directed the Regional Forester to adjust timber harvesting and road construction activities within semi-primitive nonmotorized areas, amend each plan to include guidelines to ensure the conservation of certain sensitive plant species, and to further address biological diversity issues. In January 1990, the Chief of the Forest Service directed the Wisconsin National Forests to establish a "committee of scientific experts" to address biological diversity issues. In 1992 both Forests and a committee of scientific experts established the "Scientific Roundtable" to address biological diversity issues. The efforts of this group eventually resulted in publication of the *"Report on the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests"* (General Technical Report NC-166) in March 1994. The Forests recognized the need to conduct another roundtable that would examine the potential social and economic impacts of following recommendations coming from the Roundtable on Biological Diversity. The Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests published the results of the Socioeconomic Roundtable, *"Report on the Socioeconomic Roundtable Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests"* (General technical Report NC-177), in March 1995. The recommendations in these reports served as a source of several new issues, information and/or changed conditions (since 1986) that influenced forest plan revision.

A coalition of environmental organizations filed lawsuits in Federal District Court against the Nicolet Forest Plan in April 1990 and the Chequamegon Forest Plan in September 1990. The Court eventually ruled in favor of the Forest Service. However, the ruling was based on the information presented to the Judge relating to scientific knowledge of the early 1980s. A footnote in his 1994 Decision and Order stated, "Thus, the court's conclusions regarding the rationality of defendants' mid-1980s analysis of biological diversity do not necessarily apply to subsequent analysis."

It was determined that the Plans should be revised in response to updated resource information and scientific knowledge; and changing social, economic, and environmental concerns. The *End of Decade Monitoring Report for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest*, 1996, identified the following first decade changes that contributed to the necessity to revise the Forest Plans:

- Geographic information system technology enabled the Forest to map and spatially analyze its resource base.
- The Biological Diversity and Socioeconomic Roundtables provided a wealth of information and recommendations that enabled forest managers to better understand biological diversity, ecosystem management, and the socioeconomic effects of resource management activities.
- The aquatic and land-based ecological classification system and other specific resource inventories provided forest managers with new information for improving the management and protection of the Forests' resources.
- Information obtained during Forest Plan implementation made it possible to improve the estimation of the Forests' Allowable Sale Quantities.
- The social environment changed as a result of northern Wisconsin population increases and private land development next to the Forest.

The USDA Forest Service published its *USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan (2000 Revision)* setting long-term goals and objectives that will guide future agency actions in concert with the Government Performance and Results Act (Results Act). One objective is to “provide ecological conditions to sustain viable populations of native and desired nonnative species and to achieve objectives for Management Indicator Species (MIS)/focal species. Strategies to accomplish this objective include implementing habitat restoration and management activities for species with viability concerns, focal species, and ecosystems at risk. This strategy is in accordance with recommendations provided to the Forests' within “*Report on the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forest.*”

In June 1996 the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester identified forest plan revision needs in the Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for Revision of Land and Resource Management Plans for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (NOI). The following four major forest plan revision topics were identified in the NOI: (1) access and recreational opportunities, (2) biological diversity, (3) special land allocations, and (4) timber production. Special forest products were also identified as an item that would be addressed in the revision.

Ten problem statements were later established, as part of the development of alternatives, which elaborate on the details of the NOI topics.

---

## Decisions Made in the Forest Plan

The approval of the Forest Plan results in:

- Forestwide multiple-use goals and objectives (36CFR 219.11(b));
- Forestwide management standards and guidelines (16 USC 1604), (36CFR 219.13-27);
- Management Area Prescriptions and standards and guidelines that apply specifically to future activities within designated management areas (36 CFR 219.11);

- Identification of lands suitable for timber production (16 USC 1604(k), 36 CFR 219.14), and establishment of an allowable sale quantity (16 USC 1611 and 36 CFR 219.16);
- Recommendations to Congress (e.g. recommendations for additional Wilderness areas (36 CFR 219.17)); and
- Forest Plan monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)).

---

## **Public Involvement, the Environmental Analysis and Decision-making Processes, and Issue Identification**

### **Public Involvement**

American Indian tribes, other federal agencies, state and local governments, individuals, and organizations helped identify Forest Plan revision issues. The Forest hosted a series of open house meetings when the Notice of Intent was issued. The meetings provided information about the forest plan revision process and gathered public input on the scope of the decisions to be made. Forest planning open houses, newsletters, and news releases informed the public about the progress of the revision. Public input helped shape the alternatives considered in revising the Forest Plans. See Appendix A for details on the public involvement process up to now.

The Forests consulted and exchanged information with local governments, including counties, State agencies, and local area American Indian tribes on a government-to-government basis throughout the plan revision process. Consultation aided the development of revised management goals and objectives, and standards and guidelines.

Forest management issues also span administrative and regional boundaries. Collaboration with other national forests, and other federal agencies has been important for forest plan revision.

Several key public involvement points in the Forest Plan revision process helped shape the Notice of Intent (NOI) to revise the forest plans. The NOI identified potential issues and possible alternatives for addressing the issues. The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS), the identification of forest plan revision alternatives, an analysis of possible environmental effects, and the publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Proposed Forest Plan are key points in the forest plan revision process where the public provides input.

### **Environmental Analysis and Decision-making Processes**

The results of an analysis of environmental effects for each of the alternatives are displayed in Chapter 3 of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). A preferred alternative was selected as a result of those environmental effects. The selection of a preferred alternative for the Proposed Forest Land and Resource Management Plan is not a final decision; rather, it provides a management direction to which the public may respond in the comment period following the release of the draft documents. Comments from the public are gathered during not less than a 90-day comment period beginning when the Notice of Availability of the Proposed Forest Plan and DEIS is announced in the Federal Register. The Forest will review and analyze public comments, and then develop and publish a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), Forest Plan, and Record. The deciding official is the Regional Forester for the Eastern Region of the Forest Service.

