



File Code: 1620
Date: August 11, 2020

Dear Friend of the Forest:

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest would like to share the current status of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self Determination Act activities on the national forest. Historically, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest has had two Resource Advisory Committees known as RACs – one serving the Chequamegon land base (west side of the Forest) and the other serving the Nicolet land base (east side of the Forest). The Forest submitted a request to merge the Chequamegon RAC and Nicolet RAC into the Northern Wisconsin Secure Rural Schools RAC, this provides administrative efficiencies and eases the ability to establish a quorum to conduct RAC business.

Our agency's policy allowed the Forest to transition existing RAC members to the new RAC. However, many of our current member's assignments will expire by the end of the year. Thus, the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is going to renew or, in the case where current members are not allowed to renew membership due to time limitations, recommend new RAC members.

Late in 2019, the Forest publicly asked for membership applications for the Northern Wisconsin RAC. We received lots of diverse interest, and we are excited to get members formally on the committee to begin this important work. In order to place members on the committee the National Forest needs to submit the application packet to our National Office. The Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture reviews and formally assigns each member to the RAC. This process usually takes several months.

The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest planned to submit the member application packet earlier this year, however priorities changed with the COVID-19 pandemic with staff supporting the Forest's Incident Management Team. Staff are now starting to shift back and our working towards completing the Northern Wisconsin RAC membership packet and will soon be submitting it to our National Office. The Forest envisions having our Northern Wisconsin RAC members notified this upcoming winter.

Resource Advisory Committees are responsible for reviewing and recommending projects for implementation under Title II of the Secure Rural Schools Act. By law, the four-year term, fifteen-member committee is composed of a wide representation of national forest interests. Now, before the RAC committee members are announced and meetings convene, is a good time to begin to generate project ideas and organize project details with the help of Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest resource specialists like your local wildlife biologist, botanist, or Forest engineer. Getting this information organized will make project selection by the future RAC quicker and more efficient.



Examples of projects that funds can be used for include, but are not limited to: road, trail, and infrastructure maintenance or obliteration; soil productivity improvements; improvements in forest ecosystem health; watershed restoration and maintenance; restoration, maintenance, and improvement of wildlife and fish habitat; control of noxious and exotic weeds; hazardous fuels reduction; and reintroduction of native species. Projects must be on national forest lands but can occur on adjacent public or private land if it can be demonstrated that there is a direct benefit to public land resources.

Two important dates to take notice of if you would like to be involved in the RAC or Secure Rural School Title II process include:

- Projects must be recommended by the RAC and Forest Service approved by **September 30, 2022**
- Project funds must be obligated by **September 30, 2023**.

If there are details you would like to know about the Secure Rural Schools process and are not listed above, you can find them at

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/cnnf/workingtogether/advisorycommittees> or

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/working-with-us/states/secure-rural-schools>. In addition, feel free to ask for additional information or pose questions to Penny McLaughlin, RAC Coordinator, 715-362-1322; penny.mclaughlin@usda.gov or Adam Felts, RAC Designated Federal Official, 715-362-1335; Adam.Felts@usda.gov on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

Sincerely,



PAUL I. V. STRONG
Forest Supervisor

cc: Dawn Laybolt, Adam Felts, Penny McLaughlin