

# Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 61, No. 124

Wednesday, June 26, 1996

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Agricultural Marketing Service

[Docket Number FV-96-354]

#### North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Advisory Committee on Private Commercial Disputes Regarding Agricultural Goods

**AGENCY:** Agricultural Marketing Service, Agriculture.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to establish a NAFTA Committee.

**SUMMARY:** This notice describes the application procedures for the members of the public volunteering for service as U.S. Representatives on the NAFTA Advisory Committee on Private Commercial Disputes Regarding Agricultural Goods.

**DATES:** Applications and comments must be received on or before July 26, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Applications and comments should be sent to Mr. David L. Priester, International Standards Coordinator, Fruit and Vegetable Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 96456, Room 2071-South, Washington, DC 20090-6456. Application forms may be obtained by writing to the above address or by calling 202-720-2184 or faxing 202-720-0016.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** David L. Priester, Tele: 202-720-2184, Fax: 202-720-0016.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** As provided for in Article 707, of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), an Advisory Committee on Private Commercial Disputes Regarding Agricultural Goods will be established to provide recommendations on possible systems to achieve the prompt and effective resolution of commercial disputes regarding agricultural goods. This Advisory Committee will work on disputes for all agricultural

commodities, but initially it will focus its attention on perishable fruits and vegetables.

The Committee will be comprised of up to ten (10) members (and ten (10) alternates), of which up to eight (8) members (and eight (8) alternates) may be selected from outside the Government. The Secretary of Agriculture will appoint the members and alternates.

#### Application Process

Candidates must complete the Advisory Committee Membership Background Information Form AD-755 (8/31/95). It is important that all questions are answered and the information requested is as complete as possible. This information will be treated as confidential and is used to complete background clearance checks.

#### Selection Criteria

Committee members shall be appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The Committee will be comprised of up to ten (10) members (and ten (10) alternates) including producers, shippers, receivers, packers, attorneys, and other interested and knowledgeable parties. The Secretary invites those individuals, organizations, and groups affiliated with the above industries, to nominate individuals for membership on the Committee. Nominees should have expertise or experience in the resolution of private commercial disputes in agricultural trade.

Equal opportunity practices will be followed in all appointments to the Committee in accordance with USDA policies. To ensure that the recommendations of the Committee have taken into account the needs of the diverse groups served by the Department, membership shall include, to the extent practicable, individuals with demonstrated ability to represent minorities, women, and persons with disabilities.

#### Compensation

The members of the Advisory Committee will not be paid a salary, or any other compensation, and will be responsible for their own travel and per diem expenses for their service on the Advisory Committee.

#### Time and Travel Requirement

Members should be prepared to spend time for one or two meetings a year, plus time for meeting preparation. Applicants should be fully prepared to travel to locations in Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

Dated: June 20, 1996.

Robert C. Keeney,

Director, Fruit and Vegetable Division.

[FR Doc. 96-16302 Filed 6-25-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

## Forest Service

### Revision of the Land and Resource Management Plan for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests; Ashland, Bayfield, Florence, Forest, Langlade, Oconto, Oneida, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, and Vilas Counties, Wisconsin

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice; intent to prepare environmental impact statement.

**SUMMARY:** The Forest Service intends to prepare an environmental impact statement for revising the Chequamegon and Nicolet Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plan) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1604(f)(5) and 36 CFR 219.12. The Forest Service will prepare one environmental impact statement and one revised Forest Plan that encompasses both National Forests (36 CFR 219.4(b)(3)).

The current Forest Plans for both the Chequamegon and Nicolet were originally approved on August 11, 1986. These Plans guide the overall management of these National Forests. The six primary decisions made in Forest Plans are:

- (1) Forestwide Multiple-use Goals and Objectives (36 CFR 219.11(b));
- (2) Forestwide Management Requirements (36 CFR 219.27);
- (3) Management Area Direction (36 CFR 219.11(c)),
- (4) Lands Suited/not Suited for Timber Management (36 CFR 219.14, 219.16, 219.21);
- (5) Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements (36 CFR 219.11(d)); and
- (6) Recommendations to Congress, (such as recommendations, if any, for additional Wilderness (36 CFR 219.27)).

Forest Plans must be revised every 10 to 15 years (U.S.C. 1604(f)(5) and 36

CFR 219.10(g)). In addition, the Forest Service has determined there is a need to revise these Forest Plans to adjust to changed conditions, incorporate new information, and consider the management of National Forest System lands in the context of the larger landscape in which these lands are situated.

In looking at the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests in a landscape context and based on the monitoring and evaluation done and public comment received, the Forest Service has determined that there is a need to make some changes to the primary decisions made in the 1986 Forest Plans. A revised Plan will be developed to address the following major revision topics that have been identified through monitoring, evaluation, and public comment:

- (1) Access and Recreational Opportunities;
- (2) Biological Diversity;
- (3) Special Land Allocation; and
- (4) Timber Production.

Some inconsistencies between the two 1986 plans that are not directly

related to the main revision topics will be resolved as the two separate Forest Plans are combined into one. To achieve this consistency, it will be necessary to make many minor changes, particularly in Forest standards and guidelines.

When making decisions in the revised Plan, we will examine the economic and social impacts to local communities, and the impacts at a broader regional level. We will also examine biological impacts at similar levels. In northern Wisconsin communities, the relationship between people and the natural environment in which the needs of people are met typically centers around the forest products and tourism industries.