## Forest Plan Revision Topics and Issues

As stated previously, the Forest Supervisor and Regional Forester concurred on the identification of the following four major topics that needed to be addressed in the forest plan revision process: (1) access and recreational opportunities, (2) biological diversity, (3) special land allocations, and (4) timber production. These revision topics function as broad headings for 10 important sub-topics or issues, listed below under their associated major revision topic. Problem Statements were prepared for each issue and these were shared with the public. For example, the biological diversity revision topic includes issues, listed as individual Problem Statements below, such as: aquatic, riparian, and wetland ecosystems; landscape patterns; ecosystem restoration; old growth; and wildlife management. The Wilderness subtopic under Special Land Allocations in the NOI is now addressed under the Recreation/Access Topic. The NOI also indicated that the revised Forest Plan would address management direction regarding the gathering of miscellaneous forest products, although it did not include it under a major revision topic.

Forest Plan revision issues are those areas of Forest management that were determined to need change as a result of more information about resource conditions, changed resource conditions, new scientific and/or technical information, improved understanding of the results of the previous management direction due to monitoring and evaluation, and changes in public perceptions about what constitutes maximum public benefit related to national forests. Addressing each item individually would normally result in a significant amendment to the Forest Plan. The resolution of these issues will change forestwide management direction, the mix of goods and services derived from the Forests, and environmental conditions existing on the Forests over the long-term.

The Purpose and Need addresses the following four topics and 10 major forest plan revision issues:

### Access and Recreation Opportunities

Problem #1—All-Terrain and Off-Road Vehicle Use/Motorized Use

Problem #9—Wilderness and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Areas

### Biological Diversity

Problem #2—Aquatic Riparian and Wetland Ecosystems

Problem #3—Ecosystem Restoration

Problem #4—Landscape Pattern

Problem #5—Old Growth

Problem #10—Wildlife

### Special Land Allocations

Problem #7—Special Land Allocation

### Timber Production

Problem #8—Timber Production

Problem #6—Special Forest Products\*

\*As mentioned previously, the NOI indicated that the revised Forest Plan would address management direction regarding the gathering of miscellaneous forest products, although it did not include it under a major revision topic.

Plan revision issues are addressed below by describing the current situation, expressing the problem with the current situation, and briefly describing how the revised plan will address each problem.

## **Topic: Access and Recreation Opportunities**

### **Problem #1: All-Terrain and Off-Road Vehicle Use/ Travel Management**

This issue will be addressed by dividing the subject into two sub-sections: Off-road vehicle (ORV) use, and motorized access in general. Off-road vehicles (all-terrain vehicles; snowmobiles; motorcycles and related 2-, 3-, and 4-wheel vehicles; amphibious machines, hovercraft, and any other vehicles that use mechanical power, including 2 and 4-wheel drive (4WD) vehicles that are highway registered; etc.) are defined as any motor vehicle that can be operated cross-country, without benefit of a road or trail, over natural terrain. All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are one specific type of ORV, and are motorized devices, with 3 or more low-pressure tires, which are straddled by the operator, are 48 inches, or less, in width, and weigh 900 pounds or less.

#### **Current Situation General**

Areas on the Forests open to motorized access are generally extensively roaded. Motorized uses on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests have a long history. People have been accustomed to utilizing roads for traveling most parts of the Forests. During the past decade, under direction of the current Forest Plans, project level restrictions have been imposed to protect natural resources and primitive and semi-primitive recreation experiences in certain areas. ORV use in general, and ATV use specifically have risen steadily over the past two decades. The increased use created new user conflicts. For example, some four-wheel drive enthusiasts prefer rugged roads or trails that are infrequently maintained. Motorcyclists and ATV operators prefer well-maintained motorized trails or roads. Other people are disturbed by resultant impacts to soils, riparian areas, and wildlife habitat; and aesthetic impacts from motorized vehicle noise.

#### **Current Situation—ATV and ORV Use**

The Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans provide very different policies regarding access for off-road vehicles. The Chequamegon Plan provides for liberal ATV access to national forest land; areas are open for this use unless areas, roads and/or trails are posted closed. The Nicolet Plan ATV policy is that all areas, roads and/or trails are closed to this use unless they are posted open; there are no areas, and very few routes posted open. Exceptions for administrative use and persons with disabilities were made on the Nicolet National Forest on a case-by-case basis. Neither policy provides adequate management tools for addressing the current demand for neither all-terrain/off-road vehicle use nor the potential resource impacts from such use. ATV use on the Chequamegon and demand for ATV access to the Nicolet have both increased dramatically since the Forest Plans were signed in 1986 (WDNR, 1998 and 1998a in the Forests' ATV Analysis of the Management Situation). The ATV use on the Chequamegon has resulted in unacceptable resource damage and occasional conflicts with other recreation activities. Illegal ATV use on the Nicolet is an increasingly prevalent problem. Some township governments are designating town roads as ATV routes on both forests. The combined effect of these variant policies is confusion for the public about what are the relevant policies, and where does each apply.

Relatively few public concerns have been expressed about snowmobile use on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests. The most common issue is a general concern about the Forests identifying and reserving additional semi-primitive non-motorized areas where motorized recreation is prohibited. There does not appear to be any significant demand for changes to existing snowmobile management direction.

Recreational use of four-wheel drive (4WD) vehicles has increased. Challenging opportunities for 4WD users are dependent on the availability of open, low standard roads and designated trails. The Forest currently has one designated trail for four-wheel drive (4WD) off-road use. The Proposed Forest Plan addresses 4WD issues separately from ATV issues.

