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Department of
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Forest Service
Eastern Region

Huron-Manistee
National Forests

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Huron-Manistee National Forests

Record of Decision

Final Environmental Impact Statement

*To accompany the 2006 Land and Resource
Management Plan*

Cooperating Agencies:

United States Department of the Interior - Bureau of Land Management
United States Department of the Interior - National Park Service
United States Department of the Interior – Fish & Wildlife Service
United States Environmental Protection Agency

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Record of Decision



**Alcona, Crawford, Iosco, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon,
Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Oscoda, and Wexford Counties, Michigan**

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Preface

This Record of Decision (ROD) explains my decision to select Alternative B, as modified, in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, as the 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan (2006 Forest Plan) for the Huron-Manistee National Forests. This ROD documents the formal decision from our agency and explains my rationale and logic in making changes to the 1986 Forest Plan, as amended.

As the responsible official for this decision, it is my duty to make the best possible decision to manage the resources on the Huron-Manistee National Forests. In making this decision, I have relied heavily on many people and the information they provided. In addition to contributions from resource professionals within and outside our agency, staff worked closely with individuals, local and state government, other federal agencies, tribal governments, and various special interest groups to develop the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan, released in March 2005.

Development of this 2006 Forest Plan is the result of the positive and productive relationships that have evolved throughout the planning process and the important contributions from all who have participated. The 2006 Forest Plan takes into consideration the thousands of comments and suggestions received since release of the draft documents and reflects the valuable contributions from meaningful collaboration with federal, state, and local agencies, tribal governments, various special interest groups, and individuals.

The development of a Forest Plan that is supported by most members of the public is a challenging task, as people often have differing views on how to best manage public lands. The complexity of managing nearly one million acres of public land for a multitude of benefits and values is difficult because the Huron-Manistee National Forests provide many different uses to many different people. The Forests include some of the most beautiful landscapes important to the tourism industry of Michigan. Ecological diversity within the Forests provide habitat for many native plants and animals. Aspen, oak, pine, and hardwood forests provide important wood products; valuable mineral deposits underlie the Forests.

Ecological and socioeconomic conditions on the National Forests do not remain static over time. The public's opinion of the best use of public lands also shifts over time. For these reasons, the management direction provided in the 2006 Forest Plan is dynamic and will periodically be re-evaluated as new information becomes available. This 2006 Forest Plan is the result of a review of the 1986 plan, an examination of new and current scientific information, and an extensive public participation process. I believe the 2006 Forest Plan helps us achieve the mission of the Forest Service, "To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

The 2006 Forest Plan evolved from the work of a dedicated interdisciplinary team of Forest Service employees. The team used the best science available in the analysis of the Forest's capability to make available various benefits and the likely environmental effects that may occur upon implementation of the 2006 Forest Plan.

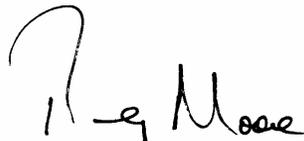
Huron-Manistee National Forests

My role as Regional Forester, as well as the role of the Forest Supervisor on the Huron-Manistee National Forests, has been to guide the process, listen to the public, facilitate the collaborative efforts, ensure the integrity of the analysis, and make important decisions throughout the process, including this final Record of Decision.

My decision strikes a balance among competing interests, opinions, and beliefs expressed by other agencies, groups, the general public and tribal governments that have been involved in the revision process. Together, we have constructed a 2006 Forest Plan that provides a scientifically credible foundation for ecological and socioeconomic sustainability over the long term. Implementation of the 2006 Forest Plan will result in a sustainable supply of goods and services from the Huron-Manistee National Forests, while conserving the natural resources of the area.

Our work does not stop here. Regular monitoring and evaluation of Forest Plan implementation is essential to ensure this 2006 Forest Plan is kept current. Changing needs and values of society, along with emerging science, may necessitate amendments to this Forest Plan. Please continue partnering with us to keep this Forest Plan relevant, not only now, but into the future as well.

Finally, I want to sincerely thank all who participated throughout the planning process. Your invaluable input helped us identify issues, determine the need for change, and develop alternatives. You also provided substantive and helpful comments on the draft documents. I invite and encourage your continued participation and interest in the implementation, monitoring, and updating of the 2006 Forest Plan. I remain confident that cooperation will unite us because I believe we share the common goal that these lands remain productive, ecologically healthy, and beautiful for current and future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reg Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a stylized "M".

Regional Forester
Eastern Region, USDA Forest Service

Record of Decision

Introduction

The Huron-Manistee National Forests' 2006 Land and Resource Management Plan (2006 Forest Plan) is a 10- to 15-year management strategy for National Forest resources. The 2006 Forest Plan was developed in accordance with the National Forest Management Act (16 U.S.C.1604, et seq.) and the 1982 planning regulations (36 CFR 219). The 2006 Forest Plan outlines environmentally sound management to achieve desired conditions on the land and produce goods and services in a way that maximizes long-term net public benefits. The 2006 Forest Plan emphasizes different desired conditions and goals for various parts of the Forests. As the 2006 Forest Plan is implemented, management practices such as those needed to improve and maintain roads, restore streams, harvest timber, manage hazardous fuels, and restore prairies, barrens, and savannahs, will occur in some areas, though not in others. Multiple-use goals and objectives will be achieved in a balanced, cost-efficient, and sustainable manner.

The original Forest Plan for the Huron-Manistee National Forests was approved in 1986 and was amended 25 times. This Forest Plan replaces all previous resource management plans for the Forests. It provides a new programmatic framework for environmentally sound management based on the best available scientific information.

The 2006 Forest Plan may be amended or revised to respond to changed conditions, new information, Congressional land designations, and changing needs and opportunities. Any action taken to amend or revise the Forest Plan will include public involvement.

Six programmatic decisions are made within the 2006 Forest Plan that will govern the landscape-scale management of the Forests. Project-level decisions are made within the framework established in the Forest Plan. The six programmatic decisions are:

1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives (36 CFR 219.11 (b)).
2. Forest-wide management Standards and Guidelines (36 CFR 219.13-27).
3. Management area direction (36 CFR 219.11).
4. Lands suited for timber production and establishment of an allowable sale quantity (36 CFR 219.16).
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements (36 CFR 219.11 (d)).
6. Recommendations to Congress, such as for Wilderness Study (36 CFR 219.17).

The Goals and Desired Conditions in the 2006 Forest Plan can be achieved from a physical, ecological, economical, and legal perspective. Management practices will be implemented and outputs produced as the Forests strive to meet the desired conditions as identified in the 2006 Forest Plan. Standards and Guidelines contained in the Huron-Manistee National Forests Plan provide the parameters within which projects must take place. Approval of any project must be consistent with the 2006 Forest Plan (16 U.S.C. 1604(i)). If a project is unable to be implemented within established standards, the project cannot go forward without amending the 2006 Forest Plan. Deviations from guidelines do not require a plan

amendment, however the project analysis and decision documents must include the rationale for deviations from the guideline. The 2006 Forest Plan is permissive in that it will allow, though not mandate, certain activities. Approval of this 2006 Forest Plan does not make a final agency decision to go forward with any site-specific project. Projects will occur only after they are proposed, their environmental effects considered, and a decision made authorizing site-specific action. Environmental analysis of site-specific projects will be tiered to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the 2006 Forest Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28.

My decision was heavily influenced by the public's involvement and input throughout the plan revision process. This decision was made following careful review of public comments, analysis of effects as documented in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), and a consideration of an appropriate range of alternatives. Scientific assessments were used during the analysis, along with the best available scientific information.

The 2006 Forest Plan was developed with input from various tribal entities, many agencies and individuals. For example, in comments submitted on the Proposed Forest Plan, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources shows support of the ecological restoration focus of the 2006 Forest Plan. Comments from the Michigan DNR included the following:

"In general, we are pleased with the strategic directions outlined in the document. Some of the revision topics detailed are strategies that the Department has been promoting for State land management in the form of sustainable ecosystems, watershed health, recreation and natural areas. Aligning management units with ecological boundaries, considering connectivity, patch size and cumulative effects on species viability are strategies that should help all large landowners to achieve biodiversity and sustainability goals."

I considered new information provided by the public, state, other federal agencies, and tribal governments. The 2006 Forest Plan represents a beneficial mix of resource uses and opportunities that provide for public needs and desires within the framework of existing laws, regulations, policies, and capabilities of the land.

In summary, the 2006 Forest Plan establishes a framework for future multiple-use management, setting programmatic direction that serves as a gateway for compliance with environmental laws at the site-specific project level. Approval of this 2006 Forest Plan does not impose implementation of any site-specific management actions, but rather provides the framework for future decision-making.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests

Lying between the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron in the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, the Huron-Manistee National Forests are two distinct units administered as one Forest. The Huron-Manistee includes seven Ranger Districts with offices located in Mio, Oscoda, Manistee, and Baldwin; the Forests' headquarters is in Cadillac. The Huron National Forest on the east side of the State is approximately 60 miles wide and 12 to 30 miles long, abutting Lake Huron near East Tawas and Harrisville. The Manistee National Forest on the west side of the state is approximately 40 miles wide and 75 miles long, abutting Lake Michigan near Manistee.

Located in a transition zone between forested lands to the north and agricultural lands to the south, this land was altered by glaciers thousands of years ago and is characterized by relatively low relief, abundant sand, clear water, and diverse forests. The Forests contain rare ecological features, such as dry sand prairie remnants, coastal marshlands, dunes, and pine barrens.

