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Forest Service
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Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact

Corsair Project

T 23N R6E, Sections 1,11,12,13,14,23,24
T23N R7E, Sections 6,7,8,9,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,26,27,28,29,32,33,34,35
T 22N R6E Sections 1,11,12,13,14
T 22N R7E Sections 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9

HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS
HURON SHORES RANGER DISTRICT
OSCODA, MICHIGAN

Introduction

This Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact (herein referred to as Decision) document my proposal for selecting management activities in the project area as analyzed in Alternative III of Corsair Environmental Assessment (EA).

Decision and Reasons for the Decision

I have reviewed the analysis presented in the Corsair Environmental Assessment (EA) and the supporting project record documentation. I am satisfied that the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) conducted a thorough analysis of the proposed action and alternatives. In addition to applying standards and guidelines from the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan as amended (Forests' Plan), the IDT carefully considered and applied site specific project design features and Best Management Practices developed by the State of Michigan as design criteria. In addition, I am satisfied the IDT effectively involved the public and carefully considered and responded to their comments.

Purpose and Objectives of the Corsair Project

The Corsair Project is designed to move the project area landscape towards the desired condition set forth in the Forests' Plan by meeting the goals and objectives for specific Management Areas (MA). The Huron Shores Ranger District determined the need to:

- Implement fuels reduction and fuelbreak projects where conditions warrant for the protection of life, property and safety (Forests' Plan, page II-3)
- Maintain and restore community diversity and forest health and to provide for wildlife and plant viability

- Produce a diverse mix of timber products in each Management Area as described in the Forests' Plan
 - MA 4.2 – high volumes of timber products (Forests' Plan, page III-4.2-2)
 - MA 4.4 – moderate to high volumes of softwood timber products (Forests' Plan, page III-4.4-2)
- Contribute to the economic base of the local community by providing a sustained yield of high quality products
- Supply a spectrum of recreational facilities and opportunities that are responsive to user demands as well as maintain a network of multiple-use trails in good condition, relying upon partnerships to the greatest extent possible
- Provide abundant and diverse opportunities for enjoying scenery, streams, lakes and river, heritage sites and wildlife
- Develop and operate the minimum road system, including all bridges and culverts, maintained to the minimum standards needed to meet requirement of proposed action, protect the environment, and provide for reasonable and safe access
- In old growth...use limited vegetation management to mimic natural disturbance, improve visual quality, reduce hazard fuels, manage pest, create fuelbreaks or maintain diversity of wildlife habitat (Forests' Plan III-7.1, 3-4)
- Use rehabilitation measures for management activities that mechanically displace or move soil, so that productivity of the land is not adversely affected (Forests' Plan, page II-21)

The Corsair Project's EA documents the analysis of Alternative 1 (No Action), Alternative II (Modified Proposed Action) and Alternative III to meet this need.

Decision

Based on the Corsair EA and in accordance with the direction provided in the Forests' Plan and the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Forests' Plan (2006), **it is my decision to implement Alternative III** as follows:

1. Thin approximately 452 acres of high sites oak to improve the existing stands and regulate growth by adjusting stand density through cutting and removal of trees.
2. Shelterwood cut and apply prescribed fire on approximately 1,770 acres of low site oak through commercial timber sale(s) to promote growth of the remaining trees, ensure oak regeneration and provide for future timber availability.
3. Thin approximately 683 acres of red pine through commercial timber sale(s) to remove low quality, unhealthy, overstocked trees and promote optimal growth on the remaining trees.
4. Thin and prescribed burn approximately 484 acres of red pine through commercial timber sale(s) to remove low quality, unhealthy, overstocked trees. A low intensity burn would occur to reduce needle cast and to increase growth of understory forbs, grasses, and shrubs.