### **Problem—ATV and ORV Use**

The existing Forest Plans provide widely disparate policies regarding access for off-road vehicles. Neither policy appears to provide adequate management tools for addressing the demand for off-road vehicle use nor the potential resource impacts of such use. Four-wheel drive user groups have requested additional designated off-road trails. A consistent policy between forests, as well as coordination with state regulation, is needed to provide for off-road use and new direction is needed to address impacts to resources. Consideration also needs to be given on how to respond to the expressed desire for more designated four-wheel drive trails.

### **Forest Plan Revision—ATV and ORV Use**

The Proposed Forest Plan provides direction for a consistent, enforceable Forestwide policy that addresses the needs of ATV users, prevents unacceptable resource damage, and minimizes conflicts with other recreation activities. The Proposed Forest Plan addresses ATV/ ORV use issues and needs by:

1. Providing a variety of quality motorized recreation opportunities;
2. Not allowing off-road, off-trail ATV use;
3. Identifying an option to address access needs for persons with disabilities;
4. Addressing past, present, and potential future ATV use resource damage by identifying the suitability of various parts of the Forests for ATV trail construction;
5. Minimizing user/management activity conflicts, and conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation uses by developing Standards and Guidelines that restrict ATV use to designated trails and roads, and limit locations of new trail construction;
6. Allowing some ATV use on designated forest roads;
7. Determining the amount of ATV trail construction that is needed; and
8. Designating some specific routes or areas for 4WD vehicles.

### **Current Situation—Motorized Use**

The current Forest Plans are inconsistent in road descriptions, total road density designations, and Management Area Prescriptions. The Chequamegon Plan inventoried only “system” roads, while the Nicolet Plan included all roads and was more detailed in its descriptions.

In 2000, the Forest Service adopted a new transportation policy in an effort to develop an effective and economically efficient transportation system on national forests. It required that a Roads Analysis be done to inform any project level road management decisions as well as a forestwide analysis of higher standard roads to inform Plan revision efforts. This analysis would be interdisciplinary and would gather detailed information to identify resource problems related to the transportation system. One outcome of the analysis would be to recommend policies guiding the management of forest transportation systems, including reduced natural resource impacts and/or better designs or locations to meet access and economic efficiency needs.

The roads analysis process has led to consistent terminology for various types of road corridors and enables detailed corridor inventories. The application of technology such as Global Positioning Systems and spatial GIS databases has improved information accuracy. Improved road inventories have shown the existing Forests road densities to be higher than previously estimated, despite accomplishment of road decommissioning/obliteration objectives during the implementation of the 1986 Plans.

The current Forest Plans assume that lower densities of open roads in some areas on the Forests would improve the recreational experience of people seeking solitude and remote recreation experiences. In the past, as road miles were closed to vehicles to meet Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized use objectives, incidents occurred where people traveled around gates or other closure devices to operate motorized vehicles within non-motorized areas.

#### **Problem—motorized access**

Assumptions used to develop total road densities in the existing Forest Plans are not consistent, and current open and total road density guidelines are not sufficient for providing the desired variety, quantity and quality of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities across the forests. Total and open road density guidelines need to be designed and applied to the forests in a consistent manner, based on Recreation Opportunity Spectrum inventories and roads analysis, such that the Forests have safe, effective and economically efficient transportation, and provide recreational experiences desired by the forest users. Spatial allocation of open and total road density goals for the forest needs to guide project level transportation system decisions.

#### **Forest Plan Revision—motorized access**

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classification system was used to apply road density goals on various areas of the forests. The Proposed Forest Plan uses two measures of road density to direct future management. Open Road density refers to the miles per square mile of road corridors that are open for public use, and Total Road density refers to both open and closed road corridors. In some cases, road density designations coincide with Management Area allocation, such as potential Wilderness (5B) and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Area (6A and 6B). In other instances Management Area boundaries do not correlate with road density designations, such as areas classified as Semi-Primitive Motorized or Roaded Natural Remote. In the latter instances, maximum road densities are shown as shaded areas applied to portions of Management Areas 1-4 on Alternative Maps. The area assigned to various road density designations changes across the alternatives to provide a range of motorized and non-motorized experiences.

**Open Road Densities** of zero miles per square mile are included in Management Areas that prescribe potential Wilderness (5B), and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Areas (6A and 6B). In addition, a goal of zero open road density would be applied to portions of Management areas (1-4) to create a non-motorized opportunity within a fully managed forest. Open Road Densities of 2 miles/square mile would be assigned to areas on the Forests that met ROS criteria for Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) and Roded Natural-Remote as well as some parts of Management Area 2B and special areas like the Moquah Barrens wildlife area. Other areas would be allowed a maximum of 4 miles per square mile open road density.

**Total Road Densities** also vary by ROS classification but are assigned differently. In this case existing Wilderness, potential Wilderness, and Management Area 6A--Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized (SPNM) areas would be assigned a zero miles per square mile total road density. Management Area 6B SPNM would be assigned a 3-mile per square mile total road density, since a certain amount of vegetation management is prescribed in such areas with its attendant need for vehicle access. Portions of Management Areas 1-4 would be limited to a maximum of 3 miles per square mile as part of providing Non-Motorized areas within a fully managed forest, including areas that met the ROS criteria for Semi-Primitive Motorized (SPM) and Roded Natural Remote. Other areas would be allowed a maximum Total Road Density of 4 miles per square mile.

The Nicolet Forest Plan stated that its forestwide average road density goal was 3.0 miles per square mile. The Chequamegon did not state an overall average road density goal, but a calculated weighted average of road density goals by management area also demonstrates a 3.0-mile per square mile forestwide average road density goal in the 1986 Plan. This overall goal remains constant in the Proposed Forest Plan using consistent definitions and descriptions of roads.

Priority for road decommissioning to move toward meeting forestwide average road density goals would be as follows:

1. Decommissioning of a road that is contributing to the resource degradation.
2. Re-route of an existing road with obliteration of the old corridor.
3. Decommissioning of roads to meet forestwide average road density goals.