Approximately 70 percent of the state's population (7.4 million people) resides within a two-hour drive of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The Forests serve as a "backyard" playground for many Midwest residents, given their proximity to several Midwest cities, adjacent private, state lands, and other recreational facilities. The Forests are a primary supplier of many local and regional demands including recreation use, timber products, and wildlife habitat.

In the late 19th Century, many of the lands that presently make up the Forests were sold by the United States government to lumber companies. Homesteaders claimed other lands in the area. These lands were exploited by wholesale clearcutting, burning, and poor farming practices around the turn of the 20th Century. The diverse, maturing forest ecosystems that we enjoy today are the result of nearly a century of forest restoration and management by the Forest Service and our conservation partners.

American Indians have used these lands for thousands of years, and treaties ensure their continued use. The Huron-Manistee National Forests have a special relationship with the tribes and consult with them on the uses and management of the National Forests.

A Vision of the Future

The Huron-Manistee National Forests' "link lands and people," in many ways. The Forests' trail system, including the North Country National Scenic Trail, brings many state, federal agencies, and private land owners together to manage this significant recreation resource. The nationally known "Friends of the Forests" group brings people with a wide variety of interests together, providing the Forest Service suggestions in managing the Forests. Cooperative partnerships in fisheries, wildlife, and recreation are critical to the management and stewardship of the Forests.

Michigan is located in the heart of the largest fresh water ecosystem in the world. Water resources on the Huron-Manistee National Forests include 1,800 miles of streams and 17,000 acres of lakes. The Forests contain high quality, cold-water river systems of national significance. The Au Sable, Manistee and Bear Creek, Pere Marquette, and Pine Wild and Scenic Rivers and tributaries provide a nationally recognized network of premier "blue ribbon" fishing opportunities. Each spring and fall thousands of steelhead and salmon migrate to the Forests' streams, making this one of the most popular fisheries in the State of Michigan. The Huron-Manistee is also recognized for river watercraft use, outfitters, and guides.

A wide variety of recreational opportunities will continue to be available on the Forests. The Forests' proximity to population centers and dense road network allows extensive year-round use for many outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, off-road vehicle use, biking, driving for pleasure, camping, hiking, snowmobiling, river use, and gathering berries, mushrooms, and plants. Diverse recreational opportunities across the Forests range from the

tranquil solitude found within the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness to the more developed settings found at Bull Gap Motorized Recreation Area, the Lake Michigan Recreation Area, Lumberman's Monument, or along the River Road National Scenic Byway.

Ensuring long-term forest health is a management priority. Healthy forests enable us to continue to provide a variety of benefits to the users of the Forests. Our vegetation management program is the primary tool for restoring and sustaining a diverse range of habitats for wildlife and plants, enhancing forest health, and providing wood fiber. Timber sales, prescribed fire, and noncommercial mechanical treatments are carefully planned and applied to accomplish management objectives and move toward desired conditions. Forest products will result as a byproduct of managing for healthy ecosystems. Wood products, forage, minerals, and recreation use will continue to contribute toward economic sustainability in adjacent communities.

The Forests provide unique habitats for a variety of rare and sensitive fish, plant, and animal species. Approximately one-half of the known breeding habitats for the endangered Kirtland's warbler are managed by the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Populations of this songbird have increased six-fold statewide in the past 19 years. The Forests also provide critical habitat for other threatened and endangered species such as piping plover, Pitcher's thistle, bald eagle, and Karner blue butterfly. Additionally, the Forests provide habitat for a variety of game species such as ruffed grouse, deer, and turkey. Approximately 35 percent of the registered hunters in Michigan hunt on National Forests.

Jack pine forests, one of the most volatile of all fuel types, are intermingled between private and National Forest ownership. These forests create the potential for fast-moving, intense, wind-driven crown fires such as the Mack Lake Fire of 1980 that burned more than 24,000 acres in six hours. The Forests are initiating management activities to reduce the fire risk within this wildland/urban interface.

Federally owned mineral resources such as oil and gas, sand, and gravel are found in several areas throughout the Forests. The Forests provide opportunities for the development of these resources where such use can be done in an environmentally sound manner.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests are managed to provide healthy ecosystems by maintaining or restoring natural communities on the landscape. Healthy ecosystems provide a sustainable flow of goods and services desired by the public. These goods and services will continue to contribute toward maintaining economic stability in the local communities.

Achieving this vision for the Huron-Manistee National Forests will require continued collaboration with the public and with our partners. We strive to be good neighbors and work cooperatively with others.

Decision and Rationale

Need for Change

The decision-making process began with careful review of the 1986 Forest Plan, as amended. New scientific information, changes in agency policies and priorities, results of Forest monitoring and evaluations, changing conditions of the land, and changing public demands were all evaluated to determine what changes to the 1986 Forest Plan should be proposed. The 1986 plan was kept current through 25 amendments and, although all of the objectives in that plan were not achieved, it still provided sound direction for responding to the ecological, social, and economic concerns and needs that we have faced over the past twenty years.

A comprehensive Need for Change assessment was completed which benefited from the vast amount of comments provided by you, our customers, on what you felt needed to be addressed in this plan revision. All comments were considered, but not all were relevant for this plan revision. For instance, several comments expressed concerns about Forest Plan implementation (e.g. OHV use off designated trails and law enforcement effectiveness). In this example, there was not a need to change the plan, but rather a need to do a better job in implementing the plan. Other comments did not result in a need to change the 1986 plan because the issues raised had already been addressed through recent plan amendments. Comments on threatened and endangered species and designated old growth are two examples. Amendments to address these resources were completed within the last few years (2004 and 2003, respectively). Although there is clearly not full agreement with the direction incorporated into the 1986 Plan through these amendments, comments received during our need for change process did not bring forth new information that indicated a need to revisit those issues at this time. In some cases, such as comments regarding old growth, the concerns raised mirrored previous concerns identified when the 2003 amendment was developed (e.g. desire to have less acres of designated old growth, desire to have more acres of designated old growth, or desire to have no designated acres). Since these amendments were recent, and no new information or concerns were raised, it was decided to not include them as areas identified as having a “need for change.” Further information on comments received during the need for change process and how they were addressed are found in the planning administrative record.

Overall, the need for change process determined that our amended 1986 Forest Plan was still valid and only slight modifications were needed. These modifications were identified and became the focus of the Notice of Intent (NOI) to revise the amended 1986 Forest Plan, issued on September 18, 2003.

Public involvement and comments were again solicited, on the NOI, through mailings, public meetings, website postings, and newsletters. The five areas carried forward as revision issues, and the specific questions to address through the plan revision, are:

- **Wildlife and Rare Plants:** what amount, distribution, and types of habitat (e.g. early successional versus late successional) is necessary to maintain minimum viability of

- all native and desirable non-native species, while providing other wildlife and plant resources to benefit social, economic, and ecological systems?
- **Timber Management:** what species and product mix of timber products will be produced from the Huron-Manistee National Forests?
 - **Riparian and Aquatic Resources:** to what extent are designated riparian zones managed for early successional habitat?
 - **Recreation, Semiprimitive Areas, and Access:** how many acres of semiprimitive motorized and semiprimitive nonmotorized management areas will be designated?
 - **Wildland Fire and Fuels Management:** are management activities proposed for the Huron-Manistee National Forests adequate and appropriate to maintain the biological integrity of fire-dependent ecosystems, provide for public safety, and protect public property from wildfire?

Decision Overview – Selected Alternative B, as Modified

I have selected Alternative B, as modified, as the 2006 Forest Plan for the Huron-Manistee National Forests because, in my judgment, it maximizes the net benefit to the public by:

- Providing management direction that reflects recommendations received through the public comment process, including consultations with local tribes, state and local governments, and other federal agencies.
- Contributing to restoring, enhancing, or maintaining ecological sustainability and biological diversity.
- Contributing to species viability.
- Contributing to the protection of watershed conditions necessary to support ecological functions in riparian and aquatic ecosystems.
- Contributing to the economic and social needs of people, cultures, and local communities.
- Providing sustainable and predictable levels of products and services.
- Providing clear direction to assist managers in making project level decisions in implementing the broader social, economic, and ecological goals of this 2006 Forest Plan.

My decision also considered how the 2006 Forest Plan responded to public comments, internal management concerns, and national direction and policy. My decision to adopt the management direction in the 2006 Forest Plan was made in consideration of the analysis of effects disclosed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement, the Biological Opinion of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and is supported by the planning record in its entirety.

This decision applies only to National Forest System land within the boundaries of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. It does not apply to any other Federal, State, county, municipal, or private lands, although in making my decision, I considered how likely future management of other ownerships might contribute to environmental effects resulting from managing the Huron-Manistee National Forests.

As stated, this Record of Decision selects Alternative B, as modified, as the 2006 Forest Plan. It is important to note that the Record of Decision does not authorize any other actions or site-specific activities. This is also true of the 2006 Forest Plan. A Forest Plan is a programmatic document that provides a framework of management direction that is used to guide future decision-making and is permissive in nature. As such, the 2006 Forest Plan does not authorize, fund or implement any site-specific activities. More information is presented under the heading Key Considerations in Plan Implementation.

Decision Summary and Response to Issues

From the start of the revision process, the Huron-Manistee has sought to create a Forest Plan that is broad, strategic, and landscape-based. The analyses conducted recognize that the Huron-Manistee does not exist in isolation, but is part of a larger landscape managed and influenced by many owners.