The purpose of this notice is to inform you that the Forest Service is now soliciting comments and suggestions from American Indian tribes, Federal agencies, State and local governments, individuals, and organizations on the scope of the analysis to be included in the draft environmental impact statement for the Revised Forest Plan (40 CFR 1501.7). Comments relevant to scoping include: (1) identifying

potential issues, (2) identifying those issues to be analyzed in depth, (3) eliminating insignificant issues or those which have been covered by a previous environmental analysis, and (4) identifying possible alternatives for addressing the issues. General notice to the public concerning the scope of the analysis will be provided by mailings, news releases, and public meetings.

The environmental analysis and decision-making process will include many further opportunities for public participation and comment so that people interested in this proposal may contribute to the final decision. The draft environmental impact statement is tentatively scheduled for release in November, 1997 and the final environmental impact statement and decision are scheduled for December, 1998.

The Forest Service will host a series of open house meetings to provide information about the process of revising the Forest Plans and to gather public input on the scope of the decision to be made. Meetings will be held as follows:

Date	Time	Location
July 9, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Laona District Office.
July 15, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Medford District Office.
July 16, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Lakewood District Office.
July 16, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Park Falls District Office.
July 24, 1996 .....	3 pm-8 pm .....	Washburn District Office.
August 7, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Glidden District Office.
August 8, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Eagle River District Office.
August 8, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Hayward District Office.
August 12, 1996 .....	4 pm-7 pm .....	Florence District Office.

**DATES:** Comments concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by August 26, 1996.

**ADDRESSES:** Send written comments to: Forest Plan Revision, Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forest, Federal Building, 68 S. Stevens Street, Rhinelander, WI 54501.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** George Probasco, Forest Planning Group Leader; (715) 762-2461.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** This section contains more detailed information about the process to revise the Forest Plans for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. The section is organized as follows:

- A. Need for change—Why the Forest Service believes that changes need to be made to the existing Plans.
- B. Working with others in revising the Forest Plan—Describes the public involvement plan.
- C. The nature and scope of the decision to be made—What decisions

are made in Forest Plans, what decisions will be revisited in a revised Plan, and who makes the decision.

D. Description of preliminary issues and changes that may result from addressing the issues—This is the heart of the Notice of Intent. It provides information about the four major revision topics, preliminary issues and what changes or decisions will be made to address the issues.

E. What will not be addressed or changed in the revised Forest Plan—Describes those items outside the scope of Plan revision.

F. Alternatives in the draft environmental impact statement—Because the major revision topics can be addressed in more than one way, this section describes how the Forest Service will develop and consider alternative ways of addressing the related issues.

**A. Need For Change**

The Forest Service proposes to prepare one revised Forest Plan for both

the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. In doing so, we intend to concentrate on those areas of the existing Plans that truly need changing. Each Forest currently has a Forest Plan that has been in effect for the past 10 years. Many parts of the existing Plans have been working well, and we propose to carry those parts forward into a revised Forest Plan with little if any change (some changes may be necessary for consistency as we merge the two Plans together). There are several reasons for revising the Forest Plans for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests:

The law requires Forest Plans be revised at least every 15 years. The original Plans were approved in 1986, so it is now time to begin the revision process.

Conditions have changed. Monitoring since 1986 shows conditions we did not anticipate or project. For example, a harvest level study on the Nicolet revealed inaccuracies in growth and yield projections, and thus in the sustainable level of timber harvest projected

in the 1986 Forest Plan. There is an increased demand for the variety of goods, services and uses produced by the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests (Revision Topics and Need for Change report, USDA, Forest Service, 1996). For example, an increase in gathering of special/miscellaneous forest products indicates a need for standards and guidelines to manage these resources.

New information is available. New information and scientific understanding regarding biological diversity have become available since the Plans were approved. The Forest Service has also conducted Scientific Roundtables on Biological Diversity and Socio/Economics which provided new information and recommendations (New Information report, USDA Forest Service, 1995).

**Change in Policy.** The 1986 Forest Plans focused mainly on the capabilities of and resource utilization on National Forest lands within the proclaimed boundaries of the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. In revising Forest Plans for the next decade, it will be important to describe the management of these National Forests in the context of the larger landscape in which they are situated. Furthermore, decisions about the management of the two National Forests need to be made based in part on the ongoing and future management of interspersed and adjoining private and public lands. Revised Plans will only provide direction for federally-owned lands. Looking beyond the boundaries of the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forests is important in developing complementary management strategies across multiple ownerships, addressing issues at a broader or regional scale, and looking at cumulative effects at a landscape level.

#### B. Working With Others in Revising the Forest Plan

The Forest Service intends to involve the public in the revision effort to the fullest extent practical, given the time and resource constraints under which the work is proceeding. This dialog will include both keeping the public informed about the work as it progresses, and listening to and considering the opinions and suggestions offered by the public. This dialog will occur with American Indian tribes, other Federal, State, County and local governments and agencies, and with groups and individuals interested in or affected by the Plan revision. The input received will be used throughout the revision process.

As part of its overall efforts to ensure that it honors treaty rights and its responsibilities toward nearby Indian Tribes, the Forest Service routinely will consult and exchange information with Tribes on a government-to-government basis throughout the Forest Plan revision process. This consultation will include the development of goals, standards, and guidelines needed to ensure the exercise of tribal hunting, gathering and fishing rights. In addition,

the Forest Service will be sensitive to American Indian religious beliefs.

The Forest Service will work collaboratively with other public forest managers, especially other national forests in the three-state area of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Wisconsin county Forest Association. Many forest management issues cross administrative boundaries and must be dealt with on a scale larger than a single national forest.