5. Install three (3) interpretive signs in two separate areas. Two of the three interpretive signs would be installed at Buck Pond to explain fishing regulations. The third interpretive sign would be installed at the Monument snowmobile parking lot to explain the historical significance of the Monument Row of red pine trees.
6. Expand the Monument Road Snowmobile parking lot by approximately 10 spaces in order to provide additional parking for vehicles and trailers.
7. Install and/or move gates to manage seasonal motorized use and access. Segments of trail or road may be gated to minimize resource damage where it occurs.
8. Replace up to five outhouse buildings at trailheads in the Corsair Trail system. Two outhouse buildings may be replaced at the Corsair Trailhead. Two additional buildings may be replaced at the Wright's Lake trailhead and one building at the Silver Valley trailhead.
9. Repair/replace up to four (4) bridges within the Corsair trail system. Bridges will be repaired and/or replaced to ensure safe crossings over Silver Creek.
10. Maintain the fisheries interpretive trail by repairing or replacing eight interpretive panels alongside the trail that explain stream ecology. Maintaining the trail will include adding gravel to the trail tread.
11. Enhancement of a six (6) acre wildlife opening through mechanical treatments (for example mowing) to promote warm season grasses, encourage nectaring sources for the Regional Foresters Sensitive Specie dusted skipper, and suppress NNIS with herbicides.
12. Treatment of NNIS using herbicide, mechanical, hand-pulling treatments and/or prescribed burning on approximately 25 acres to suppress or eradicate NNIS (for example, leafy spurge) and promote native vegetation.
13. Non merchantable reduction of hazardous fuels and the application of prescribed fire on approximately 2,293 acres. Non merchantable wood products would be hand cut and treated mechanically and/or with prescribed fire to reduce hazardous fuels. This includes treatments such as brushing, chainsaw work, using a masticator, chipper or other such mechanical tools, and will not utilize commercial timber harvest.
14. Create and maintain approximately 361 acres of fuel breaks. The shape of the fuel breaks would be mosaic in nature and contain overstory trees. Fuel breaks would be created using commercial timber harvests and will be maintained by using hand tools and/or mechanized equipment and prescribed fire.
15. Apply prescribed fire to approximately 9,033 acres. Prescribed fire treatments will reduce hazardous fuel accumulations, aid in nutrient cycling, and enhance habitat for fire adapted species. Low to moderate intensity fire will be used along with multiple prescribed burn entries to accomplish these objectives.

16. No longer manage approximately ten (10) miles of the North/South trail link to the Michigan Shore to Shore Horse and Hiking Trail. The trail would be abandoned by removing trail marker signs and restoring trail tread to natural vegetation where soil erosion occurs.
17. Maintain three (3) miles of existing fish structure maintenance on Silver Creek using handwork, brush and logs.
18. Manage the Transportation System in the following way:
- Five (5 miles) of Level 2 System roads will be obliterated and removed from the Forest road system (portions of or all of roads; 2202, 2069, 4081, 4662, 4664, 4665, 4681, 4697, 4410, 4651, 4660, 4673, 4678).
 - Twelve (12 miles) of Level 2 System roads will be administratively closed to public motor vehicle use and be maintained as Level 1 roads (portions of or all of roads; 2012, 2035, 2201, 2235, 2623, 4014, 4015, 4188, 4401, 4409, 4649, 4659, 4667, 4668, 4669, 4670, 4674, 4676, 4684, 4720, 4721, 4725, 4735).
 - Three (3 miles) of unauthorized and Level 1 Administrative roads will be changed to Level 2 maintenance level roads and opened for public motor vehicle use. (portions of or all of roads; Trout Road, Snowmobile trail, *UNC-2198A, UNC-2198D, UNC-4103E, UNC-4103F, UNC-4103V, UNC-4402A, UNC-4408D, UNC-4509H, UNC-4675A, UNC-4679A, UNC-4688A, UNC-4689B, UNC-4723D, 4729).
 - Eight (8 miles) of unauthorized roads will be changed to Administrative Level 1 roads (portions of or all of roads; UNC-1, UNC-2, UNC-3, UNC-4, UNC-5, UNC-6, UNC-7, UNC-2235A, UNC-4102H, UNC-4408A, UNC-8, UNC-4412M, UNC-4416C, UNC-4509A, UNC-4509B, UNC-4509C, UNC-4510H, UNC-4511F, UNC-4512B, UNC-4514A, UNC-4514X, UNC-4544E, UNC-4628D, UNC-4656A, UNC-4667C, UNC-4685A, UNC-4686A, UNC-4734A, UNC-4735A and one unnamed road).
 - Three tenths (0.3 miles) Level 1 roads will be closed and/or obliterated and removed from the Forest road system. (roads 4679 and 4729).
 - Two (2 miles) of roads will be issued a special use permit to Iosco County (roads 2620 and 2624).
 - Thirty eight (38 miles) of unauthorized roads will be obliterated (refer to the Corsair Project file for specific roads).
19. Repair soil erosion damage where it occurs through a variety of methods such as placement of waterbars, native vegetation plantings, and the placement of gravel to restore eroded soils and repair damage to the forest landscape.

*UNC = Unclassified

Design Criteria

The following design criteria would be applied to Alternative III:

Healthy Forest Measures

- Underburning in red pine stands would be prohibited from May 1 to July 15 to reduce the stress on the red pine during the period of active bud growth and leader development.

Logging Measures

- Where possible, temporary roads would be located on existing roadbeds to minimize new ground disturbances.
- Slash in harvested red pine stands prescribed for underburning would be treated by the contractor to lie within 24 inches off the ground and kept two feet from the boles of residual trees to keep fire away from the base of trees.
- Within 200 feet of a travel way (road), slash from timber purchasers operations would be treated by the contractor to lie within 18 inches of the ground.

Recreation Measures

- Skidding of forest products would not be permitted along the tread of system trails. Restrict skidding of forest products directly across the tread of system trails at specified locations that are at least 660 feet apart and would occur directly across the trail, when feasible (Forests' Plan II-12).
- Place warning signs at trail crossings and frequently used travel ways to alert recreation users during timber harvest and prescribed burning operations.

Wildlife Measures

Kirtland's Warbler

- Restrict mechanical equipment, within ¼ mile of occupied habitat from May 1 through August 15, to minimize disturbances to Kirtland's warbler during their breeding season.

Northern Goshawk/Red Shouldered Hawk

The following design criteria are necessary for the protection of northern goshawk and red-shouldered hawk because both birds are sensitive to human related disturbances and if disturbed are known to abandon their nests. Nest areas (30 acres) are protected because both northern goshawk and red-shouldered hawk are known to use the same nests or nest tree from year to year, and they have very specific habitat requirements for nesting. Any alterations to these conditions could cause the nest area to be abandoned. Implementation of Standards and guidelines as described are proven to provide for the conservation of these species (USDA Forest Service, 1993).

- Timber harvest would be prohibited within the 30 acre nest protection area. From March 1st through August 31st, timber harvest would be restricted approximately 0.5 mile within the post fledging area (400 acres).
- Prescribed burning within the nest protection area would be prohibited during the critical nesting season, from March 1st to August 31st. Burns outside of this period would be of low intensity to protect nesting habitat integrity.
- New sensitive species locations discovered within a project area may result in all actions being delayed or interrupted within the area in consultation with the appropriate district wildlife/fisheries biologist or botanist to provide for the conservation of the species.

Plant Measures

- Known locations of Hill's thistle will be marked and protected from heavy equipment and ground-disturbing activities (temporary roads, landings, skid trails, furrowing, etc.).
- Heavy equipment and ground disturbing activities would be excluded from an area within ten feet of marked Hill's thistle (*Cirsium hillii*), Ram's-head Lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium arietinum*) and other RFSS plant locations, unless specified otherwise by district botanist.
- When working within or adjacent to streamside management zones the State of Michigan's Best Management Practices will be followed.

Visual Measures

- When possible, schedule treatments to appropriately disperse visual impacts spatially in the landscape and over time.
- Where possible, implement treatments during the low visitor use seasons.
- Provide cover on landings, temporary roads, or other cleared areas to blend these areas visually into the surrounding landscape and rehabilitate at completion of project. For example, edge line of clearings would be curved instead of straight.