Wildlife and Rare Plants

Addressing ecological sustainability and health was an important consideration in revising the 1986 Forest Plan. The 2006 Forest Plan provides direction for the long-term sustainability and health of forest ecosystems. The Plan allows us to actively manage vegetation to achieve desired conditions that are consistent with the ecological communities that would naturally occur on the land. Restoration of natural communities is a primary emphasis of the Forests. Natural disturbances, such as wind, fire, and insect and disease breakouts, have typically maintained a portion of the Forests ecosystem in a young forest seedling/sapling condition (early successional). These habitats are important to a host of wildlife and plant species. Several commenters on the draft documents emphasized the need for creating these habitats using clearcutting and other even-age harvest treatments to insure there is habitat available for a variety of game species notably white-tailed deer, wild turkey and ruffed grouse. Some other commenters expressed the desire to manage the Forests primarily as a refuge of undisturbed forest due to habitat changes that are occurring on other ownerships. I have reviewed the FEIS, available scientific information, and public comments, and believe that the Huron-Manistee National Forests can and should provide both early successional and mature, undisturbed forest habitat components. The goals, objectives, and Standards and Guidelines within the designated management areas combine well to address the Forests' important role with the larger landscape. Overall, I have determined that Alternative B, as modified, provides direction for wildlife and rare plant habitat protection that is integrated with all aspects of forest management. Standards and Guidelines within the 2006 Forest Plan have been updated to ensure habitat is provided for wildlife and plant species and that potential viability concerns are addressed.

The programmatic direction in the 2006 Forest Plan will allow for adjustment of the vegetation patterns and species composition on the Forests over time, resulting in vegetative communities that are healthy, sustainable, diverse, and designed to maintain or improve the viability of plant and animal species most at risk. I recognize that there is strong public support for the restoration of natural communities. I also recognize there are some concerns about this new focus on restoration. In recognition of these different viewpoints and

concerns, my decision balances the allocation of land so that, concurrently, there will be an emphasis on: 1) restoration of natural communities; 2) multiple use resource objectives and; 3) recreation, Wilderness, or other special area designation.

I believe managing a portion of the Forests using sustainable forestry practices is needed to provide many benefits that the public expects from the Forests, including maintaining the aspen and red pine components on the Forests. These practices are designed to meet a multitude of goals, including reducing the buildup of heavy fuel situations near communities adjacent to or within the Forests, and responding to invasive species outbreaks that may threaten the overall health of the forest ecosystem. Alternative B, as modified, provides for the use of both even-aged and uneven-aged harvest to help ensure that vegetation, wildlife, and hazardous fuels management goals can be met while still meeting our recreation and scenery management goals. Overall, the direction in the 2006 Forest Plan improves the Standards and Guidelines for threatened, endangered, and sensitive species conservation and recovery by adding both Standards and Guidelines for a number of sensitive species not covered in the 1986 plan. The 2006 Forest Plan includes management direction aimed to improve habitat for all species of concern including federal, regional, and state listed species.

Timber Management

The 2006 Forest Plan identifies 401,000 acres of land suitable for timber management. These are lands capable of producing commercial volumes of timber on a sustained basis, where regularly scheduled timber harvest may occur. The Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) for the first decade is 910 million board feet (which equates to an annual average of 91 million board feet). The projected average annual allowable sale quantity for the second decade is 100.2 million board feet. The suitability analysis and ASQ calculations were derived using the best available mapping techniques, updated vegetation data, and knowledge gained from years of implementing and monitoring the 1986 Plan.

The 2006 Forest Plan provides programmatic management direction for selecting the appropriate silvicultural activities at the project level to achieve desired conditions on the landscape. This new direction will provide greater flexibility in selecting the appropriate treatments and allow adaptive management to be practiced.

In making my decision, I recognize there is a high level of concern about the ASQ level. ASQ is an upper limit on harvest, not a commitment to sell that particular amount over the next decade. While the Huron-Manistee National Forests have consistently provided timber to local communities and industry for decades, the full ASQ level has never been reached. Although many factors will continue to influence the actual timber harvest levels from year to year, I am confident that the improved suitability analysis and ASQ calculations gives us the most reliable projection possible of the timber production capability of the Huron-Manistee. I believe the 2006 Forest Plan will provide the management direction needed to have an effective timber management program that will continue to contribute to the economic stability of local communities and the wood products industry in the northern Lower Peninsula.

I also recognize that there are interest groups and individuals who believe that the Huron-Manistee National Forests should stop all commercial timber sales. Timber sales are often an efficient, effective, and sometimes the only means to move toward the desired conditions for

vegetation on the landscape. As such, timber management is the primary tool for restoring and providing biological diversity and a range of habitats, supporting ecological restoration, and providing wood fiber. The sale of timber products is an appropriate use of National Forest lands as authorized by various federal laws including Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act of 1960 and National Forest Management Act of 1976.

I made this decision recognizing the preferences of some groups and individuals, but also recognizing that commercial timber harvest on National Forest System lands is both legal and, in the case of the Huron-Manistee National Forests, desirable.

Addressing ecological sustainability and health was one thing that I thought most important in changing the 1986 Forest Plan. The 2006 Forest Plan provides direction for the long-term sustainability and health of forest ecosystems. The Plan allows us to actively manage vegetation to achieve desired conditions that are consistent with the ecological communities that would naturally occur on the land. Restoration of natural communities is a primary emphasis of the Forests, using practices that will enhance the diversity of natural communities and improve forest health conditions.

Riparian and Aquatic Resources

The 2006 Forest Plan clearly defines Streamside Management Zones (SMZ) and changes provisions for management activities allowed within these areas. The Streamside Management Zone (SMZ) is clarified to be 100-foot zone directly adjacent to streams and water. The 2006 Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines will: protect stream banks and streambeds within the SMZs, and allow consistent and accurate identification of these important areas during site specific planning and project implementation. Management for early successional habitat may occur within the 100-foot SMZ, on a limited basis, to address species viability. In response to public comments, Standards and Guidelines that provide direction for aquatic sensitive species as well as for the threatened Lake Surgeon have been added in Alternative B, as modified.

Several commenters asked for clarification of the management activities allowed within the 100-foot SMZs, specifically where and how management activities may occur. The 2006 Forest Plan is a guiding document and, as such, provides the “sideboards” that would apply to management activity within the SMZ. Individual projects are analyzed in greater detail than the analysis completed at the Forest Plan level. The site specific, detailed analysis and determination of effects will guide individual project decisions.

Overall, my decision to select Alternative B, as modified, is based upon increased knowledge of the important functions of riparian areas. It responds to the goal of Improving Watershed Conditions listed in the USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004 – 2008. The decision will improve management and ensure water quality and riparian ecosystems are maintained or improved during plan implementation.

Recreation, Semiprimitive and Access

The Huron-Manistee National Forests have been the “backyard playground” for recreational users for more than 70 years. Over time, the use levels have steadily increased and there have been many changes in the kinds of use. As we implement the 2006 Forest Plan, we will continue to work with the Forests’ stakeholders to better understand the effects of recreation on the land and the experiences people expect when they visit the Forests. In some cases, providing desired experiences or reducing the environmental effects of recreation use may call for restrictions on certain uses or in specific locations to ensure that, the Forests continue to be considered a unique place to visit in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

Many commenters encouraged the Forest Service to increase the amount of motorized access and motorized play areas on the forests. Others encouraged an increase in the amount of nonmotorized areas and opportunities. Analysis of the alternatives indicated that implementation of Alternative B, as modified, best meets the balance between motorized and nonmotorized recreational opportunities while maintaining resource values.

My decision includes providing approximately 17,150 acres of designated semiprimitive motorized (an increase of approximately 5,800 acres from the 1986 plan) and 62,300 acres of designated semiprimitive nonmotorized areas (an increase of approximately 2,700 acres from the 1986 plan). Goals, objectives, Standards and Guidelines within the 2006 Forest Plan are focused on providing recreational use of the Forests while ensuring this use is sustainable over the long term. Included in 2006 Forest Plan directions are adjustments to the boundaries and acreages of some semiprimitive motorized and nonmotorized areas to make them more manageable. In addition, we have incorporated the Scenery Management System into our 2006 Forest Plans goals, objectives, Standards and Guidelines.

Direction for use of OHV will be the same in the 2006 Forest Plan as it was in the 1986 Plan. OHV use is allowed on designated routes only. I based my decision for OHV use on 20 years of experience with the existing plan, available terrain, and national direction regarding OHV use and the importance of managing this use to allow for recreational opportunities while protecting resource values. I firmly believe that this direction has been successful on the Huron-Manistee National Forests and will continue to be successful in the future.

Additions to the National Wilderness Preservation System are a consideration and decision that must be made when revising Forest Plans. In making this decision, it is important to consider the wilderness context of the area, among other things. The Lake States (Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota) have 23 areas in the National Wilderness Preservation System, encompassing about 1.24 million acres. These areas are located on the Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha, Ottawa, Chequamegon-Nicolet, Superior, and Chippewa National Forests, as well as on lands owned by the National Park Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service. Michigan has fourteen National Wilderness Preservation System areas, Wisconsin has six National Wilderness Preservation System areas, and Minnesota has three National Wilderness Preservation System areas. I carefully examined lands throughout the Huron-Manistee for their potential as wilderness and have determined that there were no areas on the Huron-Manistee that met the inventory criteria for roadless area designation or consideration for wilderness study by Congress. Therefore, no proposed areas are recommended to Congress for wilderness study (see Appendix D of the FEIS for more information).

In addition, as part of the revision process, Forest interdisciplinary teams completed an evaluation to determine if there were any other rivers on the Huron-Manistee National Forests determined eligible for further study and consideration as potential Wild and Scenic Rivers. The teams identified a segment of the Pine River as potentially eligible for a Scenic designation under the Wild and Scenic River System, following the removal of Stronach Dam. A suitability analysis will be completed for this segment. I concur with the teams' findings (see Appendix E of the FEIS for more information). My decision does not include any recommendations to Congress for additionally designated Wilderness or Wild and Scenic Rivers on the Huron-Manistee National Forests, pending completion of the suitability analysis.