There are several ways people can become informed about and involved in the Plan revision process. These include, but are not necessarily limited to, periodic newsletters, news releases, workshops, and open house meetings. The Forest Service is maintaining a mailing list which contains the names and addresses of individuals and groups that have expressed an interest in Forest Plan revision or in national forest management in general. Those on this list will be kept informed of the status of the revision effort and of upcoming public involvement activities. To have your name added to the list, phone or write to: Forest Plan Revision, Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, 68 South Stevens Street, Rhinelander, WI 54501.

Although the Forest Service will be working with individuals, groups, land owning entities, tribal governments, and other government agencies throughout the entire planning process, there are some specific points at which we will be inviting participation or comment:

**Notice of Intent**—At the time of this publication of the notice of intent, people are invited to comment on the scope of the analysis, including: (1) identifying potential issues, (2) identifying those issues to be analyzed in depth, (3) eliminating insignificant issues or those which have been covered by a previous environmental analysis, and (4) identifying possible alternatives for addressing the issues. A series of "open house" meetings will provide a forum for comments during July and August. To be most useful, comments on the notice of intent should be submitted in writing, and be received by August 27, 1996. Comments should be mailed to: Forest Plan Revision, Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, 68 S. Stevens Street, Rhinelander, WI 54501.

**Alternative Development**—During this stage, the Forest Service will be developing a range of alternatives for a revised Forest Plan. People will be invited to participate in a facilitated meeting and open house to help develop the alternatives.

**Analysis of Environmental Effects**—During this stage, the Forest Service will analyze the probable environmental effects of each of the alternatives considered. The results of that analysis will be displayed in an environmental impact statement. People will be invited to participate in a facilitated meeting and open house to help ensure that all of the applicable effects are identified and adequately described.

**Publication of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**—This document will be filed with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which will publish a notice in the Federal Register. The Forest Service will invite written comments on the DEIS for 90 days. The DEIS is expected to be published and filed with the EPA in November of 1997. Recent court rulings emphasize the importance of people providing comments by the close of the 90-day period.

The 90-day comment period for the DEIS starts on the date the EPA publishes a notice in the Federal Register. It is very important that those interested in the revision participate at that time. To be most helpful, comments on the DEIS should be as specific as possible and should address the merits of the alternatives discussed. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement (see the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3).

The Forest Service believes that, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC U.S. 519, 533 (1978)*. Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D. Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 90-day comment period on the draft environmental impact statement, so that

substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

After the end of the 90-day comment period on the DEIS, the Forest Service will review, consider, analyze, and respond to the comments in preparing the final environmental impact statement (FEIS). The FEIS is scheduled to be completed in December of 1998. The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the final environmental impact statement, together with applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making a decision regarding this revision. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the record of decision. That decision will be subject to appeal in accordance with Federal regulations at 36 CFR 217. The responsible official is Robert T. Jacobs, Regional Forester, Eastern Region, 310 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203.

#### C. The Nature and Scope of the Decision To Be Made

Separate Forest Plans for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests were approved in 1986. Since that time, the two National Forests have merged their administrative operations, and one Forest Supervisor oversees both National Forests. Since planning regulations allow one Forest Plan to be prepared for all lands for which a Forest Supervisor has responsibility (36 CFR 219.4(b)(3)), the two existing Plans will be revised into one Forest Plan that covers both National Forests. The scope of this decision is limited to revisiting any those portions of decisions that need revision, update, or correction. The following decisions are made in a Forest Plan:

(1) Multiple-use goals and objectives for the two National Forests (Chequamegon and Nicolet) in Wisconsin. Goals are statements that describe a desired condition to be achieved sometime in the future. Objectives are concise, time-specific statements of measurable planned results that respond to the goals.

(2) Forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines). These are limitations on management activities, or advisable courses of action that apply across the entire forest.

(3) Management area direction applying to future activities in each management area. This is the desired future condition specified for certain

portions of the forest, and the accompanying standards and guidelines to help achieve that condition.

(4) Lands suited or not suited for activities. For example, the Forest Plan must identify those lands suited and not suited for timber production.

(5) Monitoring and evaluation requirements. Forest Plans are required to identify certain key items that will be monitored and evaluated to gauge how well the plan is being implemented.

(6) Recommendations to Congress. For example, Forest Plans may contain recommendations that additional Wilderness (if any) be recommended for designation by Congress.

These decisions will be re-visited only in how they apply to the revision issues that are identified. In addition, some minor changes in goals, objectives, management area descriptions, standards and guidelines, definitions, and monitoring requirements will be necessary to achieve consistency between the Chequamegon and Nicolet. Through the Plan revision process, we will also add some direction that is currently lacking in either Plan. For example, we will provide direction for the gathering of miscellaneous forest products and for management of rare plant species. We will expand the direction for use of prescribed fire and change direction for management of riparian areas to incorporate guidelines in Wisconsin Forestry Best Management Practices. These changes would normally be insignificant amendments to the Forest Plans.

Many items are beyond the scope of what can or should be changed in a Revised Forest Plan. See Section F, titled "What will not be addressed or changed in the Revised Plan" for a list of those items.

#### D. Description of Preliminary Issues Identified and Changes That May Result From Addressing the Issues

The portions of the Forest Plans to be revised focus on four major revision topics that were identified through monitoring, evaluation, and public comments. Those topics are access and recreational opportunities, biological diversity, special land allocation, and timber production.

When making decisions concerning the revised Forest Plan, we will examine the economic and social effects at a local level and at broader levels. We will also examine biological effects at similar levels. Community sustainability reflects long-term relationships between people and the natural environment in which the needs of people are met without compromising ecological capacities. In northern Wisconsin

communities, these associations typically center around the forest products and tourism industries, but also include a range of service enterprises, social organizations, and governmental institutions.

