

May 21, 2024

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Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
Florence Forest Service Office
5638 Forestry Drive
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Subject: Fourmile Project Support, Integrity of the Public Commenting Process, and Addressing Fourmile Project Opposition Concerns.

Dear Conservation Partner,

This letter is submitted by a coalition of conservation organizations and private entities, which represent millions of America's hunters, anglers, recreational shooters, wildlife & forest conservationists, and forestry and logging professionals, as well as the industries they support.

Our coalition of organizations recognize the numerous wildlife, socioeconomic, recreational, climate resiliency, and aesthetic values that are generated from our National Forests. That is why the undersigned groups here continue to strongly support implementation of the current Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF) Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan), the Fourmile Vegetation Management Project (Fourmile Project) Decision, and Sunfish timber sale as is.

We were pleased to see that the purpose and need of the Fourmile Project was to maintain and manage vegetation communities to their desired conditions as described in the 2004 CNNF Forest Plan, in addition to maintaining and/or enhancing existing forest research studies, meeting demand for wood products, providing safe and effective access, increasing public safety related to wildfire, and maintaining and/or enhancing recreation experiences. We believe the selected alternative would help promote long-term ecosystem health and productivity within the project area and move the area towards achieving the goals and associated needs of the Forest Plan.

Forests are dynamic collections of equally important seral states. Climate resilience, carbon optimization, and biodiversity are maximized when many forest ages are interspersed across landscapes. Accelerating (rather than halting) the pace and scale of restoration work identified in existing Forest Plans will most rapidly lead to resilience. Establishing more natural diversity in stand age and structure through proactive management is essential. A forest mosaic of young, middle-aged, and old stands optimizes biodiversity and carbon outcomes, resists catastrophic disturbance, and recovers from unforeseen stresses most readily. A sole focus on mature and old growth as suggested by some will inhibit adaptive capacity for climate resilience.

Forests that can both store and sequester carbon are vital. This concept is also supported by the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS). NIACS has consistently affirmed that diverse-aged forests are resistant, adaptive, and resilient to withstand the effects of climate change. NIACS's forestry and wildlife recommendations for climate smart forests are clear on this point; to withstand climate change forests must be diverse in structure, composition, age-class, and diversity. Again, proactive management like that put forth in the Sunfish timber sale is essential.

Finally, the Project Scoping and Environmental Analysis for the Fourmile Project have been completed and appropriate actions have been selected. Public input was gathered, concerns were heard, and Forest Service staff have conducted a thorough and far-reaching analysis of the project that include climate resiliency, wildlife habitat, forest diversity, soils, hydrology, and socioeconomic factors. Your staff have done their duty and due diligence to incorporate public concerns into the project. We believe that halting, stalling, or slowing this project to address false accusations of “illegal logging” would undermine the environmental analysis and public input process. This coalition urges the CNNF to stay the course and maintain the integrity of the decision-making process and Forest Plan.

We commend you and all CNNF staff for working professionally and cooperatively to monitor and complete the approved Sunfish timber sale on the Fourmile Project.

Best Regards,

Aldo Leopold Foundation
American Bird Conservancy
American Woodcock Society
Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Biewer Wisconsin Sawmill Inc.
Boone and Crockett Club
Congressional Sportsmen’s Foundation
Domtar
Ducks Unlimited
Federal Forest Resource Coalition
Federal Sustainable Forest Committee
Forest Resources Association
FutureWood Corp
Great Lakes Timber Professionals
Johnson Timber Corporation
Kretz Lumber Company, Inc.
Lake States Federal Timber Purchasers Committee
Langlade County Wisconsin
Louisiana-Pacific Corporation
Lumberjack RC&D Council, Inc
Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands
National Deer Association
National Wild Turkey Federation
North American Grouse Partnership
Pheasants Forever
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society
Sawyer County Outdoor Projects and Education
Wisconsin Paper Council
Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society
Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership