



Forest Plan Revision News

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Message from the Forest Supervisor

Last March, the Ottawa National Forest released its proposed revised Forest Plan and the accompanying Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Following the publication of these draft documents, the Forest held 5 public meetings in local communities around the western U.P., and joined the other 2 Michigan National Forests (the Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee) in holding 3 additional public meetings in lower Michigan. The meetings in the western U.P. were well attended and a number of oral and written comments were received at that time.

In addition, a 3-month public comment period, concluding at the end of June, ensued after release of the draft Forest Plan. During that time over 1,600 written comments were received. While the majority of comments received were from the northern Great Lakes region, because this is a “national forest,” comments came from all across the nation: from southern California to southern Florida to northern New York state.

As you can imagine, we heard from a wide spectrum of people who suggested a variety of ideas for changing the draft Plan. We also heard from a large audience that liked the draft Plan, but wanted to see some additional information in the environmental analysis. On the next couple of pages, we provide you with an overview of the comments that we received. We also share information on how to obtain a copy of the final Plan, which is scheduled to be released in Spring 2006. The revised Forest Plan, when final, will guide the management of the Ottawa National Forest for the next 10-15 years. I hope the vital interaction between us will continue after the Forest Plan is approved. Your continued involvement and feedback on Forest projects and activities will be invaluable to us as we begin to implement the Forest Plan that we all had a part in creating.

Bob Luechel



What We Heard

We received comments from individuals, State and local government agencies, environmental organizations, the Tribes, businesses, and partners. Planning Team members read each letter to better understand our stakeholders' issues. As we read the comments, it was obvious that the Ottawa and its resources are very important to the many people who live in the Lake States area and across the nation.

A short synopsis of some of the comments that we received is displayed on the following pages. Our response to these comments will be available in the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

Forest Plan Revision Topics Generating the Most Comments

- ▲ Off-Highway Vehicles
- ▲ Hardwood Management
- ▲ Timber Management
- ▲ Roadless/Wilderness Evaluation
- ▲ Management Indicator Species
- ▲ Aspen Management
- ▲ Threatened and Endangered Species

Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses

Forest Vegetation Composition. Goals for the vegetative composition of the forest varied from alternative to alternative. The preferred alternative proposed to manage and restore the Ottawa as a core part of the largest contiguous block of northern hardwoods in the Great Lakes region, with a diversity of forested types and conditions also occurring based on soil type and other factors.

- ▶ **Northern Hardwoods.** Many commenters expressed support for restoring the Ottawa's hardwoods to provide for a contiguous block of forest. Some commenters also expressed support for the increase in uneven-aged hardwood management. Others were concerned about increasing acreage of hardwoods at the cost of early successional species.
- ▶ **Aspen.** Aspen and the role it plays as habitat for conservation of woodcock, abundance of snowshoe hare (an important prey species for key predators), and abundance of grouse was emphasized by many. Some commenters expressed a desire to see this species maintained at current levels or increased. Others believe that the proposed goals are too aggressive and that the proposed aspen acreages are too high compared to the pre-logging era.
- ▶ **Old Growth.** A broad spectrum of comments were received on old growth: some people believing that the current acreage of old growth is sufficient, others believing that more or less acres should be identified and preserved.

Timber Management. In our preferred alternative, the Forest identified the upper amount of timber or allowable sale quantity (ASQ) that could be harvested. Many local governments, school districts, and forest industry commented on this because of its contribution to jobs, timber supply, and federal payments to counties. Some commenters opposed this level of commercial management. Some commenters believe that we also need to re-evaluate the number of acres we have identified as suitable for timber production.

All Terrain Vehicles (ATV) Use

The four alternatives for ATV use—ranging from allowing cross country access to establishing a limited designated trail system—generated many public comments. Most comments were related to the number of miles of roads and trails that should be available for ATVs. Some commenters use ATVs for access to hunting camps or favorite hunting spots, as well as other activities and expressed a desire to accommodate historical use by local residents. While some commenters expressed a desire to see more roads and trails designated, others raised concerns about the environment and damage that could result from unmanaged recreation. Some commenters expressed a desire for less ATV access, highlighting the value of having non-motorized areas to visit, and a desire for a “quiet” hunting experience.

Wilderness

While many commenters appreciated the designation of “Special Interest Areas” in our draft, there was still a concern that no additional areas were proposed for wilderness designation. Some concern was also expressed about the process used for identifying roadless areas and evaluating potential wilderness areas.

Non-Native Invasive Species

Comments were supportive of the proposed efforts to control, eradicate, and monitor non-native invasive species, encouraging more stringent guidelines and standards for equipment entering the forest.

Wildlife, Fisheries, and Rare Plants

Comments received on this topic reflect the broad interest and concern of the public for our wildlife, fisheries, and plants. Ensuring that we continue to provide habitat, protect threatened and endangered species, and monitor our activities and their potential effects was extremely important to a large number of commenters. Jack pine habitat for Kirtland Warblers was of concern to some commenters, noting the Forest's unique ability to support this species. Some noted the number of species that rely on aspen and the potential impacts to these species if there is a reduction in aspen acreage. Some noted the role of large patches of northern hardwood forests for the conservation of neotropical birds. The number of management indicator species (MIS) and the selection of those species was of interest to some.

To Receive A Copy of the Final Plan

In preparation for the distribution of the final Forest Plan and its accompanying documents, we would like to know how (and if) you want to receive documents. To improve government efficiency, better meet the needs of our public, and in response to the the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Ottawa National Forest is offering Forest Plan documents in electronic formats.

Please clip out the coupon below and return it to our office by December 31, 2005, or call or e-mail our office with the following information: your name and address, if you wish to remain on our mailing list, what documents you would like to receive, and in what format. Your early response will help us in maintaining our mailing list and will ensure that we only send you the information you requested.

Ottawa National Forest Land & Resource Management Plan

If you received this newsletter, you either requested Forest Plan Revision documents, you are on our mailing list to receive Plan Revision information, or you recently commented on the proposed revised Forest Plan.

Our Final Forest Plan is scheduled to be available in Spring 2006. This document is accompanied by the Record of Decision, the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which includes an analysis of alternatives proposed and a response to comments received during the public comment period for the proposed Forest Plan, and an Executive Summary of the FEIS.

You will be removed from our mailing list unless we hear from you by December 31, 2005.

- I do not wish to receive any documents; please remove me from your mailing list.
- Please notify me via e-mail of the availability of documents; I will view them on your website.
My e-mail address is: _____
- Send me a hard copy of the Record of Decision and Executive Summary of the FEIS only.
My mailing address is: _____
- Send me ALL documents hard copy.
- Send me ALL documents on CD.
My mailing address is: _____
- Large text copy, other: _____



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Contact Us

If you have any questions about the revision process, our current or future activities, or how you can receive a copy of the final plan, please contact us.

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Forest Plan Documents

There are several documents associated with Forest Plans. These include:

Final Environmental Impact Statement

(FEIS): Addresses the effects of our management actions on the land for the proposed alternatives. In addition, the FEIS provides our response to comments received during the public comment period

Record of Decision: Documents the Regional Forester's decision to adopt an alternative as the Forest Plan and provides the rationale for the decision.

The Forest Plan: Will guide the management of the Ottawa National Forest for the next 10-15 years. This document contains standards, guidelines, goals and objectives for forest management.

FEIS Executive Summary: Provides a summary of the FEIS.

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