The four major revision topics were derived from a list of potential revision topics made available for public comment in July and August of 1995. A series of 13 open house meetings were held, and over 100 individuals responded with written comments. While opinions were divided about how an issue should be addressed in a revised Plan (ie. have more or have less), most people who commented generally agreed these key topics needed to be considered. The access and recreation topics were combined because they are very closely related. The topic of sustainability of local communities is a vital consideration in all of the topics and will be incorporated into the effects analysis.

The section that follows describes the major revision topics to be addressed. The decisions made on key topics will result in changes to Forestwide goals and objectives, Forestwide standards and guidelines, and management area allocations, prescriptions, and guidelines.

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

Access for people to use the Forests has become an increasingly controversial topic in recent years as a result of increasing visitors, changes in land use, costs of road management and impacts on fish and wildlife habitat. The number of people visiting the Forests is one on the rise, as projected. However, the large increase in motorized use in and through the Forests, primarily that of all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) was not anticipated. More people visiting the Forests has resulted in greater conflict between motorized and non-motorized users. In addition, concerns have been raised about the variety and distribution of recreation opportunities offered by the Plans. Changes in Plan direction are needed in order to improve the quality of recreation experiences while providing access for all users.

Some preliminary issues for which decisions will be made:

*All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs)*— Presently, the two National Forests have different approaches for the use of ATVs. All areas on the Nicolet are closed to ATVs with the exception of use by Forest Service personnel and use by permit to persons with disabilities. On the Chequamegon, all areas are open unless posted closed. The revised Plan

will include direction for ATV use that can be uniformly enforced on both Forests, emphasizes quality experiences for both motorized and non-motorized uses, and reduces conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users.

The revised Plan will determine which areas of both Forests are potentially available for ATV use. Some areas may be allocated as open for ATVs, some areas as closed to ATVs, and some areas in which ATV use will be limited to designated trails. Compared to the current Plan, it is likely that more land may be available for ATV use on the Nicolet, while less land may be available for this use on the Chequamegon.

*Motorized and Non-motorized Use*—There is an extensive system of roads and trails open to motorized vehicles (eg. cars, trucks, ATVs, snowmobiles, 4-wheel drive vehicles) which allows access to nearly every part of both Forests. The use of motorized vehicles is often in conflict with uses by people who are seeking more solitude. Motorized use can also reduce the quality of habitat for some wildlife, because there is a greater potential for human encounters. The revised Plan will specify in which parts of the Forests motorized or non-motorized uses will be emphasized. This would enhance the overall recreation quality; provide adequate access for recreation, transporting wood products, and gathering special/miscellaneous forest products; protect fish and wildlife habitat; and conserve biological diversity. The Plan will also set standards for road density and road management.

*Mix of Recreation Opportunities*—The Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests are managed to provide recreation opportunities within a wide range of settings. These settings are categorized using criteria such as the level of motorized access to lakes and streams, the scenic conditions, the level of vegetative management, and the remoteness of the area. Concerns have been raised that the present Forest Plan direction favors roaded and motorized recreation settings at the expense of semi-primitive and non-motorized opportunities. Implementing standards and guidelines in the current Plans has not produced visible differences among recreation settings because there is little difference in harvest size limits, silvicultural practices, road density, and recreational developments between semi-primitive and roaded-natural areas.

The revised Forest Plan will change standards and guidelines for size of timber harvests and silvicultural

prescriptions so that there is a more distinct difference in recreation opportunities between semi-primitive and roaded-natural areas. The present land allocations will be reconsidered, with an emphasis on allocating some additional semi-primitive, non-motorized acres and reducing incompatible uses where possible. The locations of some present semi-primitive, non-motorized areas on the Nicolet may change to improve their compatibility with surrounding Forest and road settings.

*Economic, Social and Biological Considerations*—Year-round outdoor recreation continues as an important part of northern Wisconsin's economy. As one of many recreation providers in northern Wisconsin, the Chequamegon and Nicolet offer a variety of public forest settings for local and out-of-town customers. Changes in these opportunities or in the type or level of access could result in either growth or loss of visitors, disruption or local user activities and impacts on local communities. For example, a change in management that alters motorized access could restrict where and how some people use the woods. At the same time, other users may find additional opportunities. These effects and other biological effects will be addressed during Plan revision in perspective with the Forests' role for providing access and outdoor recreation.

#### *Topic: Biological Diversity*

The term biological diversity is used to describe the variety and variability of life and the ecological complexes in which they occur. The issue includes many aspects and is very complex. A conceptual model identifies three interrelated components of diversity—composition, structure and function—operating at multiple scales and changing through time. For National Forest management, it is important that biological diversity be considered on a regional (Great Lake States) or sub-regional (Northwoods) scale that includes several National Forests and the public lands around and between forests that are managed by other agencies. This kind of analysis is important because National Forest lands may be able to compensate for declining trends in biological diversity on other lands, or may be able to provide complementary management opportunities along Forest boundaries.

The biological diversity issue has assumed an increasingly important place in natural resource management issues. There is a greater awareness of the complexity of the subject and of the extent to which some elements of

biological diversity are declining due to habitat loss or alteration. Some see the National Forest as playing a role in slowing the rate at which species are becoming extinct, slowing the rate at which biological communities are becoming simplified and declining in abundance or size, and in conserving biological diversity. Other people are concerned that efforts to protect biological diversity may result in lower levels of timber production, limits on motorized access to some areas, or lower populations of some game animals. This subject touches the core values of people in matters such as relative importance of commodity and non-commodity forest products, and forest development versus conservation.

