Forest Service Notice

Joy VanDrie-Public Affairs Officer
joy.vandrie@usda.gov

Kyle Stover-Tofte Ranger District Silviculturist
Kyle.stover@usda.gov
Superior National Forest - Home (usda.gov)

Superior National Forest Introduces Assisted Migration Plan for the National Forest System

The Assisted Migration Pilot Plan is an interdisciplinary plan, addressing scientific research, genetic considerations, cultural considerations, seed sourcing logistics, monitoring needs, and practical silviculture application for consistent implementation across National Forest System lands.

Duluth, Minn., November 9, 2023 –The Superior National Forest (SNF) joined the Office of Sustainability and Climate (OCS) and the newly created Forestry Assisted Migration Technical Assistance Team (FAMTAT) to produce the first Assisted Migration Pilot Plan for a national forest as a science-based approach to creating climate resiliency. In 2020, former Superior National Forest Ecologist-Katie Frerker, currently Climate Adaptation Specialist with the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS), formed a voluntary team with area Tribes and partners and developed an AM Pilot Plan, which focuses on 'assisted population migration and assisted range expansion' - two of three AM types.

The SNF is at a unique ecological position in Minnesota where the iconic boreal forests of the north transition to the temperate hardwoods of the south. Impact models agree that the boreal tree species that make up the bulk of SNF land like balsam fir, black spruce, paper birch, quaking aspen and white spruce could have reduced suitable habitat and biomass across the region in the future. They may also be less able to take advantage of longer growing seasons and warmer temperatures than temperate forest species. Ultimately, the projected changes in climate will exceed the natural migration, dispersal, and adaptation abilities of many tree species that are now common on the SNF and could lead to increased mortality and decreased ecosystem productivity and carbon sequestration.

The AM Pilot Plan will ensure that the Forest Service is pursuing assisted migration decisions informed by guidance (or future policy) in a consistent and coordinated manner on the forests. The AM Pilot Plan will promote the continued health and productivity of the landscape, develop a resource toolkit with decision-support tools to assist forests and land managers in developing Assisted Migration plans, and inform decisions on the proper use of Assisted Migration at the local level.

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"During the development of the plan, it has been fully demonstrated that a cross-disciplinary team is crucial," says Katie Frerker, Climate Adaptation Specialist, "We have over 20 organizations and over 100 individuals involved on our voluntary AM Pilot Plan team. The integration of scientific, social, operational, and cultural considerations and discussion has been amazing."

The following Tribes, national forest, state and federal agencies, and partners all contributed to the development of the SNF AM Pilot Plan:

- Bois Forte Band of Chippewa
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- 1854 Treaty Authority
- Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
- Chippewa National Forest
- Ottawa National Forest
- USFS Northern Research Station
- USFS Office of Sustainability and Climate
- Dovetail Partners
- University of MN Cloquet Forestry Center
- Michigan DNR
- Minnesota DNR
- Wisconsin DNR
- Minnesota Forest Industries
- Minnesota Forest Resources Council
- Minnesota Tree Improvement Cooperative
- Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science
- University of MN Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative
- The Nature Conservancy
- University of Minnesota – Duluth
- University of Minnesota – Twin Cities

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REFERENCE:

Assisted Migration, the human-assisted movement of species or genotypes in response to climate change, is becoming increasingly discussed as a potential natural resource management strategy to address a rapidly changing climate. There are three different types of assisted migration that are described in scientific literature and within the Plan:

- **Assisted population migration** involves the human-assisted movement of seed sources or populations to new locations within the historical established range of a species. For example, planting jack pine on the forest from seeds collected just south of the forest.
- **Assisted range expansion** is the human-assisted movement of seed sources or populations from their current range to suitable areas just beyond their current range, facilitating or mimicking natural dispersal and range expansion. For example, planting swamp white oak on the forest, a species native to southern MN, to ameliorate the effects of emerald ash borer.
- **Assisted species migration** is the human-assisted movement of seed sources or populations to a location outside of the established range of a species, beyond locations accessible by natural dispersal. This is primarily proposed as a last resort for endangered species or species with highly vulnerable fragmented populations. An example of this would be to introduce a conifer from outside of Minnesota to replace a pine found in the state. This kind of assisted migration is **not** being proposed on the Superior at this time.

For more information on the SNF Assisted Migration Pilot Plan and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) go to
https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/superior/landmanagement/resourcemanagement/?cid=fseprd522228

For more information on Boreal Forests and what it is?
https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/superior/learning/nature-science

For more information on Tribal Relations
https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/superior/workingtogether/tribalrelations

For more information on USDA Forest Service Assisted Migration Strategy
https://www.fs.usda.gov/ccrc/topics/assisted-migration

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Find out more about the Superior National Forest at www.fs.usda.gov/superior and follow us on Twitter @SuperiorNF, on Facebook and Flickr (photo credit: Superior National Forest) #superiornf

The Superior National Forest is managed in Five (5) districts, with a Supervisor's Office:

- *Supervisor's Office, Duluth: 218-626-4300*
- *Gunflint District Office, Grand Marais: 218-387-1750*
- *Kawishiwi District Office, Ely: 218-365-7600*
- *LaCroix District Office, Cook: 218-666-0020*
- *Tofte District Office, Tofte: 218-663-8060*
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