

THE CHIEF'S DESK...

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS

July 18, 2008



Stay safety wise when temperatures rise!

From the Weekly Report

Chequamegon-Nicolet Completes Travel Management Project Environmental Assessment

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (WI) has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) documenting analysis of three alternatives involving site-specific designations regarding motorized vehicle use within the boundaries of the Forest. The EA will be available for public review and comment during a 30-day comment period.

Mark Twain National Forest to Host Biomass Harvesting Equipment Field Day

Researchers from Auburn University have been conducting field trials of harvesting equipment designed for removal of small-diameter trees. On July 19, they will demonstrate use of the equipment and present preliminary results of their study to interested loggers and the public. The Mark Twain National Forest (Mo) provided field locations for the equipment trials where removal of small-diameter trees matched ecological restoration needs identified in their Forest Plan. The Missouri Forest Products Association provided financial support for the study in Missouri and sponsoring the field day.

Anglers of the Au Sable, et al. v. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management

On July 10, 2008, Judge Lawson (United States District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, Southern Division) issued his decision on Savoy Energy's project to drill an exploratory gas well to its subsurface mineral leases. On June 8, 2005, the plaintiffs Anglers of the Au Sable, Tim Mason, and the Mackinac Chapter of the Sierra Club filed a complaint against the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The complaint alleged the Forest Supervisor's decision approving the Surface Use Plan for the South Branch Well was in violation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and the Mineral Leasing Act. The proposed location (Crawford County, Michigan) includes a portion of the South Branch of the Au Sable River, a popular site for fly fisherman. The plaintiffs' claims as they pertain to NEPA were upheld. More specifically, 1) The Forest Service acted arbitrarily and capriciously in finding that Savoy Energy's project would have no significant environmental impact. The Forest failed to adequately address the Council of Environmental Quality's intensity factors; 2) The Forest Service did not consider an appropriate range of alternatives (i.e., did not take a "hard look" at the "No Action" alternative; did not consider alternative locations for the well's bottom hole). In contrast, plaintiffs' claims related to the National Forest Management Act (i.e., the drilling project contradicts the Forest Plan) and the Mineral Leasing Act were denied. The Forest Service and BLM are enjoined from taking action using the current Decision Notice/FONSI and Environmental Assessment.

Regional Rainbow Gathering on Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests

On July 25-August 3, the Regional New England Rainbow Family gathering is being planned on the Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forest, Rochester Ranger District. The Gathering will be held at the Rob Ford Meadows located in the Town of Granville in Vermont. As many as 500 family members attended the 20th anniversary gathering. The Forest has designated an Incident Commander, and is working with the Rainbow Family Representative on an Operating Plan and a Large Group Special Use Permit.

Southern Region Launches Climate Change Learning Seminars

The Southern Region's Public Affairs Task Force on Climate Change recently launched a series of learning seminars, a website, and a program for employees to earn rewards recognizing their efforts to reduce their own carbon footprint at work and home. The Task Force's primary focus is to raise awareness and help move employees towards adopting climate change as an integral part of doing business in the Forest Service. On July 8, the first of six learning seminars using video teleconference was broadcast throughout the Southern Region, featuring guest speaker Anna Jones-Crabtree, Sustainable Operations Coordinator, Rocky Mountain and Northern Region. Crabtree made two presentations about how to save energy and sustainable operations. The seminar debut was a resounding success. About 300 employees throughout the Region watched the seminar live. Fifty people who completed conservation actions received awards by the end of the same week. Their actions generated increased interest in climate change, the actions also contribute to the agency's environmental footprint report, the region's sustainable operations program. The next seminar is scheduled for July 21. <http://fsweb.r8.fs.fed.us/climate/>

Forest Learns of Possible National Distinction for Hanging Lake

During the week of July 7, the White River National Forest (CO) learned that the Hanging Lake area on the Forest has been chosen for possible designation as a National Natural Landmark, a National Park Service-administered program. Hanging Lake is located in the Glenwood Canyon about seven miles east of Glenwood Springs. The lake's shoreline was created by travertine limestone deposits on rocks and logs, which create travertine layers that form lake water. The National Natural Landmark program recognizes sites that have outstanding examples of biological and geological features. Fewer than 600 sites have earned this distinction and only 11 have been named in Colorado.

Grassland to Shorten Grazing Allotment Season

On July 11, the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland (Colo.) announced plans to shorten the season of some grazing allotments because of ongoing drought conditions. The past seven years of below average rain and snow have caused a lack of desirable forage for cattle. Cattle are being removed from seven allotments, and that number is expected to grow if the Grassland does not receive significantly more moisture. To date, rainfall on some areas of the Grassland is 35 percent below average. Consequently, grazing season has been shortened over the last several years due to drought conditions. Range staff will continue to monitor range condition and the available forage in cooperation with the permittees.

Grassland to Release Prescribed Fire Environmental Assessment

On July 15, the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Grasslands and the Pawnee National Grasslands (Colo.) released the Pawnee National Grassland Prescribed Fire Environmental Assessment. The Grassland is proposing to continue the use of prescribed fire on all 193,000 acres, located approximately 35 miles northeast of Greeley, Colo., in Weld County. The Grassland has been conducting prescribed burning for about 14 years. An open house will be held on July 25.

Media Tour Planned on San Juan National Forest

On July 17 and 18, Trout Unlimited's Public Lands Initiative hosted a media tour on the San Juan National Forest (Colo.) to showcase the proposed West Hermosa Creek Wilderness Area. The event featured a fly-over of the area and two separate day trips into the Roadless Area. One alternative of the draft San Juan National Forest Resource Management Plan Revision proposes Wilderness designation for the Roadless Area.

Two Pittsburgh Brothers Drowned in the Allegheny Reservoir

On July 15, two Pittsburgh brothers, a 21-year old and 19-year old, drowned in the Allegheny Reservoir on the Allegheny National Forest (Pa). One of the brothers jumped from the Casey Bridge spanning the Kinzua Arm of the Allegheny Reservoir into the water, approximately 75 feet, and sustained bodily injuries upon impact. The other brother then left the shoreline and swam out to his brother. Both men disappeared under the water; the bodies were recovered in the early evening.

And in the Media

The Sunday, July 13, 2008 edition of the *Idaho Statesman* newspaper included a guest op-ed from Idaho State Rep. George Eskridge where he laid out his arguments against Forest Service recreation fees. Eskridge's opinions are very similar to those given at the U.S. House hearing on June 18 that fees are a disincentive to outdoor recreation and they hurt Idaho's tourism economy.

http://resourcescommittee.house.gov/images/Documents/20080618/NPjointwithWP/testimony_eskridge.pdf



EARTH HEALTHY HABITS

A Good Cover Up - Lose a little less heat from your stovetop (either gas or electric) by putting a lid on your pot. Your food or water will heat up faster, and you will save energy in the process.

PERSONNEL NEWS

No appointments news this week.

In the Future

CHIEF KIMBELL, ASSOCIATE CHIEF COLLINS, and DEPUTY CHIEF HOLTROP (NFS), KASHDAN (BUS OPS), BARTUSKA (R&D), and HUBBARD (S&PF) will travel to the Denver to participate in the National Leadership Council meeting with Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, Associate Deputy Chiefs, Chief of Staff and Chief Financial Officer. While in Denver, **CHIEF KIMBELL** will meet with the Retirees.

NOTE: People, Places and Things, is compiled from input by field units and Washington Office staffs as well as from news articles, newsletters and other sources.