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**File Code:** 1950  
**Date:** September 25, 2015

Dear Interested Members of the Public,

Thank you for your interest and participation you exhibited through the development of the Barker Project on the Superior National Forest, Tofte and Gunflint Ranger Districts. With your help, we have developed our proposal, completed our analysis of effects, and once again are accepting your comments on the project. This letter is notification that the comment period on the Barker Project Environmental Assessment will be starting.

Since February, when the Barker Project Scoping Report was published, we have received numerous comments about the project. In May, we met with users of the Bally Creek Ski Trails to talk about options for mitigating potential impacts to the ski trails from the proposed activities. As a result of all the conversations and comments received, we have modified the Proposed Action and have focused the analysis in the Environmental Assessment on those resources the public said were important.

The Barker Project Environmental Assessment and supporting documents are available for review on the Superior National Forest website at [www.fs.usda/goto/superior/projects](http://www.fs.usda/goto/superior/projects) or you may request a copy from the Tofte or Gunflint Ranger District Offices. While review of the entire Environmental Assessment is recommended, some key areas that may be of interest for you to read are:

- **Chapter 2:** This chapter provides a summary of the Barker Project. It outlines the different alternatives that were considered, summarizes the effects, and describes how well each alternative would meet the purpose and need for the project.
- **Appendix A:** This Appendix contains our response to comments we received. For example, a number of people expressed concern about the proposed action in the Bally Creek Ski Trail System. In response, an alternative was developed to address the concerns and the alternative is analyzed in the Environmental Assessment.

### **How to Comment on the Environmental Assessment**

Your comments will help us determine if further analysis or changes are necessary prior to making a decision. We will accept comments for 30 days following the date of the legal notice publication in the Cook County News Herald, September 26, 2015. You must provide written comments during this 30-day comment period or have submitted comments during the scoping period of February 2015 to have standing for an objection (36CFR 218.2).

You may submit your comments by mail, fax, email, or orally. Send written comments to the letterhead address above, FAX to 218-387-3246, or email to: [comments-eastern-superior-tofte@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-eastern-superior-tofte@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 Tofte and Gunflint Ranger Districts during normal business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday either via telephone at (218) 387-1750, (218) 663-8060, or in person. Please be sure to include your name, address, and the Barker



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. All people who submitted comments or contacted us will be notified when the Draft Barker Project Decision Notice is available on the web and the objection period has started.

### **Need for the Project**

We feel that the Barker Project will enable us to continue to carry out our forest management practices for the Superior National Forest and will help create a more diverse ecosystem, both in age and structure, for future generations. This project will improve the health and resiliency of the forest in the Barker Project Area while contributing to broader vegetation management efforts in the area. The Barker Project would create young forest, increase within-stand diversity, enhance the Caribou Walking Trail System, improve riparian function, improve the health and productivity of red and white pine plantations, improve the productivity of stands with low tree stocking, reduce hazardous fuels in the Wildland Urban Interface areas, manage the use of Forest Road 333, and manage vegetation in the Ninemile Lake Campground and Bally Creek Ski Trail System.

We are excited about the Barker Project and believe there are many long term benefits of the proposed action. For further information about the Barker Project, please contact Becky Bartol, the Project Leader, by telephone at (218) 387-3207 or by email at [rbartol@fs.fed.us](mailto:rbartol@fs.fed.us).

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



**KURTIS E. STEELE**  
Tofte and Acting Gunflint District Ranger