Wildland Fire and Fuels Management

The 2006 Forest Plan provides a programmatic framework that allows for an increase in the use of prescribed burning as a management tool to accomplish ecological objectives. Prescribed fire will be used to alter understory and ground vegetation species composition and density. This will result in healthier ecosystems and help restore native plant communities.

Alternative B, as modified, provides the greatest potential to protect public and private property as well as natural resources from wildfire. Standards and Guidelines have been added or enhanced to allow for managing wildfires to effectively protect life, property, and communities. The 2006 Forest Plan focuses fuels reduction activities on the rural/urban interface and intermix areas.

My decision recognizes that many of the natural communities on the Huron-Manistee National Forests have evolved under a fire regime of frequent, low-intensity fires. The careful use of prescribed fire will help restore these natural communities and insure they are maintained in a healthy and sustainable condition. The framework set forth in the 2006 Forest Plan is based upon a wealth of current scientific research on fire-adapted ecosystems and fire regimes on the ecosystems on the Huron-Manistee National Forests. My decision also responds to the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 and USDA Forest Service Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2004-2008 by managing for the restoration of these fire-adapted ecosystems.

Based on comments received throughout the planning process, it is evident that there is broad support for fire suppression and hazardous fuels reduction activities. I recognize that as a result of wildfire suppression and natural succession, hazardous fuels have accumulated in some areas that threaten property and public safety. This decision allows for prioritizing sites and accomplishing hazardous fuel reductions with a variety of methods as determined through site-specific analysis.

Wildland fire suppression is extremely important for the protection of life and property. The 1986 Plan had very little direction for wildland fire suppression. My decision provides guidance needed to provide for better integration of the fire and fuels program with other resource needs and management activities.

Other Decision Items

- **Oil and Gas Availability** - The 2006 Forest Plan identifies federal lands administratively available for oil and gas leasing, in accordance with 36 CFR 228.102(d). Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines describe what lands may be considered available and, if available, under what conditions. There are approximately 480,000 acres of federally owned oil and gas development rights on the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The remaining acreage of federal surface has private or state held oil and gas development rights. Almost all of this acreage has, at one time or another, been leased, and much of this acreage has also been explored or developed. Under the 2006 Forest Plan 969,727 acres, of federally owned surface, would be available for mineral leasing (this includes the 480,000 acres of subsurface development rights mentioned above). A variety of stipulations apply to accessing and developing these minerals. These details can be found in Chapter III of the FEIS and Chapters II and III of the 2006 Forest Plan. Currently, there are 77 authorized federal leases on the Huron-Manistee National Forests, covering approximately 60,000 acres. There are currently 32 producing oil and gas wells on National Forest System lands within the Forests' boundaries.
- **Management Area Designation** - The 2006 Forest Plan will emphasize management direction designed to restore and enhance healthy ecological conditions in the natural communities on the Forest. This management direction provides for opportunities ranging from timber management activities and hazardous fuels reduction treatments to creating and maintaining barren, prairie, and savannah habitat. Overall, this ecological approach to management will contribute to species viability as well as increased ecosystem integrity and biological diversity on the Forest. Furthermore, Alternative B, as modified, includes management emphasis that provides for road systems for public access, developed and non-developed recreation areas, non-motorized and motorized trails, cross-country ski areas, snowmobiling, and a host of other activities. These management areas will provide for a mix of young forest habitat as well as older forest habitat important to both game and non-game wildlife species. All of the management areas will provide the opportunity for people to hunt and fish on the forests consistent with State laws.

The 2006 Forest Plan also provides for the establishment of four new management areas and combines several of the Management Areas from the 1986 Plan to better reflect how these areas will be managed under the 2006 Forest Plan. Wildlife, grouse, deer, and Kirtland's warbler emphasis areas have been included in Management Area 4.2. The Management Area changes are displayed in the following table.

Forest Plan Management Area Changes		
1986 MAs	2006 MAs	Description
2.1	2.1	Roaded Natural Rolling Plains and Morainal Hills
4.2, 4.5	4.2	Roaded Natural Sandy Plains and Hills <i>(1)</i>
4.3	4.3	Roaded Natural Wetlands
4.4	4.4	Rural
5.1	5.1	Wilderness
6.1, 6.2, 6.3	6.1	Semiprimitive Nonmotorized Areas <i>(2)</i>
1.1, 3.1, 4.1	6.2	Semiprimitive Motorized Areas <i>(3)</i>
NA	7.1	Concentrated Recreation Areas
8.1	8.1	Wild and Scenic Rivers
NA	8.2	Research Natural Areas
NA	8.3	Experimental Forests
8.1	8.4	Special Areas
NA	9.1	Candidate Research Natural Areas
9.2	9.2	Wild and Scenic Study Rivers

(1) Management Area (MA) 4.2 for the revised Forest Plan combines MAs 4.2 and 4.5 from the 1986 Plan. MA 4.5 in the 1986 Plan was for Kirtland’s warbler habitat.

(2) Management Area (MA) 6.1, semiprimitive nonmotorized (SPNM), for the revised Forest Plan combines MAs 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 from the 1986 Plan. The three 1986 MAs were all for SPNM areas in Sandy Plains & Hills (6.1), Rolling Plains & Morainal Hills (6.2), and Wetlands (6.3).

(3) Management Area (MA) 6.2, semiprimitive motorized (SPM), for the revised Forest Plan combines MAs 1.1, 3.1, and 4.1 from the 1986 Plan. The three 1986 MAs were all for SPM areas in Sandy Plains & Hills (1.1), Rolling Plains & Morainal Hills (3.1), and Wetlands (4.1).

- **Monitoring and Evaluation** - The 2006 Forest Plan strengthens monitoring and evaluation direction. The revised direction will better inform managers about how forest management activities are affecting ecological health and whether activities are moving the land toward the desired conditions called for in the 2006 Forest Plan.

My decision to revamp the monitoring strategy (Chapter 4) of the 2006 Forest Plan places the focus on monitoring the extent to which we are making progress toward the desired conditions and objectives described in the 2006 Forest Plan. In strengthening the monitoring section of the 2006 Forest Plan, the Forests incorporated concepts developed by the Forest Service’s National Inventory and Monitoring Institute. The Monitoring Framework in Chapter 4 ties well with the strategic nature of a forest plan. More specific monitoring requirements will be developed as the 2006 Forest Plan is stepped down to specific projects.

The 2006 Forest Plan identifies new management indicator species (MIS) which I believe will be good indicators of the health of selected natural communities and specifically the results of plan implementation on habitats and populations. With this

decision I am making one modification to the MIS identified in the Proposed Revised Plan. The intent of MIS is to monitor potential impacts to habitats based on our management activities. I have decided to add the bald eagle as an MIS. Commenters expressed concern that we did not have a MIS for late seral habitat types. I believe it is important to have at least one MIS that does utilize this habitat. The bald eagle meets this criterion, while still meeting the other MIS criteria outlined in the FEIS and supporting project record material.

The change in the designated MIS list described above does not change any of the analysis or intent of the management direction analyzed in the FEIS and 2006 Forest Plan. Management Indicator Species are part of the overall monitoring program and adaptive management approach for the 2006 Forest Plan.

Changes between the Draft and Final EIS

The Forests received well-prepared and constructive public and internal comments on our Draft Environmental Impact Statement and the Proposed Revised Forest Plan. Changes made to the final documents reflect these comments and range from minor edits and clarifications to changes in the standards and guidelines. Some changes also resulted from data corrections, new information, or field verification. Following is a summary describing the most substantial changes made between the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Proposed Revised and 2006 Forest Plan.

Wildlife and Rare Plants

The following changes were made in response to comments received. None of these modifications represents a change in overall management direction.

- Standards and Guidelines have been added to address the needs of Indiana bat. These include management direction for regeneration unit design, monitoring and evaluation criteria, waterhole development or restoration, upland water sources, and the prohibition of firewood permits within suitable habitat.
- Standards and Guidelines have been added which address the Karner blue butterfly. Additions include management direction for relocating or decommissioning roads and trails to protect habitat, providing dispersal corridors, providing timing restrictions on management activities, designing activities to protect and improve habitat, and clarifying the desired amount of habitat restoration.
- The acreage of Kirtland's warbler essential breeding habitat within Management Area 4.2 has been clarified as 88,300 acres.
- Measures have been added to limit foot traffic, close roads, and prohibit resource development and mining in Pitcher's thistle habitat.
- The list of MIS has been updated to include the bald eagle (this change is described and explained above).

Riparian and Aquatic Resources

Several commenters expressed confusion over some of the information presented. In addition, it was noted that some information pertaining to sensitive species and the threatened lake sturgeon was missing. The following changes were made in response to these comments.

- Standards and Guidelines specific to the lake sturgeon and aquatic sensitive species have been included.
- Additional goals and objectives specific to aquatic species have been added to include monitoring of aquatic species listed as sensitive, protecting lake habitat for the pugnose shiner and maintaining native aquatic vegetation and water quality.
- Standards and Guidelines regarding management activities allowed within streamside management zones for endangered, threatened, and sensitive species habitat management have been clarified.

Public Involvement

The Huron-Manistee National Forests implemented a thorough and active public participation campaign throughout the planning process. This effort started in the mid to late 1990s with the initial Need for Change process. This initial effort was curtailed due to legislative mandate requiring that no additional plan revisions be initiated until a new planning rule was developed. However, the input received was considered when the work on the plan revision resumed in 2002. A variety of public involvement tools and methods were used, including public meetings, open houses, newsletters, news releases, and meetings with specific special interest groups when requested. Our efforts and the efforts of those people who participated provided valuable contributions to the development of the 2006 Forest Plan.

Meetings and Open Houses

During October and November 2002, we heard from more than 200 people who commented in writing or attended a public meeting held to solicit input on the need to modify the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Plan. Approximately 600 suggestions were submitted during the public comment period. During February 2003, another series of public meetings was held throughout the state.

Input from individuals, organizations, state, county and federal agencies, tribal governments and Forest Service employees, was used to identify needed changes and issues to be addressed during the Forest Plan revision process. Based on public input and internal evaluations, a proposed action was developed and a Notice of Intent (NOI) published in the Federal Register on September 18, 2003.

After the NOI was published, 10 open houses were held throughout the state to provide information on the Forests' approach to ecosystem management, allow the public a chance to learn more about the planning process, answer questions, and hear what the public had to say.

These meetings were designed to help keep the public informed of where we were in the process and gave us an opportunity to learn from their questions and concerns.

Following the March 18, 2005 Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan, a series of eight open house meetings were held throughout the state to discuss the alternatives, the rationale for the preferred alternative, explain how issues were addressed, and answer any questions about providing comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan.

Approximately 350 copies of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan documents were distributed in print or CD-ROM format. Notification was also provided to approximately 1,450 individuals on our mailing list, indicating that these documents were available for viewing on the Forests' website.

During the three-month public comment period following the March 18, 2005 release of the draft documents, nearly 1,650 individual pieces of mail, including letters, postcards and emails were received by the Forests. Comments came from individuals, organizations, and all levels of government, including tribal governments. Most comments (approximately 1,450) were postcards or form letters of identical text; approximately 170 were individually written, unique letters. About 300 unique comments were identified.

Newsletters

Five issues of the Huron-Manistee National Forests' *Forest Plan Revision News* were sent to more than 1,600 addresses on our mailing lists through regular and electronic mail. Each issue of the newsletter contained information about our revision efforts, timeframe, and avenues for public involvement. Each *Forest Plan Revision News* coincided with significant milestones in the process, such as announcing the publication of the NOI or releasing draft documents for review.

News Releases

At every significant milestone, news releases were prepared and distributed to area media, including the Associated Press and National Public Radio. Each news release informed the public of the status of our revision and provided information on how to comment or obtain additional information.

Website

The Forests posted information and pertinent documents about Forest Plan Revision on its web site at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnmf/pages/planning.htm>

Alternatives

Alternative Development

Forest Plan Revision was formally initiated with publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register on September 18, 2003. Public comments received during this initial comment period, along with management concerns identified during the Need for Change assessment, helped the interdisciplinary team develop a range of alternatives to address the significant issues. The process used to formulate the alternatives is described in Chapter 2 of the FEIS.

Perhaps no task was more important to the interdisciplinary team working on the 2006 Forest Plan than development of a reasonable range of alternatives. Based upon resource information, public comment, and experience gained under the 1986 Plan, the team crafted what I believe to be an excellent representation of alternative means to meet the purpose and need for this programmatic document. To the extent practicable, we have solicited and reviewed alternatives submitted by the public and documented that analysis in the record. The range of alternatives is driven by what is best for the land and the people that use it.

Existing resource conditions and the role of the Forest (as embodied in the purpose and need statement) are the heart of the development of the alternatives. Development of a programmatic multiple use resource plan involves compromise and balancing of a myriad of biological, physical, and social factors. The range of alternatives reflects the trade-offs associated with this task.

Alternative A is the no-action alternative, which reflects the 1986 Forest wide direction and subsequent amendments. Alternatives B and C were developed to provide a range of choices for addressing the revision topics and issues. Alternative B, as modified, falls within this range of alternatives and reflects a balance based on the extensive public comments received on the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement. All alternatives adhere to the concepts of multiple-use and ecosystem management.

Alternatives Considered but not Evaluated in Detail

Federal agencies are required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to rigorously explore and objectively evaluate reasonable alternatives and to briefly discuss the reasons for eliminating alternatives that were not considered in detail (40 CFR 1502.14). Seven alternatives were considered but dismissed from further consideration.

Results of evaluations associated with the Need for Change, Notice of Intent, and Analysis of the Management Situation were used to create eight initial alternative sketches. These initial alternatives were subjected to qualitative evaluations aimed at understanding how each might respond to various issues in comparison to the Current Direction. Two of these sketches and the current plan direction (no action alternative) were carried forward. The other six initial alternatives, Minimum Management, Passive Management, Maximum Timber, Maximum

Revenue, Maximum Multiple Use, and Maximize Range of Response were eliminated from detailed study. The remainder of this section briefly discusses each of the alternatives eliminated from detailed study because overall they did not meet the purpose and need developed based on law, regulation, policy; the need for change process and analysis of the management situation (FEIS Chapter 1). Nor did these other six alternatives effectively respond to the Forests issues or public comments received.

Minimum Management

This alternative was directed at reducing particular management level intensities, including the size, extent, or number of candidate Research Natural Areas, Study Wild and Scenic Rivers and semiprimitive areas. Additionally, management activities, such as habitat improvement, timber management, and trails construction and maintenance were reduced. The alternative was dropped from further consideration because it failed to effectively respond to the overall Purpose and Need for change outlined in Chapter 1 of the FEIS; nor does it respond to the Forests' issues or to public comments received. Further, many of the potential changes contained in this alternative were covered by the minimum level benchmark.

Passive Management

The Huron-Manistee received requests to consider an alternative promoting “passive” management. That is, allowing “natural” processes to dictate future conditions on the Forests. Activities, such as fuels treatments, creation of early successional habitat, game species emphasis areas, and motorized recreation development, were de-emphasized in favor of mature forested habitats, nonmotorized recreation, and Wild and Scenic Rivers. This alternative was dropped from consideration because it does not respond to the Purpose and Need for Change. Specifically, it fails to address the need: to intensively manage some early successional habitat to maintain species viability, to manage fuels treatment to reduce unacceptably hazardous conditions, to effectively respond to Forests' issues or to public comments received.

Maximum Timber Management

The Forests were requested to consider maximizing the production of timber products. Activities, which resulted in increased timber production, such as timber harvest or creation of early successional habitat in aspen or jack pine, were emphasized. In contrast, management that would limit timber harvest, such as establishment of candidate Research Natural Areas and Wild and Scenic Study Rivers, was restricted or eliminated. This alternative was dropped from further consideration because it failed to respond to the Purpose and Need for Change. Specifically, it fails to: adequately address species viability requirements, and effectively respond to Forests' issues or to public comments received. Further, many of the ideas contained in this alternative were covered by the maximum timber benchmark.

Maximum Revenue

An alternative to promote forest management activities maximizing Net Present Value was considered. Activities that generate dollars to local economies (for example, timber harvest, game species management emphasis areas, mineral development, and motorized recreation opportunity development) were emphasized. The alternative was dropped from further consideration because it failed to respond to the Purpose and Need for Change. Specifically, it fails to adequately address species viability requirements and effectively respond to Forests' issues or to public comments received. Further, many of the changes contained in this alternative were covered by the maximum net present value benchmark.

No Mineral Leasing

An alternative that considered prohibiting the leasing of federally owned minerals was considered. Documentation and environmental analysis of a reasonably foreseeable development scenario for oil and gas is required in accordance with the Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act of 1987 prior to making a leasing decision. The plan revision process provides the opportunity to bring the Forest Plan into compliance with this Act. The Act's implementing regulations state that the agency shall also identify an alternative of "not allowing leasing." The Huron-Manistee National Forests considered such an alternative but it was not analyzed in detail for the following reasons.

The range of alternatives formulated during Forest Plan revision address the overall Purpose and Need while addressing the issues identified during the "Need for Change" and scoping processes. Since oil and gas was not determined to be an issue that would be used in formulating alternatives, it was considered unnecessary to analyze such an alternative, in detail, for the sake of analysis. Oil and gas leasing/development have occurred on the Forests since the mid-1960s. The existing 32 producing oil and gas wells over the nearly million acres of National Forest System lands can be considered a modest amount of development. Foreseeable development over the next 10-15 years is projected to include an additional 88 wells drilled on National Forest System lands with 64 wells being productive. This projected level of development is consistent with historic drilling on the Forests and is insignificant when considered in context of all other resource activities. In addition, ownership of the mineral resource across the forests is split between the Federal government, State government, and private entities. Approximately 50 percent of the mineral resources are controlled by either the State or private entities. It can be estimated that roughly half of the total 88 wells projected to be drilled over the next 10-15 years would be drilled into state or private ownership. Control over leasing and development of the non-federal mineral estate under National Forest System lands is very limited and full analysis of an alternative, which, in essence, only minimally decreases the already insignificant amount of projected development, is not reasonable.

The production, transmission, and conservation of energy are national priorities as reflected in the National Energy Policy and the Forest Service Energy Implementation Plan. The fourth goal of the Forest Service Strategic Plan calls for us to "help meet energy resource needs." A "no lease" alternative is not consistent with current Forest Plan direction or the agency minerals policy. No comments or information were provided during the Notice of

Intent/Need for Change comment period that identified a need to change current Forest Plan direction for oil and gas. Therefore, this was not considered a reasonable alternative.

Maximum Multiple Use

Comments were received to consider an alternative that maximizes outputs from the Forests. It differed from the Maximum Revenue Alternative in that emphasized outputs were not required to generate revenue. As such, the Alternative sought to maximize a diverse array of outputs, such as game species habitat management, candidate Research Natural Areas, semiprimitive motorized and nonmotorized areas, habitat management for rare and sensitive species, and fire and fuels treatments. The alternative was dropped from further consideration because it failed to effectively respond to the Purpose and Need for Change, or adequately address the Forests' issues or public comments received. Specifically, this alternative would not have met the requirements to maintain viability for all native and desirable non-native species.

Maximize Range of Response

An alternative that maximizes the range of response for each issue was considered. This alternative aimed to respond to the fact that many of the issues the Forests face are very polarized, for example some publics ask for more timber harvest while some ask for less. This alternative increased acres, designations, or activities where the preferred alternative decreased them and vice versa. The alternative was dropped from further consideration because it failed to effectively respond to the Purpose and Need for Change or adequately address the Forests' issues or public comments received. Specifically, it would not meet viability requirements for a variety of species and habitats dependent on early successional conditions.

Alternatives Considered and Evaluated in Detail

Alternative A

Alternative A, the no-action alternative, reflects current Forest-wide direction. Alternative A satisfies the 1982 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(f) (7)) and CEQ regulation (Section 1502.14 (d)) that a no-action alternative be considered. 'No action' means that current management allocations, activities, and management direction within the 1986 Forest Plan, as amended would continue. Some desired conditions, goals, objectives, and Standards and Guidelines would be updated to assure consistency with current national policy.

Desired Conditions: This alternative emphasizes wildlife, recreation, and timber. Timber management would be used as the primary tool for reaching desired vegetative conditions, achieving wildlife habitat objectives, and providing timber products for local industrial and individual needs. This alternative would provide a range of settings for a variety of recreational opportunities including developed recreation sites and areas for dispersed recreation like backpacking, hunting, camping, and OHV use.

Decision Rationale: During my evaluation of how this alternative responds to the five issues discussed in the *Decision Overview Section* of this document, I have found that Alternative A would not support management of the Huron-Manistee's unique natural resources or provide conditions supporting the Huron-Manistee's ecological capabilities to the extent of the Selected Alternative. In addition, Alternative A would not contribute to the vitality of the social and economic environments, to the same degree as the Selected Alternative, because it would not provide goods and services at the same levels.

Specifically, Alternative A would not insure that we meet the habitat restoration needs for a variety of endangered, threatened and sensitive species including the endangered Karner blue butterfly. In addition it fails to provide habitat to insure viability of a number of other sensitive species found within the planning area. Many of these plant and animal species are associated with barrens, prairies and openings. This alternative provides no provision for the management of early successional habitats in riparian areas. This habitat management may be necessary to maintain the viability of some species found on the forests including the Gold-winged warbler.

Alternative A provides no specific provisions to address the existing build up of fuels in fire prone, urban interface areas of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Therefore, I determined that this alternative does not adequately address the risk that wildland fire poses to forest resources, private property and human lives.

Alternative B - The Selected Alternative

This is the selected alternative and the 2006 Forest Plan, as modified from the Proposed Revised Forest Plan. The Forests are managed similar to Alternative A.

Desired Condition: To maintain or improve the habitat for a wide variety of game and non-game species and provide diverse recreation opportunities and a mix of forest timber products. Emphasis will be placed on managing hazardous fuels in fire-dependent ecosystems and at-risk rural/urban interface areas. In addition, this alternative incorporates considerations for recent legislative mandates (i.e. the energy bill), current research, and monitoring and evaluation results. Vegetation management will be similar to the 1986 Plan with increased emphasis on the needs associated with hazardous fuels treatment, barren and prairie restoration, species viability and replicating disturbance factors typical of the ecosystems of the northern Lower Peninsula. Desired future conditions, goals, objectives, and Standards and Guidelines are updated.

Decision Rationale: My rationale for selecting Alternative B as the 2006 Forest Plan is detailed in this Record of Decision. See the *Decision Summary and Rationale* section for more information.

Alternative C

This alternative provides a widened range of response to the issues and related comments by either decreasing or increasing the management intensity of some activities in a number of program areas.

Desired Conditions: Management activities proposed under this alternative are similar to Selected Alternative but the quantity and/or implementation rates are different. The rate of implementation of vegetation management for barren and prairie restoration, to address species viability, will increase in this alternative. The acres of hazardous fuels treatment and fuel break creation in fire-dependent ecosystems would be less under this alternative than under the Selected Alternative (6,000 acres instead of 8,000 acres per year). As with Alternative B, desired future conditions, goals, objectives, and Standards and Guidelines would be updated.

Decision Rationale: During my evaluation of how this alternative responds to the five issues discussed in the *Decision Overview Section* of this document, I have found that Alternative C would not support management of the Huron-Manistee's unique natural resources or provide conditions supporting the Huron-Manistee's ecological capabilities to the extent of the Selected Alternative.

Specifically, Alternative C would further reduce the acres of early successional habitat available because of a reduced harvest level for aspen compared to the Selected Alternative (1,500 acres per year in Alternative C as compared to 2,400 acres per year in the Selected Alternative). In addition this alternative would accelerate the rate of barren and prairie creation from approximately 9,300 acres in decade one under the Selected Alternative to 26,200 acres under this alternative. Although this implementation rate would increase available habitat for endangered, threatened and sensitive species in the first decade I determined that such a dramatic shift would not be socially acceptable or practical to implement.

Alternative C does provide specific provisions to address the existing build up of fuels in fire prone, rural/urban interface areas of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. However, it provides only 6,000 acres of treatment annually compared to the 8,000 acres in the Selected Alternative. Therefore, I determined that this alternative does not adequately address the increased risk that wildfire poses to forest resources, private property and human lives.

The Environmentally Preferred Alternative

Regulations implementing NEPA also require the specification of "...the alternative or alternatives which were considered to be environmentally preferable." (40 CFR 1505.2(b)). I have reviewed the National Environmental Policy Act to determine the criteria for identifying the environmentally preferable alternative. All six criteria in NEPA (Section 101(b)) were considered.

Based on review of the NEPA criteria for identifying the environmentally preferable alternative, I believe Alternative B, with modifications, is environmentally preferable. This alternative best addresses the protection and stewardship aspects of the criteria, while at the same time addressing those criteria which speak toward providing a balance between population and resource uses and attaining the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation. This alternative places top priority on conservation and recovery of threatened and endangered species.

Consistency with Other National Policies, Laws and Authorities

The Forest Service manages the Huron-Manistee National Forests in conformance with many laws, regulations, executive orders, and policies. The list provided here is not a complete list of all governing statutes that apply to the Forest Plan Revision, but it highlights the primary statutes guiding the preparation of the 2006 Forest Plan. In all cases, the 2006 Forest Plan is consistent with national law, policy and direction.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The Forest has compiled and generated information relevant to the effects of each of the alternatives considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement. I find that the environmental analysis and public involvement process complies with each of the major elements of the requirements set forth by the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500-1508). These include:

- Considering a broad range of reasonable alternatives.
- Disclosing cumulative effects.
- Using the best scientific information.
- Considering long-term and short-term effects.
- Disclosing unavoidable adverse effects.

The decision here does not directly authorize any new ground-disturbing activities or projects. These activities and projects will be subject to additional site-specific environmental analysis that will tier to the Final EIS and will follow applicable environmental analysis, public involvement, and administrative appeal procedures.

The 2006 Forest Plan has adopted all practicable means to avoid or minimize environmental harm. These means include provisions for providing those ecological conditions needed to support biological diversity, and Standards and Guidelines to mitigate adverse environmental effects that may result from implementing various management practices. The 2006 Forest Plan includes monitoring requirements and an adaptive management approach to assure needed adjustments are made over time.

National Forest Management Act (NFMA)

When the Huron-Manistee's Plan revision effort began in 2002, the Agency's 2000 planning regulations were in effect; however, that rule included transition language that allowed plans to be initiated under the 1982 rule during the transition period. Using my discretion to use either the 2000 rule or the 1982 rule, I chose to use the 1982 rule. When the 2005 planning rule was adopted, it allowed ongoing revisions to be completed under the provisions of the

1982 rule if the revision had already begun. The Huron-Manistee National Forests met this criterion and therefore proceeded to completion under the 1982 planning regulations. The NFMA planning regulations specifies a number of requirements that guide Forest Service planning. The 2006 Forest Plan complies with each of these requirements, as explained in this Record of Decision and the accompanying Plan, FEIS, and Appendices.

Net Present Value and Net Public Benefit

The 1982 Planning Rule requires identification of the alternative that maximizes the net present value (NPV) and how the Selected Alternative compares to this alternative. According to the economic analysis displayed in the FEIS, Alternative C maximizes NPV due to the mix of products and services provided and the treatments and management actions prescribed. Analysis indicated that Alternative C has an economic NPV of \$7.3 million annually. The 2006 Forest Plan (Alternative B, as modified) has a NPV of \$6.8 million annually, and ranked third among all alternatives. While Alternative C has a slightly higher NPV calculation, the 2006 Forest Plan will provide the highest net public benefit. Many benefits associated with the 2006 Forest Plan are not captured in fees or revenues, nor are they necessarily quantifiable. For example, it is difficult to assign monetary value to the conservation of habitat for a variety of species. For this reason, the alternative that maximizes NPV may not be the alternative that has the highest net public benefit. I have determined that the 2006 Forest Plan has the highest net public benefit because it best balances multiple uses of the Huron-Manistee and best fulfills the mission of the Forest Service.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

This Act creates an affirmative obligation “...that all Federal departments and agencies shall seek to conserve endangered and threatened (and proposed) species” of fish, wildlife, and plants. This obligation is further clarified in the national Interagency Memorandum of Agreement (dated August 30, 2000) which states our shared mission to “...enhance conservation of imperiled species while delivering appropriate goods and services provided by the lands and resources.” Based upon consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, their concurrence with our Biological Assessment and the finding of non-jeopardy in their Biological Opinion, I have determined that this Plan is in compliance with the ESA.

Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act/Forest Service Strategic Plan 2004-2008

The procedures of the 1982 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12(f)(6)) require that at least one alternative be developed that responds to and incorporates the Resources Planning Act (RPA) Program’s tentative resource objectives for each National Forest as displayed in Regional Guides. There is no longer a Regional Guide for the Eastern Region. This was withdrawn on November 27, 2001, as required by the 2000 planning rule (36 CFR 219.35 (e)). The Forest Service Strategic Plan 2004-2008, in lieu of an RPA Program, was completed in accordance with the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) and the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act.

While Forest Plans should be consistent with the broad guidance provided in the Strategic Plan and should consider the information provided by the RPA Assessment along with other available and relevant science, neither the Strategic Plan nor the Assessment contain recommended outputs to incorporate in specific forest plans. I find that the 2006 Forest Plan is in compliance with, and contributes toward the broad goals of the Forest Service Strategic Plan, which are:

- **Reduce the risk from Catastrophic Wildland Fire:** Fire, both prescribed and wildland, will be used as a tool to enhance ecosystem resiliency and to maintain desired fuel levels. Fire will play its natural role where appropriate and desirable, but will be actively suppressed where necessary to protect life, investments, and resources. The 2006 Forest Plan contains management direction in the form of desired conditions and objectives to increase the amount of forest restored to or maintained in healthy condition to reduce risk and damage from fire. The 2006 Forest Plan also focuses on treating vegetation in high hazard areas within the wildland/urban interface areas to reduce risk from wildland fire.
- **Reduce the Impacts from Invasive Species:** The 2006 Forest Plan contains direction to address the spread of terrestrial or aquatic non-native invasive species that pose a threat to Forest ecosystems.
- **Provide Outdoor Recreation Opportunities:** The 2006 Forest Plan will continue to emphasize outdoor recreational use of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The Forests will provide a variety of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities that are designed to address recreation demands, provide desired settings, and minimize user conflicts, while sustaining natural resources. It increases direction needed to better manage the use of motorized and non-motorized recreation (including OHVs, snowmobiles and lake access) and incorporates management plans and corridor boundaries to manage the Forests' designated and study Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- **Help Meet Energy Resource Needs:** There are no biomass energy projects currently in the area surrounding the Huron-Manistee National Forests. However, if a nearby biomass or energy project were developed, it could create a market for smaller diameter trees and lower quality wood products that would contribute to our ability to meet vegetative objectives identified in the 2006 Forest Plan. Because the 2006 Forest Plan is strategic, the Huron-Manistee will be able to respond to requests to explore alternate methods for providing energy, as long as the activities comply with direction for the management area.
- **Improve Watershed Conditions:** The 2006 Forest Plan employs a proactive approach to managing watersheds and riparian areas. It will move the Forests towards achieving the desired condition to have healthy watersheds that are resilient to natural disturbance events such as floods, fire, and drought and are capable of absorbing the effects of human-induced disturbances. The Forests' watersheds will provide high quality wildlife and fish habitat that allows for

the conservation of native and desired non-native species. The Forests will provide habitat to support a quality recreational fishing experience that includes a variety of fish species and access to lakes and streams.

- **Mission-related work in addition to that which supports agency goals:** The 2006 Forest Plan was developed to be consistent with the overall laws and policies that guide the management of national forests. It provides for human uses of the environment, as well as sustaining ecological processes for future generations. It also includes management direction to protect, improve, or mitigate impacts to watersheds, riparian and aquatic habitats, visual integrity and threatened, endangered, and sensitive species habitats. Monitoring and evaluation are incorporated to ensure an adaptive management approach that is consistent with land capability, scientific understanding, and expected outcomes.

Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA)

In 2003, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act was signed into law. I find that the 2006 Forest Plan is consistent with HFRA in that it provides for the protection of old growth when conducting HFRA covered projects, provides for public involvement in assessing and conducting hazardous fuels reductions projects and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuels reduction based on condition class and fire regime. In addition, the 2006 Forest Plan addresses and displays fire regime condition classes and it also emphasizes protection and enhancement of riparian areas and watershed health as directed under HFRA.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

Executive Order 12898 (59 Federal Register 7629, 1994) directs federal agencies to identify and address, as appropriate, any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations. I have determined, from the analysis disclosed in the Final EIS, that the 2006 Forest Plan is in compliance with this Executive Order.

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

The 2006 Forest Plan is a programmatic action and does not authorize any site-specific activity. Projects undertaken in response to direction of the 2006 Forest Plan will fully comply with the laws and regulations that ensure protection of cultural resources. The 2006 Forest Plan contains direction for cultural resource management including direction to integrate cultural resource management with other resource management activities.

Several other laws apply to the preservation of cultural resources on federal land. Since the 2006 Forest Plan does not authorize ground-disturbing activities, consultation with the Michigan State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) under the NHPA is not required. However, the Huron-Manistee did request SHPO to review the Proposed Revised Forest Plan and received correspondence from SHPO stating they accepted the changes proposed in the

Revised Forest Plan. In addition, Tribal consultation has occurred during the development of this 2006 Forest Plan. It is my determination that the 2006 Forest Plan complies with the NHPA and other statutes that pertain to the protection of cultural resources.

Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments (1994)

These policies support the Forest Service actions in establishing mutual and beneficial partnerships with American Indians and Alaska Natives and honoring treaty obligations. Forest Service policy is recorded in Forest Service Manual Section 1563. The Huron-Manistee National Forests met with tribal leaders on several occasions during the forest plan revision process. Concerns voiced by the tribes were addressed and incorporated into the revision documents. I believe the 2006 Forest Plan is consistent with Forest Service policy in Forest Service Manual Section 1563.

Data Quality Act

The Data Quality Act and its federal guidelines concern the quality of information used in the work of federal agencies. The 2006 Forest Plan and its accompanying EIS were developed by an interdisciplinary team of agency scientists and resource specialists using the best available scientific information. Data quality was a paramount concern, as the objectivity and quality of scientific data is key to developing a realistic resource plan.

The interdisciplinary team was aware of USDA information guidelines and devoted considerable efforts towards ensuring that the information used in developing the 2006 Forest Plan was credible and appropriate for the context. Scientific information was solicited from other federal agencies, state resource agencies and other recognized experts and scientists. Although the USDA Data Quality Act guidelines are not intended to be legally binding regulations, they were carefully considered while developing the 2006 Forest Plan and the FEIS.

Energy Policy Act of 2005

I find the 2006 Forest Plan is consistent with the Energy Policy Act of 2005. This Act makes it clear that domestic energy production from both renewable and nonrenewable sources is a national priority.

USDA Forest Service Final 2005 Travel Management Rule

The Travel Management Rule (70 Federal Register 68264), dated November 9, 2005 (36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295) revised regulations regarding travel management on National Forest System lands to clarify policy related to motor vehicle use including off-highway vehicles. This rule prohibits the use of motor vehicles off the designated system or use inconsistent with those designations once designations are published on a Motor Vehicle Use Map.

The majority of the Huron-Manistee National Forests' transportation system is already in place and supports an extensive system of Forest roads and trails that are open to OHV use. The 2006 Forest Plan sets desired conditions, goals and objectives that maintain a "closed unless designated open" policy for OHV travel, allows for a moderate level of increased OHV route development primarily focused on creating loops and connections between existing roads, trails and facilities, and to continue the current prohibition on cross-country OHV travel.

The 2006 Forest Plan does not make any final agency decision to develop or designate any specific route for either snowmobile or OHV use. The Forest will work closely with local governments, interest groups, and individuals to determine specific routes to be developed in the future. Over time, the Motor Vehicle Use Map will reflect these desired conditions in the 2006 Forest Plan. Desired conditions will not be met immediately but over the next 10-15 years through site-specific project analysis with public involvement eventually providing up to 31 miles of additional OHV routes to connect existing routes.

Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Executive Order 13186

The 2006 Forest Plan focuses on enhancing ecological health and plant and animal community diversity to the benefit of wildlife species, including migratory birds. The management direction in the 2006 Forest Plan is in compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and was developed with full consideration of the broad objectives and intent of Executive Order 13186.

Other Laws, Policy and Regulations

I also find that FEIS and the 2006 Forest Plan are consistent with the following body of policy and regulation:

- The National Energy Policy (Executive Order 13212)
- The Clean Air Act
- The Clean Water Act
- The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act
- The Energy Requirement and Conservation Potential
- Executive Order 13112 on Invasive Species
- Secretary of Agriculture's Memorandum # 1827 on Prime Farmland, Rangeland and Forestland
- Executive Order 1099 on the protection of Wetlands and Floodplains, and
- The existing body of national direction for managing national forests

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementation Begins in 30 Days

The 2006 Forest Plan becomes effective 30 calendar days after the Notice of Availability of the Record of Decision and Final Environmental Impact Statement is published in the *Federal Register* (36 CFR 219.10 (c)(1) [1982 planning rule]).