When applied to Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forest management, the biological diversity issue results from a concern that broad-scale landscape patterns have changed substantially from a baseline condition that presumably sustained species and communities now in decline due to habitat loss or alteration.

In a forest landscape, the term "landscape patterns" refers to the spatial arrangement of forest patches composed of different species or successional stages. The terms may also be applied to patches of different land uses, such as residential, commercial or agricultural. The change in landscape patterns that has arisen from human influences has had a negative effect on some plant and animal species. Some effects are direct, such as when primary habitat is altered. Other changes are indirect, as when a change in landscape patterns affects the ability of a species to disperse or propagate, or when a species achieves a different competitive ability relative to other species with which it formerly coexisted. Some of these effects are apparent immediate, while others take many years before they can be detected.

Current Forest Plans (1986) did not take a broad-scale approach to the analysis of biological diversity, nor did they consider landscape patterns. Rather, biological diversity was addressed primarily at small scales as tree diversity (species, within-stand vertical structure and age of vegetation) and as individual species (Endangered, Threatened, Sensitive and Indicator). Concern for biological diversity has been at the heart of challenges to the current Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans, both from administrative appeals and later through a lawsuit. The Forest Plan needs to be revised to incorporate these new approaches for addressing concerns about biological diversity.

Some preliminary issues for which decisions will be made:

*Spatial Scale of Reference-Lake States Area*—New scientific information has shown that maximizing biological diversity at a small scale may reduce biological diversity at a broader scale. An analysis of regional biological diversity may highlight unique conditions or capabilities of the National Forests. The revised Plan will address the unique role of the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forests in conserving biological diversity regionally. In some cases, this may mean that National Forest management may compensate for trends on other lands by providing habitat that is scarce regionally.

*Old Growth*—Old growth forests are characterized in part by older trees, trees with cavities, and sizeable coarse woody material on the forest floor, and provide ecosystem conditions necessary for some species. Old growth forests provide aesthetic values prized by many people, and in some cases may contribute to the overall quality of the forest condition and productivity. For example, since they typically contain many snags which provide habitat for insect eating birds, old growth forest may play a role in checking the spread of forest pests. The two 1986 Forest Plans defined old growth in different ways, had different standards and guidelines, and did not contain specific direction on location. Today, little true old growth (remnants of original forest) remains on either forest. The revised Forest Plan will provide common definition and specific direction for the amount, type, distribution, location and management of old growth. Some alternatives may provide for old growth forest within a network of natural areas to provide older vegetative communities of forested and non-forested types through time in a setting where human influence is minimized on the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests.

*Fragmented Habitats*—Fragmentation, when applied to land management, results when a large and contiguous ecosystem is converted to a network of small patches isolated from each other by areas of a different ecosystem condition. Activities such as road building, logging and agriculture can contribute to fragmentation. In ecosystems that were formerly openlands or savannah, widespread planting of jack pine by the Civilian Conservation Corp created fragmentation in these ecosystems. At a landscape scale, the cumulative effects of small-scale projects are a reduction in patch size, increased distance between isolated

patches, and an increase in the amount of edge habitat. Increased edge habitat affects species requiring large patches, (including forest species as well as open-land species) and can interrupt species dispersal. Using an ecological classification system, we will decide on the amount, location and management of areas where large forest patches within the landscape will be maintained, and we will also maintain a continuum of other patch sizes. Mimicking the natural disturbances of fire, wind, and water in some areas will also help avoid fragmentation of the landscape.

*Habitat Linkages*—This aspect refers to linking blocks of habitat by corridors that allow or encourage movement between them and may increase the effective size of total habitat for some species. In some cases, linkages allow spread of exotic species and undesirable predators, insects or diseases, so both positive and negative effects and characteristic patterns of linkages among historic ecosystems must be considered. The revised Plan will specify what habitats should be linked to provide for movement of plants and animals and to increase the effective size of habitats that are now separated in space. It will also state how much area is needed to link habitats with suitable types of management in the various corridors.

*Ecosystem restoration*—This aspect describes management direction that would restore and maintain the structure, function, and composition of native terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. This will involve managing to maintain species and communities at risk, to promote old growth or old forest, to reduce fragmentation, and to restore ecosystems that are under-represented within the regional landscape. Ecosystem restoration may use management activities that mimic natural disturbance regimes such as fire in barrens ecosystems. The revised Plan will specify the amount, location, and management for ecosystems that require restoration work.

*Management Indicator Species*—Management indicator species (MIS) are selected to serve as indicators of change to the conditions of the habitats they occupy and to accurately predict the effects of forest management practices. Most of the MIS species selected in the 1986 Plans were highly mobile animals which made discerning changes in populations of species more difficult. Also, many of the MIS species were habitats generalists and did not serve as the best indicators of change to habitats. The revised Plan will utilize MIS that better serve as ecological indicators by

having narrower niches, showing sensitivity to change and allowing more accurate monitoring. New indicators of ecological sustainability may include some keystone species, floral or faunal communities, foraging guilds of animals, landscape patterns, and ecological processes like regeneration or nutrient cycling.

*Scientific Roundtable on Biological Diversity*—In response to appeals of Forest Plans for the chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, the Chief of the Forest Service directed these Forests to establish a "committee of scientific experts" to address biological diversity issues. Many of the recommendations of this group of scientists will be evaluated for possible inclusion into the revised Plans as forestwide standards and guidelines or management area prescriptions.

