



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Huron-Manistee National Forests
Baldwin Ranger Station
650 N. Michigan Avenue
Baldwin, MI 49304

231-745-4631 (Voice)
231-745-2345 (Fax)
231-745-7701 (TTY)

File Code: 1950

Date: December 2, 2008

Dear Interested Parties:

The Baldwin/White Cloud Ranger District is inviting public comment on the following proposed project on National Forest System lands (see attached maps): *Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project*. The Karner blue butterfly is a federally endangered species that has declined on the Huron-Manistee National Forests over the past century as the oak/pine savannas/barrens habitats on which it depends have been replaced by mature forests due to extensive reforestation and fire control efforts, and the process of natural succession. To prevent the Karner blue butterfly from disappearing from our local landscape, the Huron-Manistee National Forest's Plan (Forest Plan) calls for the restoration and maintenance of savannas and barrens. In addition, a conservation strategy for the Karner blue butterfly is provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan and the Draft Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Management Strategy for the Huron-Manistee National Forests, which provide management and monitoring measures to meet recovery goals for viable populations. The Forest Plan incorporates the recovery goals by directing the restoration and maintenance of 20,300 acres of savannas/barrens within designated Karner blue butterfly population management areas and essential Karner blue butterfly habitat.

Project Locations and Acres Proposed for Treatment

County	Township	Section(s)	Twp.	Rng.	Acres	Treatment
Oceana	Grant	36	13N	17W	3	Removal of vegetation and seeding/planting via hand tools
Oceana	Otto	11, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 34	13N	16W	262	Removal of vegetation and seeding/planting via hand tools
Oceana	Greenwood	7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, 30	13N	15W	166	Removal of vegetation and seeding/planting via hand tools

The proposed project would restore and maintain 431 acres of occupied Karner blue butterfly habitat by reducing tree/shrub density (to an average of <15% canopy cover) and reducing the cover of undesired vegetation less than 2 meters in height (to an average of <25%) by removing individual herbaceous or woody plants using hand tools. Reducing overstory and understory cover would promote the growth of wild lupine – the host plant for the Karner blue butterfly, other nectar plants such as black-eyed Susan and horsemint, and native grasses such as big blue



stem, little blue stem, and Indian grass. Additional treatments are proposed to achieve the desired coverages of native grasses and flowering plants:

- Seeding/planting using hand tools to establish 5-15% cover of wild lupine and other Karner blue butterfly nectar plants.
- Seeding/planting using hand tools to establish >60% presence of desired savanna plant species and <5% presence of non-native invasive species.

A decision on this proposed project would be documented using a categorical exclusion under 36 CFR 220.6(e)(6), *Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction*. **This scoping opportunity is also the 30-day comment period to establish standing under the Forest Service administrative appeal regulation.** To have standing to appeal a decision resulting from this analysis, a commenter must submit comments on the proposed actions to the deciding official during this 30-day comment period beginning upon publication of the legal notice in the **Lake County Star**.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments on this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the *Lake County Star*. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. Regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period (36 CFR 215.6.)

Written comments must be submitted to: Heather Keough, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box Drawer D, Baldwin, MI 49304. You may also comment by phone at (231)745-4631 ext. 3111 or fax to (231)745-2345. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., M-F, excluding holidays.

Oral comments must be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours via telephone to Heather Keough (231) 745-4631 ext. 3111 or in person to Heather Keough, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box Drawer D, Baldwin, MI 49304, or at an official agency function (i.e., public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments on the **Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Restoration Project**.

Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf), Word (.doc) or Portable Document Format (.pdf), to comments-eastern-huron-manistee-baldwin-white-cloud@fs.fed.us. Comments must have an identifiable name attached or verification of identity will be required. A scanned signature may serve as verification on electronic comments.

Appeal Eligibility

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period. Only those who provide comments during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision under the regulations. Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide the following information:

1. Name and Address;
2. Title of the proposed action;
3. Specific comments on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons that the Responsible Official should consider in reaching a decision;
4. Signature or other verification of identity upon request; identification of the individual or organization who authored the comments(s) is necessary for appeal eligibility;
5. For multiple names or multiple organizations, a signature must be provided for the individual authorized to represent each organization, or for each individual that wishes to have appeal eligibility, and
6. Individual members of organizations must submit their own comments to meet the requirements of appeal eligibility as an individual; comments received on behalf of an organization are considered as those of the organization only.

Additional information regarding this action can be obtained from: Heather Keough, U.S. Forest Service, P.O. Box Drawer D, Baldwin, MI 49304, (231)745-4631 ext. 3111 or email at hkeough@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

/s/ Leslie E. Russell

LESLIE E. RUSSELL
District Ranger

Enclosures (3)