Standards that describe adequate Road Obliteration are also included in the Proposed Forest Plan.

## **Problem #9: Wilderness and Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized Areas**

### **Current Situation**

Designated SPNM areas and Congressionally designated wilderness are intended to provide visitors with a remote experience free from the presence and sounds of motorized vehicles. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests provide one of the few places in Wisconsin with a land area large enough to provide some seclusion for quality non-motorized experiences. According to some national recreation activity surveys, future national forest visitors will increasingly demand remoteness and solitude experiences (USDA FS 1995 in SPNM AMS and Cordell et al 1990).

The 1984 Wisconsin Wilderness Act directs the Department of Agriculture to “review the wilderness option when the plans are revised, which revisions will ordinarily occur on a 10-year cycle, or at least every 15 years” [Section 5 (b) (2)].

The present Chequamegon Forest Plan increased semi-primitive nonmotorized (SPNM) recreation opportunities and attempted to minimize conflicts between motorized and non-motorized activities. However, as a result of the Chequamegon cross-country ATV policy, SPNM and wilderness areas were, effectively, the only places where non-motorized experiences were available. During the past decade, the Chequamegon reported nearly twice as much SPNM area use as was anticipated (End of Decade Monitoring Report, p10, 1998). Opportunities for quality non-motorized recreation experiences could diminish as SPNM use increases (AMS, Wilderness and Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Areas, 2001).

The present Nicolet Forest Plan provided some quality non-motorized recreation opportunities outside of SPNM and Wilderness by not allowing ORV/ATV use. The Forest also provided some specific recreation opportunities within semi-primitive motorized areas. During the past decade, the Nicolet reported slightly less SPNM and wilderness area use than was anticipated.

### **Problem**

Feedback from the recreating public suggests that the existing Forest Plans underestimated the quality of non-motorized recreational opportunities necessary to meet user demands (End of Decade Report 1998a), especially given the current increase in ATV use. Comments from the public indicated they had difficulty finding areas free of mechanized sights and sounds.

In addition, the 1986 plans allowed timber harvest within SPNM areas with some restrictions. The timber activities permitted by the Plans, in conjunction with the Great Lakes forest history of near complete timber harvest at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, resulted in little difference between the appearance of SPNM areas and the general appearance of the rest of the forest, and thus a lack of wild character and primitive feeling desired by users in such areas. New direction is needed to provide a range of quality non-motorized recreation opportunities, including those that emphasize remoteness, solitude, and wild character.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

Alternatives for the Proposed Forest Plan address a range of quality non-motorized recreation opportunities that emphasize remoteness, solitude, personal challenge (individually or in combination), and the absence of motorized vehicles. The Alternatives address this through Standards and Guidelines and via a range of potential new SPNM and wilderness areas.

Using a forest inventory based on ROS classifications, SPNM areas were identified and assigned to one of the following classifications in each alternative:

- **Management Area 6A**—SPNM, high quality, no timber harvest, Open Road Density=0 mi/sqm, Total Road Density, =0 mi/sqm
- **Management Area 6B**—SPNM, medium to high quality, limited timber harvest, Open Road Density=0 mi/sqm, Total Road Density=up to 3 mi/sqm
- **Non-Motorized designation applied to portions of Management Areas 1-4** – fully managed forest, Open Road Density=0 mi/sqm, Total Road Density=up to 3 mi/sqm.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests inventoried and evaluated all areas on the Forests which met criteria for potential Wilderness areas, in accordance with 36 CFR 219.17(a). Eight areas met these criteria, and the Proposed Forest Plan recommends 3 of these areas (MA 5B) for Congressional designation as Wilderness (See Chapter 3 for more detail).

## Topic: Biological Diversity

### Problem #2: Aquatic, Riparian, and Wetland Ecosystems

#### Current Situation

Forest aquatic resources are diverse and abundant. The Forests have 16 fourth level watersheds, 2,020 lakes, approximately 2,000 miles of streams (including 1,382 miles of Class I, II, & III trout streams), approximately 75,000 acres of riparian habitat, and 347,000 acres of wetlands. Forest management activities can have potentially significant effects on basic watershed functions and lake, stream, wetland, and groundwater quality. The Forest Service's Strategic Plan (2000 revision) establishes key objectives for National Forest management with a strong emphasis on maintaining and restoring watershed health.

The existing Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans would benefit from: (1) a more robust treatment of key issues associated with aquatic, riparian, and wetland ecosystems; (2) increased reference to watershed management; riparian area, wetland, and water quality goals and objectives; and mitigation measures for other activities within these areas; (3) improved direction for specific aquatic resources, issues, and management activities; and (4) identification of Desired Future Conditions (DFCs) for aquatic, riparian, and wetland ecosystems.

#### Problem

The existing Forest Plans do not describe a desired future condition for aquatic resources. Goals, Objectives, and Forestwide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines are needed to provide clearer direction on the management, protection, and restoration of watersheds and individual aquatic, riparian, and wetland ecosystems.

#### Forest Plan Revision

Goals, Objectives, and Forestwide and Management Area Standards and Guidelines have been developed which apply across Alternatives 2-9. They would work to move toward reaching the desired condition for watersheds and aquatic resources. The desired condition is included in its entirety at the end of Chapter 3 of the Proposed Forest Plan. A summary is included below:

- **Watersheds.** Healthy watersheds are resilient in the face of natural events and capable of absorbing the effects of human disturbances. They function properly by absorbing rain, recharging groundwater, providing favorable conditions of water flows, dissipating floods, and connecting headwaters to downstream areas and wetlands. All forest watersheds are assessed to determine their condition with regard to soils, riparian habitat, aquatic habitat and the quantity, timing and quality of flows. Conditions are restored or enhanced as needed.

- **Riparian ecosystem habitat.** Riparian corridors whose structure, function and composition are intact and serve as landscape connectors border streams and lakes. Floodplains have little or no development and store and transmit floodwaters with a minimum of risk to human safety and property. The terrestrial component of riparian areas consists of a diversity of vegetation that compares favorably with estimates of range of natural variability (variation of physical and biological conditions within an area due to climatic fluctuations and disturbances of wind, fire, and flooding). The diversity and abundance of wetlands are maintained or restored over time. National Forest shoreline ownership on lakes and streams is maintained or increased over time.
- **Aquatic ecosystem habitat.** The composition and productivity of biological communities in streams and lakes are not limited by reductions in water quality. Water temperatures, sediment, nutrients, and dissolved oxygen are within normal ranges for the valley segment, stream reach or lake type. Streams are maintained or restored for natural functions and processes such as water and sediment transport within the normal ranges for the watershed. Stream flows are sufficient to maintain channel integrity and support aquatic biota. Most Class I and II trout streams are in a free-flowing condition, to provide suitable habitat for cold-water stream communities.
- **Aquatic communities.** Provide a healthy fishery where ecological potential exists to offer angling opportunities for the public. Habitat management and access are coordinated with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) harvest regulations to maintain healthy fish populations and aquatic communities. The diversity and abundance of native aquatic flora and fauna are maintained or restored in most streams and lakes consistent with the ecological capability of the water body. Exceptions include cases where game fish have become naturalized, such as brown trout, or where the WDNR prescribed and stocked game fish for angling opportunities.

### Problem #3: Ecosystem Restoration

#### Current Situation

Current Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans provide very little ecosystem restoration direction. Restoring deteriorated ecosystems is one of the primary goals of the Forest Service's "*Course to the Future*." The Forest Service's Strategic Plan (2000 revision) recognizes that maintaining or restoring sustainable forest ecosystems is an important mission element. In 1990 the Chief of the Forest Service directed the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests to establish a "Committee of Experts" to address biological diversity. A Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity was convened on September 20-23, 1992. Roundtable members provided advice for ongoing implementation of forest plans and for future forest plan revision. The committee identified the following major factors that impact elements of biological diversity and ecosystem sustainability: (1) changes in natural disturbance regimes and landscape-level processes, such as, fire suppression and changes in location, frequency, and size of forest openings; (2) landscape level fragmentation and direct human effects, such as edge effects and introduction of exotics; (3) direct consequences of forest management policies, for example, inadequate or inconsistent use of ecosystem restoration knowledge; and (4) regional and global threats (Crow et al 1994).

The 1976 National Forest Management Act states that forests must “provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities based on the suitability and capability of the specific land area in order to meet overall multiple use objectives.” Further direction concerning species diversity is found in 36 CFR 219.27(g):

“Management prescriptions, where appropriate and to the extent practicable, shall preserve and enhance the diversity of plant and animal communities... so that it is at least as great as that which would be expected in a natural forest, and the diversity of tree species similar to that existing in the planning area. Reductions in diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species from that which would be expected in natural forest, or from that similar to the existing diversity in the planning area, may be prescribed only where needed to meet overall multiple use objectives. Planned type conversions shall be justified by an analysis showing biological, economic, social, and environmental design consequences, and the relation of such conversions to the process of natural change.”

With regard to population viability, 36 CFR 219.19 states:

“Fish and wildlife habitat shall be managed to maintain viable populations of existing native and desired non-native vertebrate species in the planning area.”

Viable population habitat determinations are made at the forest level during preparation of the forest plan. Forest managers provide for species diversity and viability by managing for a mix of habitats on a landscape and site level. This task can be accomplished by activities such as managing for both large and small vegetative patches, providing for snags and coarse woody debris, and regenerating of a variety of tree species. Appropriate strategies are also developed for maintaining sensitive plant species.

Curtis (1959), Finley (1976), Padley (1999), Mladnoff and Pastor (1993) estimated vegetative species and patterns present before European settlement. The pre-European settlement landscape was most likely a complex patch mosaic of differing forest types and ages. The smaller forest patches of today contain fewer species maintained at “truncated successional stages” (Pastor and Borschart 1990; Frelich and Lorimer 1991; Mladenoff and Pastor 1993). Terrestrial ecosystems that formerly dominated the landscape but are now present to a smaller degree were pine barrens, pine forest, and northern hardwood interior forests.

### **Problem**

Ecosystems historically present on these Forests consisted of age class distributions, species composition and structural characteristics that are different from those of today. Maintenance and/or restoration of components of ecological composition, structure and function are needed to increase the likelihood of sustaining local ecosystems and, in turn, providing for maintenance of the diversity of plant and animal communities native to this area. In some cases, the maintenance and restoration of these ecological characteristics are also contributors to maintaining viable populations of native and desired non-native wildlife, fish and plant species. The 1986 Plans provided little explicit direction on ecosystem sustainability, and new information since 1986 demonstrates the need for heightened and/or changed direction.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

Based on changing public values and new knowledge and information, the Forest would maintain, improve, or restore the composition, structure, and function of some early and mid-successional forested ecosystems, late successional mesic forested ecosystems, and some large non-forested natural communities (pine barrens).

Forest ecosystem restoration problems are addressed by efforts to restore naturally occurring terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem components and rare, declining, or absent processes. A variety of ecosystems can be sustained by maintaining viable, well distributed, populations of native and desirable non-native plants and animals. The Proposed Forest Plan describes ecosystem restoration efforts that contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species, protect species at risk, and reestablish a range of early, mid, and late successional forested ecosystems by restoring: (1) northern hardwood forest interior structural and composition components and landscape patterns that benefit species with population viability risks; (2) regionally rare mature natural red / white pine forest communities; (3) globally-imperiled pine barrens that have plant and animal species population viability risks; and (4) forest old growth communities where they are rare, have structural deficiencies, and (or) species population viability risks.

