



NEPA

Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions

October – December, 2011

Purpose of the SOPA

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest updates a Schedule of Proposed Actions (SOPA) quarterly for all actions that we are currently considering that are governed by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of this schedule is to provide early and informal notice of proposed projects so that you can become aware of Forest Service activities, indicate your interest in specific projects, and become involved early in the environmental analysis and documentation process.

Format

Proposed actions (or "projects") are grouped by the Ranger District where the action would occur. In some cases, a project that would occur on multiple districts is listed under a "lead" district. Forest-wide projects are grouped separately. The SOPA will provide you information indicating the current planning stage, or status of each proposal. With this information, you'll have an idea of the timing of upcoming projects and how to get involved by commenting on them.

Using the SOPA

The information given for each project is brief, but specific. A table provides the project name, purpose, status, location, description, time frames, and a contact person. Information on the SOPA is brief so that you can more easily sort through and identify projects of interest to you. More detailed information is available on request. A project-specific contact person and contact information is provided so that you won't have to guess as to where you can receive more information. For more complex proposals, the SOPA provides a web link to documents already out for public review.

Read through the list of proposed projects. If you wish to comment on a proposal or be placed on its mailing list, then call, write, or email the contact person. You may comment right then or just indicate you are interested and wish to remain informed. The forest has many projects in numerous resource areas on-going at any time, so we do ask you be project-specific about your interest. Each Project maintains its own contact list (the Forest does not maintain general project interest lists). You will only be added to a project contact list if you notify us of your specific interest.

Limitations of the SOPA

The intent of early public involvement is to make sure we understand all the public concerns about a proposal before we frame and complete the environmental analysis. The SOPA adds to other public involvement activities we do; it doesn't replace them. Complex proposals will typically involve additional, informal and formal comment periods.

The SOPA is only updated quarterly and is therefore limited to proposals known at the time of update. Certain activities (such as public requests for special uses and safety-related or emergency actions) are often completed on a short time frame. Such decisions are typically excluded from full NEPA documentation by regulation because they are "minor and routine" ("categorical exclusions"), and may not show on the SOPA until after the decision has been made. Short turn-around decisions will employ other methods of public scoping, as appropriate.

Once listed, a proposal will stay on subsequent issues of the SOPA until a decision is made or it is cancelled. At such time it will show once more on the SOPA as "completed" or "cancelled", and then will not appear on future SOPAs.

Privacy of your comments

Comments received in response to solicitation as part of the NEPA process, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record of a proposed action. The full text of the comments will be available for public inspection unless anonymity, or withholding under the Freedom of Information Act, is requested.

Persons who submit comments anonymously or request anonymity will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Regulations at 7 CFR 1.27(d) provide that any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such withholding.