*Economic, Social and Biological Considerations*—Northern Wisconsin forests, including the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, have provided people and communities a way of life for thousands of years. Changing national forest management to address such complex conditions as biological diversity raises concern by those who feel directly affected. Potential outcomes of Plan revision could include limits on motorized access and alternate prescriptions for harvesting timber in unique areas, possibly impacting area economies. Managing the Forests as ecosystems while producing forest products and conserving diversity may also improve the quality of the overall forest condition. Biological, social and economic effects, trade-offs and benefits will be addressed during Plan revision.

#### *Topic: Special Land Allocation*

Public interest in the allocations of lands to specific purposes makes special land allocation a revision topic. Many people value these areas and feel that more of Wisconsin's National Forests should be assigned to special allocations in order to address such issues as conserving biological diversity, providing primitive recreational opportunities, providing scientific research or baseline monitoring, protecting unique features and resources, and providing non-commodity values and uses. Many other people oppose assigning more areas to special allocations and want to reduce the current quantity of such allocations. They are concerned such areas could limit or reduce recreation use, access, or traditional economic returns to local communities from timber harvesting and tourism.

Some preliminary issues for which decisions will be made:

*Wilderness*—The 1984 Wisconsin Wilderness Act requires the Forest Service to revisit the Wilderness option when the Forest Plans are revised. The Forest Service must decide if any additional areas should be recommended for designation as Wilderness by Congress.

*Research Natural Areas*—Research Natural Areas (RNA's) are part of a national network of ecological areas designated in perpetuity for research and education and/or to maintain biological diversity. Research Natural Areas will be designated on National Forest land based on criteria such as whether a representative or unique vegetative condition or potential condition can contribute to the RNA needs for Region 9, the presence of rare elements, and the value for scientific research. The revised Plan may designate previously identified Candidate RNA's or change them to another land use designation. Other areas will be evaluated to determine their suitability as RNA's or Candidate RNA's.

*Special Management Areas*—These areas are unique because of their recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, botanic, or heritage (cultural) characteristics. The revised Plan will determine if the existing Candidate Special Management Areas should be designated and will determine the suitability of additional areas as Special Management Areas.

*Economic, Social and Biological Considerations*—Allocating lands for specific purposes will remove land from other uses, such as commodity production, but will also provide new uses such as backcountry experiences, gathering special/miscellaneous forest products, and area for scientific research and monitoring. This decision requires a difficult balance between human values, social needs, and the biological needs of an area or species. Some people are concerned that such allocations could reduce traditional recreation uses, access, and economic returns to local communities. Potential benefits and trade-offs for local tourism and timber economies will be addressed through the role the Chequamegon and Nicolet serve in providing special land areas in northern Wisconsin.

#### *Topic: Timber Production*

The production of timber products and how that relates to the management of other resources is an important revision topic. Commodity products from the National Forests provide raw materials important to local industries—industries that affect the economic and social fabric of the local communities.

How the Forests are managed to produce those commodities greatly affects other aspects of National Forest management such as biological diversity, available recreation experiences, and game and non-game animal habitats. In some cases, timber production and vegetation management are conducted to accomplish objectives for wildlife, recreation or visual quality. While most of the issues considered in the revision effort are interrelated, the issues of timber production and vegetation management directly affects almost all other issues.

Some preliminary issues for which decisions will be made:

*Subregional Scale-Biological Diversity and Efficiencies*—Interpreting an analysis of conditions in the Lake States area suggests that the National Forests may have a role in compensating for conditions and trends elsewhere in the area. Because of this, it may be determined that there is a specific and unique opportunity for the National Forests to provide habitat that is scarce or declining elsewhere. These opportunities may lead to a change in focus from some of the cover types prescribed in the current Forest Plans (1986) toward an emphasis on scarcer types. Further, economic analyses may indicate that there are efficiencies in featuring certain types in specific locations.

*Allocation of Forest Cover Types*—The existing Forest Plans allocate portions of the two Forests to various management area prescriptions. These prescriptions, among other things, describe the type of harvesting that will predominate in each management area. The spatial locations of these prescriptions will be reconsidered during the revision, as will some of the aspects of the prescriptions themselves. One important objective of the revision will be to better match the management prescriptions with the capabilities of the land and with the demands for products while considering biological diversity.

*Vegetation Management Standards and Guidelines*—Within each management area and over the Forests as a whole, the Forest Plans provide direction for vegetation management practices through standards and guidelines. Some of these may be modified and others may be added or deleted during the revision. For example, experience during implementation of the Plans has shown that guidelines for treating limbs and tree tops left after logging may need to be changed to accomplish visual quality goals more efficiently. Under some alternatives considered, additional standards and guidelines may need to

be developed for vegetation management adjacent to riparian areas and areas unique to conserving biological diversity. These guidelines could shield the unique areas from negative effects of wildlife predation or increased levels of light and wind.

*Timber Harvest Levels*—Under law, forest plans include an estimate of the allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for each national forest. This volume is a ceiling, or maximum level of timber sale outputs that can be achieved during a decade of implementing a forest plan. The ASQ for the Nicolet National Forest under the current Plan was estimated to be about 970 million board feet (MMBF) for the first decade. In practice, this has not been achieved for a variety of reasons: the extent and severity of tree mortality and growth reduction due to drought, insects and disease were not adequately understood or incorporated into the growth and yield models; the actual amount of land suitable for timber production is less than originally thought; and the effects of some land allocations and practices were not fully anticipated. Under the revised Plan, the ASQ will be determined more accurately, taking into account the factors listed and using a variety of techniques.