Management Area 2B places the most emphasis on northern hardwood interior forest. Management Area 4B places the most emphasis on red and white pine forest communities, while Management Areas 8C and 4C provide the most emphasis on barrens and open land communities. Varying allocation of these and other Management Areas provide variation across alternatives in the amount and speed of achieving characteristics of natural vegetative communities. See Chapter 3 of the Proposed Forest Plan for more details on Management Area prescriptions.

### **Problem #4: Landscape Patterns**

#### **Current Situation**

Landscape pattern is the term most commonly used to describe the arrangement of species and communities in a natural setting. Landscapes have three structural components: a matrix--the most connected portion of similar vegetation within the landscape; patches--isolated portions of similar vegetation within the matrix; and corridors--relatively narrow areas that connect patches (Diaz and Apostol, 1992). Very small patches, such as the size of a tree canopy gap in a forest, provide important habitat components for some species such as magnolia warbler (Howe et al, 1995). Large patches can improve species viability by decreasing dispersal distance, and increasing the likelihood of mating (Primack, 1993). Greater diversity of habitat-specific species occurs as patches become larger (Primack, 1993).

Current Forest Plans do not directly address landscape patterns. Landscape structure and composition is only addressed as a side effect of prescribed management activities. Widespread historical harvest and the existing Forest Plans' emphasis on even-aged management, early successional forest types, and edge habitat have generally resulted in a small patch landscape pattern. Large patches and interior conditions are lacking, and old growth patches are isolated. Once common ecosystems and formerly dominant species, such as hemlock, are rare; while previously uncommon species, such as aspen, are now commonplace. This situation is outside the estimated range of variation described in Appendix D for both the size and distribution of patches and the mix of forest types and

successional stages. A vegetation pattern of disconnected patches impacts many species that react negatively to large amounts of forest edge or isolated stands.

### **Problem**

Current standards and guidelines for both Plans address biological diversity by increasing species variety through edge habitat creation and the strategic placement of forest vegetation types. The level of even-age management and emphasis on early successional forest types has resulted in a landscape pattern where small patches dominate. The emphasis on disconnected patches impacts many species that react negatively to large amounts of forest edge.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

The Proposed Forest Plan describes desired future conditions that include landscape composition and structure as objectives, and modify long-term landscape patterns by: (1) emphasizing areas that maintain interior forest conditions; (2) restoring large patches across the landscape; (3) increasing mid to late successional forest habitat (forestwide or in concentrated blocks); (4) decreasing the interspersion of early successional habitat with large concentrated blocks of late-successional habitat (where appropriate); (5) increasing attention to connections between landscapes and/or patches; and (6) restoring formerly dominant forest types such as white pine.

These are accomplished by allocation of Management Areas with prescriptions that emphasize large block management. Some of these include Management Area 2A, 2B, and 3B which emphasize large patches of northern hardwood interior forest, as well as Management Area 4B which emphasizes large patch management within pine communities. (See Chapter 3 of the Proposed Forest Plan for more details).

## **Problem #5: Old Growth**

### **Current Situation**

Recent ecological research indicates that the northern portions of the Lakes States were formerly characterized by extensive old growth forest. Old growth forests provide a variety of important ecological functions such as high quality habitat for some species of plants and animals, source areas for populations of some species, and soil and water conservation areas. Old growth areas also serve as reference sites for ecological research and control sites for monitoring the effects of forest management practices and environmental changes.

The historical precedent for the Forests' potential change in old growth direction was the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity. Roundtable scientists recommended reserving more old growth and managing it with an ecological emphasis. Numerous public comments received during appeals of the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans, questionnaire responses to mid-point Forest Plan responses, public scoping responses for project-level analyses, and public comments in response to the Forest's Plan Revision Notice of Intent favor increased attention to old growth management.

The Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests identified and reserved some old growth areas since the present Forest Plans were approved. The Chequamegon did not formally designate areas with NEPA decisions, but recognized proposed areas as a part of desired future conditions described in opportunity area analyses. The Nicolet accomplished its Plan objectives of acres of designated old growth with NEPA decisions and described it

as “Managed Old Growth” implying that such stands would be harvested at some time, albeit well beyond normal rotation age.

### **Problem**

The 1986 Plans do not consistently define old growth, nor does the management direction incorporate an updated definition of old growth, including the significance of old growth to ecological sustainability. There needs to be consistent criteria developed for old growth, including desired spatial and temporal arrangement of existing and future old growth, and the relevant characteristics needed to aid in the inventory and designation of old growth areas.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

The Proposed Plan reflects the ecological importance of old growth and allocates old growth areas based on present characteristics and spatial distribution. Old growth community complexes are included in the old growth areas. They consist of several vegetative communities that normally occur in concert, such as northern hardwood-dominated drumlins, next to hemlock forest on slopes, transitioning into black ash swamps in interdrumlin areas. Management Area 8G represents old growth, provides direction for old growth management, and varies in allocation across alternatives 2-9. See Chapter three of the Proposed Forest Plan for more detailed description of Management Area 8G.

## **Problem #10: Wildlife Habitat**

### **Current Situation**

The abundance and distribution of Forest wildlife primarily depends on the amount, distribution, and quality of habitat. Wildlife habitat is comprised of vegetation types and vegetative/land structural features such as dead trees, water bodies and man-made structures. The need to change existing Forests’ wildlife management direction developed with our increasing knowledge of wildlife habitat relationships, wildlife population status changes, and increasing public concern and input during forest plan implementation.