Cultural Resources Measures

- All cultural resources sites would be protected by avoiding the site, either through sale design alteration, or through designation of a reserve area around the site. Such a Reserve Area will be at least 30 meters (98.4 feet) radius or the area determined by a Forest Service Archaeologist that will be adequate to protect the site.
- Any cultural resource sites found during implementation of the project would be reported immediately to a Forest Service Archaeologist and work would stop in the area.

Reasons for the Decision

My decision to implement Alternative III is based on its effectiveness in achieving the stated purpose and objective for the project (EA, Sections 1.3 and 1.4), addressing IDT concerns and addressing public concerns. Alternative III represents a site-specific application of the goals of Management Areas (MA) 4.2, 4.4 and 7.1 as described in the Forests' Plan (pages III-4.2- 1-15, III-4.4-1-8, and III-7.1-1-4).

In evaluating the effects of the alternatives as stated in Chapter 3 of the EA, it is my judgment that Alternative III is more effective than the other alternatives in achieving the stated purpose and need for action and project objectives for the following reasons:

1. Provide Timber Products:

Alternative I (No Action) would provide no timber products for the local economy.

Both action alternatives will generate an estimated 34,398 CCF (hundred cubic feet) of timber (EA, Table 7). Both Alternative II and Alternative III meet the management direction for MA's 4.2 and 4.4 of providing a diverse mix of timber products (Forests' Plan, pages III-4.2-2 and III-4.4-2).

2. Reduce Hazardous Fuels and Reintroduce Fire into Fire-Adapted Ecosystems:

Alternative I (No Action) would not reduce fuel loading, thereby, Alternative I would decrease the ability to safely suppress wildfires and evacuate the public in or adjacent to the project area. Alternative I would not improve the condition class of any acreage within the project area.

Alternative III proposes approximately 420 more acres of prescribed burning and 20 additional acres of non-merchantable fuels reduction than Alternative II. The combination of additional prescribed burning and non-merchantable treatments proposed in Alternative III will be more efficient at realizing the projects objective of "implementing fuels reduction project where conditions warrant for the protection of life property and safety" (Forests' Plan II-3; Corsair EA pg. 9) because it reduces hazardous fuels by removing the fine (1 hour) fuels and some of the larger (10 hour) fuel types. These additional treatment acres will also improve the Fire Regime Condition Class by as much as one Condition Class helping to restore natural fire regimes.

- ### 3. Promote Old Growth Conditions within Designated Areas:
- Alternative I, the no action alternative allows designated old growth stands to progress towards that condition without treatment. Stands which have unnatural conditions would not be accelerated towards old growth characteristics by treatments. This alternative will take the longest time for some stands to reach old growth characteristics. Alternatives II and III improve old growth conditions (Forests' Plan, II-4) by reintroducing fire into fire adapted ecosystems and by thinning red pine plantations in a way that will promote larger trees, reduce the plantation row appearance. Both action alternatives are equally beneficial to the old growth resource. The use of prescribed fire may have short term, minor negative impacts to old growth development. However, these are outweighed by the long term

beneficial ecological impacts of allowing fire to play a more natural role in the ecosystem and help prevent stand replacing wildfires in old growth.

4. Maintain and Improve Wildlife Habitat, Including Early Successional Habitat:

Provide for Species Viability Needs: Alternative I does not provide any early successional habitat in any Forest or vegetation type. This alternative does not meet the objective of improving wildlife habitat above current conditions and does not meet Forests' Plan direction in regards to creating or maintaining wildlife habitat within the project area. Mid to late successional habitat would continue to increase, further reducing habitat availability for species that are dependent on early successional habitat.

Alternatives II and III both provide improvements for wildlife habitat through the various vegetative treatments analyzed in the EA. Alternatives II and III meet the forest wide goal of improving wildlife habitat particularly in regards to maintaining and creating early successional habitat (Forests' Plan, II-3-6, III-4.2-2-3, and III-4.4-2-3).

Alternatives II and III are considered equal in regards to their overall positive benefit to wildlife.

5. Reduce Non-native Invasive Species Infestations: Alternative I does not provide treatment to help control existing or future infestations of NNIS.

