

Science of the Seasons: Podcast 8 Northern Forest Future Project and Outlook for [Outdoor Recreation in the Northern United States](#)

Kelly van Frankenhuyzen talks with scientists about recreation in the Eastern Region, the Northern Forest Futures Project, and the [Outlook for Outdoor Recreation in the Northern United States](#)

Paul Strong, Forest Supervisor, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in Rhinelander, Wisconsin

Stephen Shifley, Research Forester with Northern Research Station in Columbia, Missouri

Michael Bowker, Research Social Scientist with the Southern Research Station in Athens, Georgia

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Narrator: I'm Kelly van Frankenhuyzen with the U.S. Forest Service, Northern Research Station. Summer is the season that perhaps, more than any other, lures us away from our desks and our responsibilities to go out and enjoy nature. In the corner of the nation extending from Maine to Minnesota and from Missouri to Maryland, National Forests offer a variety of recreational activities on a wide range of landscapes. I spoke to a forest supervisor about recreation as well as Forest Service scientists about the future of recreation on the northern forests.

Paul Strong: My name is Paul Strong. I am the Forest Supervisor on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest in northern Wisconsin. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is comprised of 1.5 million acres of public lands in northern Wisconsin. It has thousands of miles of gravel surfaced roads that are suitable for passenger vehicles, which means you can get to most of these acres, if you have a desire to get outside and play, on this National Forest.

We have hundreds of tremendously interesting places on the forest, but there are a few that are somewhat unique and give our visitors a chance to see and experience something that they might not find in other places nearby. Well, I have the pleasure and privilege of helping administer the National Forest for the public, I also take advantage of it myself. I particularly like to hike, and we have two

National trails that always appeal to me. One is the North Country National Scenic Trail, which is one of the nation's long distance hiking trails, eventually designed to go all the way from upstate New York to North Dakota. We have one other National Scenic Trail called the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, and it follows the edge of the furthest advance of the last glacier in Wisconsin. Again, I like getting out on that trail, not just because it's a beautiful place but I get a sense of history there. It gives me a chance to reflect on the passage of time and what nature does to the landscape.

Narrator: Scientists explored many aspects of forest change through the Northern Forest Futures Project.

Stephen Shifley: I'm Steve Shifley, and I work for the U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station as a research forester and I'm located in Columbia, Missouri. Well, the Northern Forest Futures is an initiative of Northern Research Station that began in about 2008 and it followed on a successful endeavor by the Southern Research Station called Southern Forest Futures, and in both cases it was an opportunity to really look ahead 50 years and try to understand the trends and forces that are driving forest change and social change, and look for- to anticipate problems and look for opportunities. So using a number of projection tools, some mathematical modeling, getting together a group of about 30 to 35 scientists participated in this at different points, as well as administrators and advisors, and the states participated as well in terms of identifying issues and providing feedback specific to the 20 individual states that are located in the region. We looked ahead from 2010 to 2060- a 50 year window and tried to project how the forest landscape is going to change and of course how forest is going to change is affected by population change, economic activity and land use and climate change and so to some degree all of those features were factored in and then we concentrated primarily on the forest resource within that context of change.

Narrator: The research behind the [Outlook for Outdoor Recreation in the Northern United States](#) recently uncovered new information related to recreation on National Forests.

Michael Bowker: My name is Mike Bowker. I'm a research scientist with the Forest Service's Southern Research Station. I'm located in Athens, Georgia. One of the things that we've looked at are outdoor recreation trends on National Forests. Let me talk about, for a minute, I'll first talk about some specific trends with respect to visitors and visits. There is an increase in women as a proportion of the visitors. For example, from 05 to 09 the percentage of females visiting National Forests in that region for recreation was about 28%. And during the period of 2010-2014 that's risen to 35%, suggesting that more and more females are coming to the forest. The National Forests actually do a good job at serving people with a disabilities, and from 2005 to 2009 about 8% of the groups visiting National Forests responded that they had at least one person in the group with a disability. And, in 2010 to 2014 that proportion stayed the same, but one thing that surfaced from that information is that there was an increase from 79% saying the site was accessible in the 2005 to 2009 period to almost 89% saying the site was accessible to disabled people from 2010-2014, so that suggests quite an improvement there.

Narrator: The Forest Service has a long history of providing recreational opportunities for the public. The Forest Service has recognized the great values of forests to get people, especially in urban areas, into the wild lands. Steve Shifley spoke about the connection between people and recreation.

Stephen Shifley: I think recreation plays a huge role in strengthening the relationship that people have with forests and other natural environments. And, I think there is a concern about maintaining that relationship into the future, as our population grows and becomes more and more urbanized and people become less connected with nature due to some of those demographic trends. And ultimately it's people that give us the social license to manage forests, or fund management of forests, through the Forest Service or state agencies. And, ultimately, they determine what we can do, what we can't do, and

what we should do with forest management, and they dictate that through the voting process as tax payers. And it's pretty clear that in urban forests and urban trees, that the life is measurably enriched for people when they live in association with trees and urban forests.

Narrator: Paul Strong addressed the importance of recreation on National Forests in the future with growing populations, especially in urban areas.

Paul Strong: As our populations increase in the United States, and more and more people are living in urban areas, I think National Forests are going to be more important than ever, particularly around recreation and the opportunity for people to escape the urban areas and have experiences in the wild lands but in addition, come to appreciate the variety of values that these rural areas bring to all people of the country.

Narrator: For more information on the Outlook for Outdoor Recreation and the Northern Forest Futures Project, visit www.nrs.fs.fed.us/futures/. For additional information about recreation on the Eastern Region of the National Forest System visit <https://www.fs.usda.gov/r9>. This podcast is produced by the US Forest Service. The Forest Service is an agency of the US Department of Agriculture. The US Department of Agriculture is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

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