There are several wildlife issues that are best addressed at a Forest level. The 1986 Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans show some inconsistencies in management of Federally Threatened or Endangered species. They are inconsistent in providing management guidance for some species on the Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species list as well. Guidelines to maintain coarse woody debris need updating for consistency and to encompass new information. New information related to the value of small permanent wildlife openings and their spatial arrangement on the landscape need to be incorporated into the revised forest plan.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests provides habitat for over 300 species of vertebrate animals and a large unquantified number of invertebrates. A number of these species are categorized as threatened, endangered, or sensitive at national, regional, or state levels. Others species are hunted, trapped, or enjoyed in non-consumptive ways. Current Forest Plan direction emphasizes desired future conditions for vegetation and other features that primarily benefit early-successional habitat dependent wildlife species. The existing Plans do not adequately ensure the distribution, abundance, and quality of desired habitat types and features needed to meet the requirements of some mature forest dependent wildlife species. Changes in social values regarding wildlife and wildlife-

related recreation, and a new understanding about the suitability of some landscape habitat features is reflected in revised management direction.

### **Problem**

The 1986 Forest Plans are inconsistent in direction for management of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species, as well as in direction for certain structural components, such as reserve trees. The existing Plans tend to focus on early successional species and habitats and do not sufficiently provide for area-sensitive or edge-sensitive species.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

An analysis of existing direction for the Forest Plans, current conditions, and new information helped shape Forest Plan revision alternatives and provided updated wildlife management direction. The Proposed Forest Plan provides new or updated direction for: (1) managing permanent openings; (2) reserving adequate amounts of standing and downed dead woody material; (3) expanding the Riley Lake Wildlife Management Area to provide additional upland shrub/grassland habitat needed to meet sharp-tailed grouse population objectives; (4) providing for the recovery and viability of “Regional Forester Sensitive Species;” and (5) designing a landscape pattern that includes some large patches of vegetation to provide habitat for area sensitive species.

## **Topic: Special Land Allocations**

### **Problem #7: Special Land Allocations—Research Natural Areas and Special Management Areas**

#### **Current Situation**

Research Natural Areas (RNAs) are maintained in their natural condition and provide opportunities for monitoring natural processes, studying ecosystems and their component parts, and investigating successional and other long-term changes. Special Management Areas (SMAs) have outstanding natural, historical, or recreational features and are also maintained in their natural condition. RNAs and SMAs identified for their ecological characteristics maintain and protect unique ecosystems, processes, and rare or sensitive plant and animal species and habitat.

The 1986 Chequamegon Plan identified 10 candidate RNAs and 6 of those areas were designated as RNAs. The remaining 4 areas were recommended for SMA designation. Of 18 candidate RNAs identified on the Nicolet, 3 were designated RNAs and 8 were designated as Special Management Areas. Of 71 candidate Special Management Areas on the Nicolet, 9 were formally designated as SMAs via project level decisions. The areas chosen as RNAs or SMAs were largely small areas of unique habitat.

More recently the Eastern Region of the Forest Service started using a process for identifying candidate RNAs that include consideration of the representation of historic natural communities. In addition, an inventory and analysis process called Landscape Analysis and Design (LAD) was carried out on the Forests. This process involved inventory of vegetative communities that provide representation of historic vegetation on various Land Type Associations. Once inventory was complete, the areas were analyzed to ultimately provide a system of vegetative community complexes that characterize the natural variation across the forest.

### **Problem**

Existing RNAs do not make use of the new framework that the Eastern Region of the Forest Service is now using for establishing a network of representative ecological reference areas. The existing and candidate RNAs and SMAs lack a wide range of representation of vegetative communities and thus provide less value as reference areas. In addition, the existing areas are small, isolated, and are not integrated into a systematic network of reserves where proximity, continuity, and presence of connecting corridors are coordinated. Finally, current Plans do not provide for management area prescriptions or guidelines for most RNAs and SMAs and do not display locations on a map so that they can be easily identified for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

The Proposed Forest Plan identifies specific candidate RNAs and designates SMAs by providing Management Area prescriptions 8E and 8F for RNAs and SMAs, respectively, including specific standards and guidelines to direct management. Identification of these areas takes the following into account: (1) representation of vegetative communities found historically on the landscape, (2) coordination of areas into a systematic network of reserves, (3) makes use of the Eastern Region's RNA selection framework, and (4) includes areas with outstanding scenic, recreational, geological, botanical, zoological, paleontological, and historical features as SMAs as well as those with ecological value.

## **Topic: Timber Production**

### **Problem # 8: Timber Management**

#### **Current Situation – Timber Production**

The Chequamegon National Forest identified 700 million board feet as its Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ; maximum allowable harvest over a ten-year period) for the first decade of its 1986 Plan. The Nicolet National Forest identified a first decade ASQ of 970 million board feet. The Chequamegon harvested nearly 99% of its ASQ in the first 10 years of plan implementation, averaging the sale of approximately 69.0 million board feet per year. The Nicolet produced annual timber outputs as high as 90 million board feet at the start of the decade, but dropped to as low as 33 million board feet and averaged approximately 71 million board feet per year in the first decade of Plan implementation. This was approximately 73% of the ASQ. The combined average annual allowable sale quantity estimated for the second decade, 1996 to 2005, was 186 million board feet. The average combined annual sale quantity of the two Forests from 1996 through 2001 has been 106 million board feet per year.

The Chequamegon timber volume produced per acre was lower than that predicted in the 1986 Plan, resulting in more acres being entered to meet the expected outputs. The Chequamegon had predicted that it had more acres tentatively suitable for timber production than it needed to meet demand. While the average annual output was near Plan predictions, the acres entered were higher, and the mix of species-products was also considerably different than predicted, due to ground conditions being different than envisioned in the Plan.

The Nicolet timber harvest volume produced per acre entered was approximately as predicted, but the number of acres available for entry was found to be less than predicted in the Plan. The Nicolet National Forest's 1991 ASQ Situation Report states that the acres of land actually suited for timber harvest were fewer than originally thought for a variety of reasons, including the following:

- Acres of recreation sites and roadways were greater than predicted (acres not available for timber production),
- Acres within wild and scenic river corridors were included within the estimate of suitable acres, resulting in an over estimate of acres administratively available to produce timber,
- Implementation of Standards and Guidelines resulted in more acres being effectively made unsuited for timber harvest than was predicted, and
- Drought, insect and disease problems slowed tree growth during the early years of the decade, resulting in reduced growth, and some acreage not being ready for entry during this planning period.