Alternative II and Alternative III both provide NNIS treatment. NNIS treatment is essential to preventing the further spread of invasive plants. The sites may be treated multiple times to achieve desired results.

6. Manage the Road System: Alternative I does not provide for prudent transportation system management. Alternative II proposes to close and/or obliterate 7.8 miles of Level 1 and Level 2 roads as well as obliterate 14 miles of unauthorized roads.

Alternative III proposes to close and/or obliterate 5.3 miles of Level 1 and Level 2 roads as well as obliterate 38 miles of unauthorized roads. Alternative III comes closer to meeting the Forests' Plan objective of having 3 miles per square mile of open road. Alternative III also better meets the Forests' Plan direction and the Corsair Project objective of "developing and operating the minimum road system maintained to the minimum standard needed to protect the environment and provide for reasonable and safe access (Forests' Plan pg. II-39, Corsair pg. 11).

7. Provide Quality Recreation Experiences: Alternative I does not meet this objective. Alternative II proposes to relocate a segment of the horse and hiking trail and designate additional miles of ATV trail on the existing snowmobile trail. Alternative III was developed through the public scoping and comment process and does not propose to relocate the horse trail or designate ATV trail. Alternative III provides a higher quality recreation experience since it incorporates public and trail user input.

In developing the EA, Decision Notice (DN), and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), I recognize that less than complete knowledge exists about many relationships and conditions of

wildlife, fish, forests, jobs, and communities. The ecology, inventory, and management of a large forest area are complex and constantly developing sciences.

As required by 36 CFR 219.35, I have considered the best available science in making this decision. The project record demonstrates a review of relevant scientific information, database review, field reconnaissance, consideration of responsible opposing views, and, where appropriate, the acknowledgment of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk.

It is also important to state that the management actions in Alternative III are routine and have been continuously analyzed and successfully implemented for years on the Huron National Forest. Numerous environmental assessments have been conducted for projects having similar purpose and needs on the Forest. Examples specific to the Huron Shores Ranger District include the Brittle II (2010), the Mix and Match (2006) and Memorable (2004) projects. Based on analysis of the current project and many previous projects it is my decision to implement Alternative III to achieve the stated objectives of the project.

Other Alternatives Considered

In addition to the selected alternative, I considered two other alternatives (Alternative I and Alternative II). A comparison of these alternatives can be found in Table 4 (EA, page 23).

Alternative I: Deferred Harvest (No Action)

Vegetation and wildlife management would be deferred. No timber commodities would be produced. The level of wildfire risk to nearby communities would continue to escalate due to continued fuel buildup. Routine use and maintenance of roads, trails, and other facilities in the project areas would continue. Current uses of the area would continue until such uses were prohibited by changes in environmental conditions or until the next planning phase.

Alternative II: The Modified Proposed Action Alternative

Direction provided in the Forests' Plan is the basis for this alternative. This alternative was designed and proposed by the ID Team to move the project areas from the current condition toward the desired condition as described in the Forests' Plan. This action proposes actions that respond to the need to sustain a healthy forest, produce a diverse mix of timber products, restore fire adapted ecosystems, improve and maintain diverse wildlife habitats, control non-native invasive species, reduce hazardous fuels and provide quality recreation, and rehabilitate user-created resource damage. Alternative II includes similar actions to Alternative III however has fewer acres of prescribed burning and non-merchantable fuels reduction. Alternative II proposes more Level 1 and Level 2 road closures and fewer unauthorized road closures.

Alternative III:

Direction provided in the Forests' Plan is the basis for this alternative. This alternative was also designed to move the project areas from the current condition toward the desired condition as described in the Forests' Plan. Alternative III combined ID Team as well as public comment into its design. Alternative III expands fish structures along Silver Creek, obliterates 24 additional

miles of unauthorized road, and expands prescribed burning by approximately 409 acres. Maps displaying the activities proposed in Alternative III can be found in Appendix B of the Corsair EA (pp 131-140).

Public Involvement

In making this decision, I have taken into account public concerns and comments regarding the proposed project. I have evaluated the adequacy of the issue resolution in the EA, in formulating alternatives, determined design criteria, and evaluated the effects of alternatives. I also took into consideration issues raised during the scoping and the 30-day comment periods. Response to comments is found in the project file. Therefore, based on all factors, it is my judgment that Alternative III best provides for the greatest net benefit to the public.

