USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil Science Division

Soil Survey Region # 10

MLRA Soil Survey Office, Duluth, Minnesota

Interdepartmental Collaboration Between NRCS and USFS

Purpose

Soil scientists from the NRCS soil survey office in Duluth, Minnesota, provided technical soil services for an interdepartmental collaboration between the United States Forest Service (USFS) and NRCS. The project was developed to improve land type associations for forest land use.

Background Information

The Superior National Forest is in northeastern Minnesota and is nearly 4 million acres. Due to advancements in geographic technologies, the staff at the Forest desired an update to the boundaries of existing land type associations. Land type associations are based on general similarities in climate, geology, landform, and vegetation. These associations are a key component in forest management strategies for the USFS. USFS requested assistance from NRCS soil scientists due to their expert knowledge of soil qualities and properties.

Key Outcomes/Products

NRCS soil scientists and USFS ecologists collected soil and vegetative data and provided ground-truth verification of existing LTA boundaries.

The final product will depict land type associations that more closely follow the landscape and existing vegetation. Updated data will promote healthy forest ecosystems, improve timber management, and enhance water quality.

NRCS soil scientist Larissa Hindman and USFS forest ecologist Katie Frerker collecting soil samples.

Future Goals/Conclusions

The Superior National Forest is part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The Forest is within the boundary of the Lake Superior watershed and includes over 2,000 lakes. Healthy forests and clean water are an important part of the economy in northeastern Minnesota.