*Economic, Social and Biological Considerations*—Following the decline of the early logging era, Forest Service management focused on rehabilitating the northern Wisconsin forests. Timber production was high in response to increasing demands. Many local communities came to rely on steady or growing supplies of national forest resources. Recent decades have brought major changes in public expectations and values related to the national forests. Concerns about ecosystem condition, biological diversity, and the economic benefits of tourism now join long-held interests in timber and fish and wildlife. Changes in management direction for the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests may affect the types, quantities, and source locations of timber products from the Forests. Area communities are concerned about losing timber-related jobs and related economic impacts if timber production declines. However, managing the Forests as intact ecosystems over the long term may eventually result in improved timber growth, higher value products, and increased revenue from tourism. Potential effects, such as these, will be addressed through Plan revision.

#### E. What Will Not Be Addressed or Changed in the Revised Plan

Although many decisions relate to managing a National Forest, some



decisions, such as treaties, laws, rights, and regulations, are beyond the scope of what can be decided in a Forest Plan. Other decisions deal with implementing projects or enforcing regulations. These are also beyond what can be decided in a Forest Plan.

Another category includes decisions that can be decided in a Forest Plan, but do not need to be re-visited at this time. The revision of an existing Forest Plan should concentrate only on those parts of the Plan that truly need changing. Decisions made in the initial Forest Plan that work well will be carried over into the revised Plan with few, if any, changes.

The following is a list of items that we will not be deciding in the revised Forest Plan:

#### *Existing Rights*

*American Indian Treaty Rights*—American Indian communities bring long histories of traditional use to the Forests similar to their uses on tribal lands. Tribal members rely upon fish, wildlife and plants for religious, ceremonial, medicinal, subsistence and economic purposes. It is to maintain this lifeway that various treaties between the United States and a number of Indian Tribes located near the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests guarantee the Tribes' right to hunt, fish and gather in those Forests. In addition, historically and presently, the conservation of the natural resources subject to the treaty rights is a necessary and integral part of tribal culture and sovereignty. In revising the Forest Plan, the Forest Service will honor the treaty obligations toward those Tribes that retain hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forest lands. These rights are part of existing law. Their existence and nature are beyond the scope of the Forest Plan and are not a decision to be made in the Revised Forest Plan. As part of its overall efforts to ensure that it honors these rights and its responsibilities toward nearby Indian Tribes, the Forest Service routinely will consult and exchange information with those Tribes on a government-to-government basis throughout the Forest Plan revision process to develop goals, standards, and guidelines needed to ensure the exercise of these treaty rights.

*Rights of Private Property*—The revised Plan only makes decisions that apply to National Forest System lands. The Revised Plan will make no decisions regarding management or use of privately owned lands or reserved and outstanding mineral estates.

*Rights of Other Ownership*—The revised Plan will make no decisions

regarding state, county, industrial, or other federal (such as National Lakeshore, or National Wildlife Refuge) forest lands.

*Rights of Existing Permittees and Easement Holders*—Many people and businesses hold special use permits and easements for various permitted uses within the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. These include permits such as: recreation summer homes, special-use roads, and utility corridors. The revised Forest Plan will not re-visit decisions on existing permits and easements. As they are renewed, it may be necessary to make changes in the terms of permits and easements to achieve consistency with revised standards and guidelines.

#### *Law, National Policy and Decisions Not Within Forest Service Authority*

*Existing Wildernesses*—The Rainbow Lake and Porcupine Lake Wildernesses on the Chequamegon National Forest and the Blackjack Springs, Headwaters, and Whisker Lake Wildernesses on the Nicolet National Forest were established by law. Considering these areas for non-Wilderness management is beyond the scope of the revised Forest Plan. Minor changes in the standards and guidelines for managing these areas may be considered in the revised Plan.

*Baiting for Deer and Bear*—On March 20, 1995, the Forest Service adopted a national policy on all baiting connected with hunting which states that National Forests will adopt state wildlife laws and regulations affecting the taking of resident game animals. Therefore, the practice of baiting on National Forest lands in Wisconsin will be the same as the state regulations on baiting elsewhere in Wisconsin. This policy does allow for area closures when Plan goals would direct protecting sensitive areas.

*Use of Motors on Lakes*—The authority for regulating the size and use of motors on lakes within the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests rests with local governments, unless superseded by Federal law (such as Congressional designation of Wilderness). Therefore, these regulations are outside the scope of decisions that can be made in a Forest Plan.

#### *Topics Where Little or No Change Is Warranted*

*Minerals Management*—Overall, the existing policy on managing the Federal minerals resource on these two National Forests has been working well. Some changes will likely be made to the standards and guidelines to provide consistency between the two Forests

and to provide a higher degree of resource protection within our legal jurisdiction.

*Wild and Scenic River Recommendations*—The 1986 Forest Plans identified parts of six rivers flowing through Wisconsin National Forests to be studied for inclusion in the National Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers system. An eligibility determination has been made on these rivers. Present Forest Plan direction protects the qualities of the rivers until these studies and recommendations for Congressional action are complete. After discussions with the Administration, Congressional representatives, and local river groups, it appears that now is not the time for such legislative action since making such a suitability determination and recommendation to Congress involves a detailed and expensive process.

As a result, no further suitability determination will be made in Plan revision. However, because the Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans differ in the management area designation for these candidate rivers, the revised plan will make the changes necessary to provide consistent direction for the river corridors. Standards and guidelines will also be changed to provide direction for vegetation management consistent with the river corridor objective and ROS setting.

*Off-Highway Vehicle Use on Forest Roads*—The use of street-legal off-highway vehicles (4 wheel drive trucks, motorbikes) will continue to be allowed on all National Forest roads except those that are closed by signing, gating, or other road closure device.