Transition from the 1986 Plan to the 2006 Forest Plan

The 2006 Forest Plan direction will apply to all projects that have decisions made on or after the effective date of this Record of Decision. Because this was a revision of the 1986 Huron-Manistee National Forests' Plan, many aspects and much of the management direction from the 1986 Forest Plan is carried forward relatively unchanged into the 2006 Forest Plan. Therefore, many existing projects and ongoing actions that were consistent with the 1986 Plan will continue to be so under the 2006 Forest Plan.

Many management actions decided prior to the issuance of the Record of Decision are routine and ongoing. Those decisions will generally be allowed to continue unchanged because the projected effects of these actions are part of the baseline analysis considered in the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Biological Assessments for the revision.

The National Forest Management Act requires that "permits, contracts and other instruments for use and occupancy" of National Forest System lands be "consistent" with the Forest Plan (16 U.S.C. 1640(i)).

I have decided not to modify any existing timber sale contracts solely due to the Revised Forest Plan. These contracts will be executed according to their terms, and these effects and conditions were considered in the FEIS. Existing timber contracts will, in most cases, be completed within three years. The decision is left to the Forest Supervisor to determine whether to modify decisions authorizing timber sales not currently under contract.

Other uses and occupancy agreements are substantially longer than timber contracts. These uses and occupancy agreements will be reviewed to determine whether or when the Forest Supervisor should exercise discretion to bring them into compliance with the 2006 Forest Plan. Recent project decisions that have not yet been implemented will be reviewed and adjusted by the decision maker, if necessary, to meet the direction found in the 2006 Forest Plan.

The decision maker has the discretion on a case-by-case basis, to modify pre-existing authorizations to bring them into compliance with the 2006 Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines. I find that the statutory criteria of "as soon as practicable" and excepting "valid existing rights" useful in exercising that discretion.

Key Considerations in Plan Implementation

The 2006 Forest Plan provides broad, strategic, landscape level direction for managing the Huron-Manistee National Forests. It does not make project-level decisions. Working toward the desired conditions and achieving the objectives in the Plan will be accomplished through site-specific project decisions, using the appropriate analyses and processes to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws and regulations.

The Final EIS for the 2006 Forest Plan did consider and evaluate the total management program that likely would be necessary to implement the objectives of the 2006 Forest Plan. It also dealt with those issues and concerns relevant at a larger landscape or forest-wide level. Therefore, in essence, the Final EIS is a large cumulative effects document, because it analyzed the total of activities that may be expected in the first decade (and longer term) and disclosed the forest-wide effects of those activities considered in total.

By tiering to the Final EIS, we will make use of this forest-wide analysis to streamline our environmental analysis for project-level decisions. We will not revisit landscape or forest-wide scale issues and effects because those effects have already been considered and disclosed in the Final EIS. This has applicability to a wide range of findings that are appropriately done at the forest-wide level.

Findings related to species viability and threatened species should be greatly simplified when projects are within the parameters of the 2006 Forest Plan and Final EIS. Project level analyses will focus on the impacts and effects at the specific site. Project-level decisions will not determine whether implementation of the 2006 Forest Plan is appropriate, but rather, which management techniques (if any) and mitigations (beyond those in the 2006 Forest Plan) are best suited to the site being analyzed.

Future Changes to the Plan

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is designed to answer questions regarding implementation of the 2006 Forest Plan. Monitoring and evaluation will tightly focus on decisions made in the Record of Decision.

Evaluation reports will display how Forest Plan decisions have been implemented, how effective the implementation has been in accomplishing desired outcomes, and what we have learned along the way. This will allow a check and review of the validity of the assumptions upon which this decision is based.

The Monitoring Framework in Chapter 4 ties well with the strategic nature of Forest Plans, with increasing specificity as the Forest Plan is stepped down to specific projects. This monitoring framework has four key monitoring components. The first component is the direction provided in Chapter 4 of the 2006 Forest Plan. The remaining three are implementation tools to ensure a common approach in monitoring Forest Plan direction.

1. The Forest Plan (Chapter 4) direction that provides *broad, strategic* guidance.
2. A Procedural Guide that provides *specific, technical* guidance.

3. An Annual Monitoring Schedule that outlines *annual, specific tasks* for the current year.
4. An Annual Monitoring Evaluation Review that provides a forum to *review current year findings* and identify specific modification if necessary.

Amending the Forest Plan

The revision of this Forest Plan is shaped by a central idea: how we manage the Forests should adapt to changes in how we understand the ecological, social, and economic environments. In the Forest Service, we call this adaptive management. The 2006 Forest Plan is well structured for adaptive management to occur because it clearly describes the desired conditions we will strive to achieve through implementation. In fact, those desired conditions are the very basis for the projects we will accomplish during the life of the Forest Plan.

In making the decision on the 2006 Forest Plan, I am also deciding that this plan will be adaptive and subject to change as we monitor, learn, and gain new information. The revision of the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Plan has incorporated much that has been learned since the 1986 Forest Plan and even as the 2006 Forest Plan was developed. However, as I have said before, this Forest Plan is not perfect. Neither is it cast in stone to be unquestioningly adhered to for the next 15 years. We will track progress toward reaching the desired conditions identified in the Forest Plan, and modify or reformulate management actions in response to that progress. If a particular management strategy, technique, or practice is applied, its results will be monitored to see if the desired effect is occurring, and if not, a modified or new strategy will be developed and implemented. That new strategy will also be subject to monitoring, evaluation, and, if needed, change.

Changes to the Forest Plan will generally take the form of plan amendments and will follow the appropriate procedures specified in the National Forest Management Act regulations. The need to amend the Forest Plan may result from:

- Recommendations of an interdisciplinary team based on monitoring and evaluation results.
- Determinations by the Forest Supervisor that existing or proposed projects, permits, contracts, cooperating agreements or other instruments authorizing occupancy and use are appropriate, but are not consistent with elements of the Forest Plan's management direction.
- Planning errors found during forest plan implementation.
- Administrative appeal decisions.
- Changes in physical, biological, social, or economic conditions.

The Forest Supervisor will determine whether the proposed changes to the Forest Plan are significant or non-significant. Significance here is defined by the NFMA regulations and is different from significance as used under NEPA. The correction of simple errors may take the form of an errata statement.

Administrative Appeal of My Decision

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to the provisions of 36 CFR 217.3. A written notice of appeal must be filed with the Chief of the Forest Service within 90 days of the date that legal notice of this decision appears in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Appeals must be sent to:

Regular Mail

USDA Forest Service
Ecosystem Management Coordination
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Mailstop Code 1104
Washington, DC 20250-1104

Express Mail

USDA Forest Service
Ecosystem Management Coordination
201 14th St., SW, 3rd Floor, Central Wing
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 205-0895

Electronic Mail

Appeals-chief@fs.fed.us

The use of Microsoft Word (.doc), WordPerfect (.wpd) or Adobe (.pdf) is recommended.

A copy of the appeal must simultaneously be sent to the deciding officer:

Randy Moore, Regional Forester
USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region
626 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Simultaneous electronic filing to the deciding officer should be sent to:

Appeals-eastern-regional-office@fs.fed.us

Any notice of appeal must be fully consistent with 36 CFR 217.9 and include at a minimum:

- A statement that the document is a Notice of Appeal filed pursuant to 36 CFR Part 217.
- The name, address and telephone number of the appellant.
- Identification of the decision to which the objection is being made.
- Identification of the document in which the decision is contained, by title and by subject.
- Date of the decision and name and title of the Deciding Officer.
- Identification of the specific portion of the decision to which objection is made.
- The reason for the appeal including issues of fact, law, regulation, or policy.
- Identification of the specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks.

Contacts

More information on this Record of Decision, the 2006 Huron-Manistee National Forests' Land and Resource Management Plan, and/or the Final Environmental Impact Statement can be obtained by contacting Leanne Marten, Forest Supervisor, Huron-Manistee National Forests, 1755 South Mitchell Street, Cadillac, Michigan, 49601, (231) 775-2421 or Jeff Pullen, Planning and Resources Staff Officer, Huron-Manistee National Forests, 1755 South Mitchell Street, Cadillac, Michigan, 49601, (231) 775-2421.

Full sets of all official documents may be found in the following locations:

- Colleges and Universities: Baker College, Ferris State University, Grand Valley State University, Michigan State University, Michigan Technological University, University of Michigan and Wayne State University
- Community libraries: Alcona County Library, Bridgman Public Library, Cadillac-Wexford County Public Library, J. R. VanPelt Public Library, Flint Public Library, Fremont Public Library and Shiawassee District Library
- On the web: www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf/index.shtml.
- On CD-ROM available at local Forest Service Offices

If you would like to request CD-ROM or hard copy versions of the full set of documents, or have questions regarding the Forest Plan and would like to speak with a Forest Service employee, see the following list of Ottawa National Forest offices:

<u>Supervisor's Office</u>	<u>Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District</u>
Forest Supervisor: <i>Leanne Marten</i> Planning and Resources Staff Officer: <i>Jeff Pullen</i> 1755 South Mitchell Street Cadillac, MI 49601 231-775-2421	District Ranger: <i>Les Russell</i> 650 N. Michigan Avenue P.O. Box Drawer D Baldwin, MI 49304 231-745-4631
<u>Cadillac-Manistee Ranger District</u>	<u>Huron Shores Ranger Station</u>
District Ranger: <i>Jim Thompson</i> 412 Red Apple Road Manistee, MI 49660 231-723-2211	District Ranger: <i>Chuck Andrina</i> 5761 N. Skeel Road Oscoda, MI 48750 989-739-0728
<u>Mio Ranger District</u>	
District Ranger: <i>Steve Goldman</i> 401 Court Street Mio, MI 48647 989-826-3252	



Randy Moore, Regional Forester

March 20th, 2006

Date

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