

Appendix D- Project Implementation Cycle and Checklist

The Tofte Landscape Project would be implemented in accordance with this implementation cycle. The steps shown would take place on a two-year cycle and would identify two years of implementation activities. This is designed as a checklist to apply the Estimated Implementation Plan, the Flexible Toolbox, Landscape Filters, and Operating Standards and Guidelines to portions of the project area, based on the EIP. In doing so it tracks compliance with NEPA decisions and law, regulation, and policy. Each implementation cycle will apply the decision as facilitated by this checklist and the material in the final EA and appendices. Each implementation cycle will document the action items and other information as required by this appendix.

The Implementation Cycle would achieve the following outcomes:

- Select stands and stand treatments for two years of implementation.
- Implement the EIP unless adjustments are needed. Review the EIP, current conditions and monitoring information to identify if and what adjustments to the EIP.
- Meet the purpose and need for the Tofte Landscape Project.
- Avoid and minimize adverse effects as identified in the landscape filters and OSGs.
- Tribal consultation and engagement.
- Public participation on adjustments to the EIP.
- Partner and government agency engagement
- Condition-based management adds the step of pre-implementation validation to the project. This entails confirming the current site conditions and selecting the appropriate management activities based on the analyzed criteria.
- Validation also confirms that adjustments to the EIP are within the scope of the Tofte Landscape Project effects analysis and decision; if not, determine whether to modify them, drop them, or conduct additional environmental analysis.
- Carry out treatments in an efficient and effective way by coordinating with other land managers and owners and using tools such as Good Neighbor Authority and stewardship agreements.

The steps in the implementation cycle are listed below. Some steps may be revisited iteratively as needed through the process. For example, Inventory and Monitoring would occur on-going to inform the current and outyear implementation cycle. “Pre-implementation validation” is spread over several steps from 1-8.

1. Address purpose and need
2. Tribal consultation: collaboration with other government agencies and stakeholders
3. Develop proposed list of stands and stand treatments
4. Check landscape filters & check operational standards and guidelines (OSGs)
5. Filed review of proposed list of stands and stand treatments
6. Public participation
7. Edit list of stands and stand treatments, finish prescriptions and site level design criteria
8. Complete pre-treatment work
 - a. Treatments are considered “validated” upon completion of these 8 steps.
9. Public notification
10. Implement treatments
11. Inventory and monitoring (ongoing)

A summary of what would occur in each step of the implementation cycle is described on the following pages.

1. Address purpose and need

- Consult NEPA Decision, latest monitoring information, and out-year plans to address Purpose and Need.
- Review the estimated implementation plan (EIP, see the environmental assessment (EA) Section 1.4) and begin determining if adjustments are needed.
- Assess existing landscape ecosystem and vegetation condition using current data on vegetation conditions and current local knowledge of landscape conditions.
- Identify current gap between existing conditions and desired conditions identified in the purpose and need.
- Apply landscape level filters helping to identify needs.
- Identify priorities and potential implementation areas including running available timber and viability models. Why here and why now?
- Identify inventory needs for future implementation.
- Develop initial online interactive map and a briefing for collaboration efforts.
- Review resiliency mapping and vulnerability assessment for climate change.
- District ranger approval.

2. Tribal consultation and collaboration with other government agencies and interested stakeholders

- Initiate collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), County, Tribes, and key stakeholders (including adjacent ranger districts).
- Follow consultation protocols for government-to-government communications with Tribes.
- Work with collaborators to identify shared and individual needs. Also consider how implementation tools such as Good Neighbor Authority or stewardship agreements may be used during implementation.
- Share latest monitoring information with US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and identify any changed conditions.
- Identify and pursue opportunities for grants.
- Refine priorities and potential implementation areas, incorporating input on potential treatment areas and priorities. Why here and why now?
- Collaboration can be ongoing through step 11 – Inventory and Monitoring.

3. Identify a portion of the estimated implementation plan and any needed adjustments to implement

- Identify any adjustments from estimated implementation plan.
- Connect existing conditions and Forest Plan objectives to specific potential treatments (EA Appendix A).
- Run through landscape level filter check list (EA Appendix B).
- Initial “stand and treatment table” and online interactive map.

4. Check landscape level filters

Apply landscape level filters.

- Apply assessments needed from Landscape Filters (EA Appendix B).
- Refine “stand and treatment table” and online interactive map.
- Compare proposed treatment stands to acreage limits (EA Table 3).
- Assess need for check-in with collaborators.
- Assess need for check-in with FWS.
- Compare proposed implementation treatment outcomes and forest products that will be available to local economy.
- Identify specific adaptation actions needed to address climate change concerns (EA Appendix A)
- District ranger approval.

5. Field review of proposed list of stands and stand treatments

- Field and imagery check as needed.
- Visit proposed treatment stands and review imagery data.
- Conduct plant and wildlife surveys.
- Consider site level design criteria and operational standards and guidelines.
- Can take place through step 10--carry out treatments.
- Start to develop detailed treatment prescriptions.

6. Public participation

Initiate 30-day public participation period on proposed stand treatment list (published on website) with interactive online map.

- Conduct open house meeting during 30-day participation period.
- Consider public input to proposed stand treatments.
- Document and post on web a summary of public input and Superior National Forest consideration.
- If no adjustments from the EIP are needed, notification without additional public participation may occur.
- As needed, can be ongoing through step 11 – Inventory and Monitoring.

7. Edit list of stands and stand treatments; finish prescriptions and site level design criteria

- Continue to refine stand treatment table with prescriptions and stand design criteria.
- Apply site level design criteria to the stand treatment table (Scoping Report-Appendix B).
- Complete treatment prescriptions.

8. Complete pre-treatment work

- Plan and complete pre-treatment work. Ongoing throughout implementation cycle. Establish and conduct program-of-work for expected treatments and activities such as:
- Conduct heritage surveys.
- Consultation (such as Tribal, Section 7, Section 106, and so forth) commitments are met.
- Complete detailed treatment prescriptions
- Complete burn plans

- Determine appropriate “tool” and funding for treatments, such as Good Neighbor Authority, Stewardship Agreement, Participating Agreement, and so forth
- Coordinate implementation work with partners
- Landline work
- Transportation and access needs
- Contract preparation
- Ground layout
- District ranger approval – this steps marks the completion of pre-treatment validation confirming the current site conditions, any adjustments to the EIP, and that the activities are within the scope of the Tofte Landscape Project effects analysis and decision.

9. Public notification

- Finalize and publish to web the stand treatment table and interactive online maps.
- Annual or biennial updates of expected stand treatments
- Review that treatments are within NEPA effects analysis and follow NEPA decision
- District ranger approval

10. Implement treatments

- Carry out treatment prescriptions.
- Contract administration – sale, award, administer, and so forth
- Carrying out agreements
- Treatments occurring on the ground
- Use checklist to verify within NEPA effects analysis and decision if treatments are adjusted at this step. This may include timely response to disturbance events.
- District ranger approval.

11. Inventory and Monitoring

Carry out monitoring plan from NEPA Project decision.

- The Tofte Landscape Project would use the Forest Plan monitoring plan (see Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan). The Forest Plan monitoring plan is appropriate for the Tofte Landscape Project because it allows for tracking on progress towards meeting the Forest Plan objectives identified in the purpose and need (section 1.3) along with the landscape filters and Forest Plan standards and guidelines incorporated into the project (see Appendices B and C). Monitoring results would be documented in the biennial Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Monitoring results would help inform if any adjustments to the EIP are needed to meet the purpose and need, and to avoid and minimize adverse effects.
- Collect inventory data– stand exam.
- Ongoing as needed to inform current and future treatments.