*Snowmobile Use*—The general policy that snowmobiles can be operated on designated trails and on unplowed roads will not be revisited. Some changes will be made to provide consistency between the two Forests.

*Visual Quality Objectives*—Although there have been some problems with the way the 1986 Forest Plans manage for visual and scenic quality on the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests, those problems center on the size limits of harvest treatments in visually sensitive areas. The visual quality objectives (VQO) system appears to be working reasonably well, with visually sensitive areas generally being adequately protected. Therefore, the visual quality objectives system will continue to be used in the revised Forest Plan. However, the clearcut limits in the VQO system will be reviewed and better defined. Travel routes and water bodies will be reviewed to determine if their VQO classification is appropriate. Some



changes to standards and guidelines may also need to be made to assure consistency between the two National Forests.

**Developed Recreation Facilities**—The revised Forest Plan will not include decisions on closing existing developed recreational facilities (campgrounds, picnic sites, boat launching ramps, trailheads, swimming beaches) nor will it propose that new facilities be built. Existing sites will continue to be operated as specified in the current Forest Plans.

Exceptions to this will be made on a case-by-case basis.

**Research Natural Areas**—The revised Forest Plan will not revisit the designation of existing Research Natural Areas.

#### F. Alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

The Forest Service will develop several revision alternatives in the DEIS. These alternatives will consider different ways to address the need to change the current Plan based on the major revision issues discussed above.

The alternatives will include "no action" which is a continuation of current direction contained in the 1986 Chequamegon and Nicolet Forest Plans.

Dated: June 20, 1996.

Robert T. Jacobs,  
*Regional Forester.*

[FR Doc. 96-16285 Filed 6-25-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### Southwest Washington Provincial Advisory Committee Meeting Notice

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of meeting.

**SUMMARY:** The Southwest Washington Provincial Advisory Committee will meet on July 11, 1996, at the Lewis County Senior Center in Packwood, Washington. The purpose of the meeting is to determine Advisory Committee vision and work priorities based on subcommittee recommendations. The meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. and continue until 5 p.m. The meeting will resume at 6:30 p.m. and conclude at 8:30 p.m. Agenda items to be covered include: (1) Subcommittee recommendations on Advisory Committee vision and work priorities, (2) Information sharing on Cispus Adaptive Management Area process, (3) Update on Advisory Committee Charter Renewals, (4) presentation on Forest Plan Allocations and their relationship to timber harvest levels, (5) Forest monitoring committee update, and (6) Public Open Forum.

All Southwest Washington Provincial Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend. This open forum provides opportunity for the public to bring issues, concerns, and discussion topics to the Advisory Committee. The open forum is scheduled as part of agenda item (1) for this meeting. Interested speakers will need to register prior to the open forum period. The committee welcomes the public's written comments on committee business at any time.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Direct questions regarding this meeting to Sue Lampe, Public Affairs, at (360) 750-5091, or write Forest Headquarters Office, Gifford Pinchot National Forest, P.O. Box 8944, Vancouver, WA 98668-8944.

Dated: June 19, 1996.

Robert L. Yoder,

*Advisory Committee Staff Officer.*

[FR Doc. 96-16238 Filed 6-25-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-M

#### National Resources Conservation Service

##### West Carroll Watershed Project, West Carroll Parish, Louisiana

**AGENCY:** Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agriculture.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intention to Delete Structural Measures and Close the Project.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act, Public Law 83-566, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Watershed Manual (390-V-NWSM, 2nd ed. 12/92), the Natural Resources Conservation Service gives notice of the intent to delete proposed channel improvements and close-out the West Carroll Watershed Project in West Carroll Parish, Louisiana, by withdrawing further Federal assistance.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donald W. Gohmert, State Conservationist, 3737 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302; telephone number (318) 473-7751.

West Carroll Watershed, Louisiana

Notice of Intent to Withdraw Federal Assistance

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** A determination has been made by Paul W. Johnson, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service, that because of significant environmental concerns that have not been addressed by the local sponsors, Federal funding will be

withdrawn from this project. The sponsoring local organizations have not concurred in this recommendation. Information regarding this determination may be obtained from Donald W. Gohmert, State Conservationist, at the above address and telephone number.

No administrative action on implementation of this proposed withdrawal of funding will be taken until 60 days after the date of this publication in the Federal Register.

Dated: June 11, 1996.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 10.904, Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-95 regarding state and local clearinghouse review of Federal and federally assisted programs and projects is applicable.)

Donald W. Gohmert,  
*State Conservationist.*

[FR Doc. 96-16206 Filed 6-25-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-16-M

#### COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

##### Agenda and Notice of Public Meeting of the Alabama Advisory Committee

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, that a meeting of the Alabama Advisory Committee to the Commission will convene at 5:30 p.m. and adjourn at 10:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 2, 1996, at the Paramount High School, Highway 20, Boligee, Alabama. The purpose of the meeting is to allow Committee members to receive a briefing on race relations issues in the aftermath of church burnings.

Persons desiring additional information, or planning a presentation to the Committee, should contact Melvin L. Jenkins, Director of the Central Regional Office, 913-551-1400 (TDD 913-551-1414). Hearing-impaired persons who will attend the meeting and require the services of a sign language interpreter should contact the Regional Office at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The meeting will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the rules and regulations of the Commission.

Dated at Washington, DC, June 20, 1996.

Carol-Lee Hurley,  
*Chief, Regional Programs Coordination Unit.*

[FR Doc. 96-16305 Filed 6-25-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6335-01-P