Some portion of the acres of suitable timberland on the Nicolet experienced greater mortality and reduced growth due to insects, disease and drought, temporarily reducing net growth below predicted levels. This left a considerable number of suitable acres temporarily short of operable volumes.

Demand for timber products has increased significantly since the forest plans were approved in 1986. From 1983 through 1995, according to Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest provided about 7.5% of the timber harvested in Wisconsin. Since 1986 the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests' timber stumpage prices have increased dramatically with the average stumpage price, across all species and products, increasing by nearly 500% (\$14.93/mbf in 1986, to \$70.99/mbf in 2001). Considering the relatively minor portion of the statewide timber production coming from these Forests, and the continuing stumpage price trend, the prediction is that demand will remain high, and that it is relatively elastic on these Forests, meaning that the competitive price will be primarily driven by the broader marketplace and not by output levels from these Forests. This is in contrast to the situation in 1986 when it was determined that the ability to supply timber was beyond demand levels at that time.

Forest planning regulations require a review of lands to determine if they are physically suited for timber harvest, as well as are located within areas where timber harvest is appropriate. The final estimate is often referred to as suited acres or acres suitable for timber management. The number of suited acres is one factor used to determine future outputs as a result of all the factors included in a Forest Plan. The second major factor in determining future timber outputs is an estimate of volume that will be produced per acre of land. These and many other factors related to expected growth and predicted management techniques are combined into a linear model that predicts an Allowable Sale Quantity or ASQ for the forest in the future by decade.

### **Current Situation – Silvicultural Prescriptions and Vegetation Types**

As described above, the Forests have a current need to change the timber resource management direction and capability estimates for providing a long-term sustainable timber program. At the same time the Forests need to maintain, improve or restore the health of the local forest ecosystems to provide for diversity of plant and animal communities (Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974) and to support maintenance of viable populations for all existing native and desired non-native plants, fish, and wildlife species in the planning area (36 CFR 219.19). The Agency's Strategic Plan (2000 Revision) identifies the need to manage for sustainable forest ecosystems as a part of meeting these natural resource objectives. Achieving sustainable forest ecosystems involves the conservation and restoration of ecosystem structure, composition, and processes.

A committee of scientific expert's was convened in 1992 as a response to the Chief of the Forest Service's remand to address biological diversity, a component of meeting the diversity and viability requirements of forest management. The results were published in a 1994 document, *"Report on the Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity Convened by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forest,"* (General Technical Report NC-166) that identifies impacts on biological diversity due largely to historical changes in the forest ecosystems, including habitat fragmentation and modification of forest structure and composition. The report offered recommendations for modifying management to support long-term goals of providing for species diversity and viability. These recommendations include proposed management changes such as: reduction of fragmentation of habitats; maintenance of the full spectrum of ecosystems characteristic of northern Wisconsin; and restoration of the wide range of forest types, stand ages, and size classes within the Forests (structure and composition).

The Scientific Roundtable recommendations, and other new information related to maintaining or restoring biological community diversity and maintaining species viability, indicate a need for changes in forest management methodologies, including silvicultural prescriptions, long-term structural and compositional goals, and forest type allocations across the landscape.

### **Problem**

Past assumptions used for identification of suitable lands as well as estimation of growth and yield need to be updated with new information to provide an accurate prediction of the long-term capabilities of the Forests to produce timber products.

Forest management methodologies need to be revised to provide for the diversity of plant and animal communities, and to maintain viability of species existing on the Forests. Needed changes include structural and compositional goals of forest stands, allocations of forest types across the Forests, and silvicultural prescriptions applicable to different land areas and forest types.

### **Forest Plan Revision**

New, more nearly accurate assumptions are being used to estimate expected growth and yield of timber products as well as to identify acres suited for timber production.

Silvicultural prescriptions have been modified to provide a wider range of silvicultural options for developing needed changes in forest structure and composition (Proposed Forest Plan, Chapter 2). Allocation of these various treatments across the landscape are proposed in ways to increase the representation of native ecosystems and reduce fragmentation of habitats, to provide biological community diversity and increase the likelihood of viability for the species found within the planning area.

## **Problem #6: Special Forest Products**

### **Current Situation**

Special Forest Products consist of items such as birch bark, birch stems, Christmas trees, cones, conifer boughs, firewood, maple sap, sheet moss, etc. that are gathered and intended for resale or are gathered on more than an incidental basis. The demand for most special forest products is expected to increase. Some local industries have expressed a dependence on these types of forest products. The livelihood of some small businesses rests on the continued availability of these resources. The gathering of special forest products allows some people to fulfill cultural needs, live off the land, and supplement

their income. Gathering forest products may be a way of life for many people in some economically depressed areas and can serve as a critical source of income for some people.

Demand for special forest products from members of federally recognized Indian tribes is also expected to increase. Historically, special forest products have been used by American Indians for religious, ceremonial, medicinal, subsistence and economic purposes. Great Lakes Region Chippewa Indians have over 380 traditional uses for vascular plants. A cooperative special forest products management approach will be needed as more and more tribal members exercise gathering rights reserved on national forest lands within ceded territories.

Current Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans do not provide direction or guidance for gathering special forest products.

**Problem**

There is demand for Special Forest Product gathering, but there is no specific management direction to monitor, manage, and control such gathering.

**Forest Plan Revision**

The Proposed Forest Plan establishes special forest products goals, objectives, standards, guidelines, and monitoring direction (See Chapter 2 of the Proposed Forest Plan).

