



File Code: 1950

Date: December 14, 2012

Dear Interested Public:

The Gunflint and Tofte Ranger Districts have developed a proposal to restore the forest along the North Shore of Lake Superior. You are invited to comment on the proposal and become involved in the project. Comments are needed by Monday, January 21, 2013.

Anyone who has driven Highway 61 knows the birch trees along the North Shore are dying. It is not just the birch trees along the highway that are dying; almost 80 percent of the birch forest on National Forest System land along the ridgeline by the shore is old and declining. Typically we would expect to see conifer trees (balsam fir, spruce, cedar and white pine) filling in the understory through succession. While succession is happening in some areas, in many areas regeneration is not occurring. The lack of regeneration is a result of a number of factors such as fewer older pine and cedar trees to provide seed, an increase in bluejoint grass which chokes off young conifer seedlings, and heavy deer browse of conifer seedlings.

The North Shore Restoration Project is designed to address this situation. The main objective of the project is to restore conifer such as white spruce, white cedar and white pine throughout the project area and tamarack and yellow birch in local settings. The project would also regenerate white birch and aspen stands but in lesser amounts and with more species and structural diversity than currently exists.

Activities proposed to accomplish the objectives include a full suite of harvesting and reforestation activities, as well as installing deer exclosures. The project area for these proposed activities is about 3-4 miles wide and along the shore of Lake Superior. The project area runs between Grand Portage Reservation and Schroeder, as displayed on the enclosed map.

Example of a birch stand in decline



*Photo by Mike Lynch*

There is very little National Forest System land along Highway 61 so most of the proposed activities will not be seen from the highway. However, the Forest Service is working with the North Shore Forest Collaborative (comprised of tribal, federal, state and county agencies, non-profit agencies and private landowners) to encourage other landowners to restore their lands as well. The mission of the Collaborative is to revitalize and maintain a healthy and functioning ecosystem along the north shore of Lake Superior. More information on the collaborative is available at the web site:

[www.northshoreforestcollaborative.org/home](http://www.northshoreforestcollaborative.org/home) .

If you are interested in the North Shore Restoration Project, there are a number of ways for you to be involved. They are:



## Review Scoping Report

We have put together a detailed report to provide you with more information on the North Shore Project including: the purpose and need for the project, summaries of the proposed activities, a map of proposed activity location, and other project information. The North Shore Scoping Report and other relevant information can be found on the Superior National Forest website at [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects) or you may request a copy from the Gunflint Ranger District.

## Attend Open House

Members of the Gunflint and Tofte staff will host an open house on Friday, January 11, 2013 for anyone interested in discussing with us the project's proposed action. The open house will be at the Gunflint Ranger District at 2020 W. Highway 61, Grand Marais, MN from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

## Provide Comments

I am inviting you to provide site-specific comments on the North Shore Project Proposed Action until January 21, 2013. You may submit your comments by mail, fax, email, or orally. Send written comments to the address on letterhead, FAX to 218-387-3246, or email to: [comments-eastern-superior-gunflint@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-superior-gunflint@fs.fed.us). Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), Word (doc), or any software supported by Microsoft applications. Oral comments will be accepted at the Gunflint Ranger District during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday either via telephone at (218) 387-1750, or in person. Please be sure to include your name, address, and the North Shore Project title, regardless of how you submit comments. All comments received (including names and addresses) will become part of the project file and are public information.

## Sign up for mailing list

If you would like to remain on the mailing list for this project we need to hear from you. If you provide comments through one of the methods described above, your name will remain on the project mailing list. If you don't have comments right now but would like to remain on the mailing list, we ask you to sign up through the Superior National Forest website at [www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/superior/projects). Click on the North Shore Project and on the right hand side chose "subscribe to email". You can also let us know you would like to remain on the mailing list by contacting us.

We are excited about the North Shore Restoration Project and we think there are many long term benefits of restoring the forests. We have been working with tribal and state personnel and North Shore Forest Collaborative participants as we developed the proposal. I am interested in continuing that discussion by hearing your thoughts on the project. For further information on the North Shore Restoration Project, please contact Becky Bartol, Project Leader at (218) 387-3207.

Sincerely,

/s/ John Wytanis

JOHN WYTANIS  
District Ranger

/s/ Peg Robertsen for

NANCY S. LARSON  
District Ranger