NEWS RELEASE

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Decision on Disposition of Historic Kawishiwi Buildings Postponed

ST. PAUL, Mn., Oct. 12, 2010 –The USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station Assistant Director Tom Schmidt announced today that he is postponing a final decision on the disposition of historic and other structures at the Kawishiwi Field Laboratory, located approximately 12 miles south of Ely, Minnesota.

"Significant interest in reuse of the buildings has surfaced in the past two months," Schmidt said. "Although the Forest Service has no need of the buildings for research or land management purposes, we are open to having some other entity rehabilitate and maintain them."

Today's announcement defers action on a final environmental assessment, released for public comment on July 15, 2010, which analyzed six alternatives for disposition of the Kawishiwi buildings. The proposed action in that assessment was demolition of the buildings after architectural, landscape and engineering documentation. Under all alternatives, the site on which the buildings sit remains public land managed by the Superior National Forest.

A final decision is expected in 2011 after options for reuse of the buildings have been fully explored.

The Kawishiwi Field Laboratory buildings are located on the Kawishiwi Experimental Forest, which was established in 1931 on the site of the former Halfway Ranger District of the Superior National Forest. The original 2,633-acre experimental forest was the site of early silvicultural studies on white and black spruce. In 1955, the size of the experimental forest was reduced to its present size of 116 acres. Although the U.S. Geological Survey currently occupies some of the field laboratory buildings, the Forest Service has not conducted research on the experimental forest since the 1980s. Extensive Forest Service research continues in northeast Minnesota on subjects including climate change impacts and development and evaluation of silvicultural and management approaches that sustain ecological complexity in forests managed for wood production.

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