In August 2012, scoping letters and maps explaining the proposed actions of the Corsair Project were sent to adjacent landowners, individuals and organizations on the District's and Forests' mailing list, Tribes, and other parties known to have an interest in this project. The scoping letter and maps were also posted on the Schedule of Proposed Actions internet sites and the Huron-Manistee Forest Service planning website. A legal notice was placed in the Oscoda Press in August, 2012.

Public involvement for the project also included ID Team members meeting with concerned citizens and groups of interested public. Several meetings with local landowners occurred in October 2012. A Power Point presentation outlining the projects proposal was given to the Corsair Trail Council in October, 2012. In November 2012, IDT members met with another group of landowners who were concerned with prescribed burning. Numerous other informational inquiries were received both by telephone, in person, and by e-mail.

Thirty (30) comments were received from members of the public in response to public scoping activities. Additional issues were also identified by the IDT. A complete discussion of the issues studied for this project can be found in Chapter 1.8 of the EA.

The primary issues that were identified as a result of scoping and the IDT were:

Issue 1: Reduce hazardous fuels using methods other than prescribed burning

Issue 2: Management of the road system

Issue 3: No longer manage the North/South connector horse trail

Issue 4: Alternative ATV route than the one being proposed

Four comments were received during the 30 day comment period that occurred in November and December of 2013. Copies of the initial scoping letter, 30-day comment period letter and response to comments, notification letters, mailing list of individuals, government agencies, tribes, and organizations contacted and all other correspondence can be found in the Corsair Project Planning Record.

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

I have reviewed the significance criteria of both context and intensity as defined by 40 CFR 1508.27. After considering the environmental effects described in the EA along with past experience with similar forest management activities, and in accordance with 40 CFR 1508.27, I have determined that implementation of Alternative III is not a major federal action and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment considering the context and intensity of impacts.

My determination is based on a review of the project record that shows a thorough review of relevant scientific information, a consideration of responsible opposing views, and the acknowledgement of incomplete or unavailable information, scientific uncertainty, and risk. Thus, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared. This determination was based on the following factors:

Context of Effects

This project, and the EA on which it is based, applies only to the area in which it is located. The context for this Decision is only within the aforementioned project area within the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Neither the effects analysis nor this Decision applies to decisions that may be made elsewhere, either regionally or nationally. After a thorough review of the effects analysis contained in the EA, I find no basis for concluding that this project has significance (both short-term and long-term) beyond the bounds of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The reasons for my conclusions are more specifically described in the paragraphs that follow.

Intensity of Effects

This refers to the severity of impact, as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following ten factors are considered in evaluating intensity:

- 1. Both beneficial and adverse effects have been considered in the analysis. The beneficial impacts will outweigh expected short term, adverse impacts.**

The selected alternative achieves the Purpose and Need objectives (Chapter 1.3 and 1.4). Design criteria will be implemented to minimize or eliminate potential effects of proposed activities. Implementing Alternative III will not have a significant effect on the quality of the environment (EA, Chapter 3). My finding of no significant environmental effects is not biased by the beneficial effects of the action. The EA demonstrates that the effects of this alternative are relatively minor and impacts generated are not directly, indirectly or cumulatively significant.

- 2. Public health and safety are minimally affected by the proposed actions.**

The EA lists project design criteria for the proposed activities. Design criteria are intended to minimize or eliminate potential impacts from proposed activities. Alternative III will not significantly impact public health and

safety. The reduction in hazardous fuel loading throughout the project area will improve public safety with regards to the risks posed by wildfires. The use of prescribed fire to reduce fuels and promote healthier forests does have risk associated with implementation. Use of prescribed fire is a common management tool and has been used frequently within and around the Corsair project area in the past. The project file discusses the measures that will be taken to minimize risks in order to gain a greater level of fire protection (refer to fire and fuels documents in the project folder; Pre-ignition Checklist, Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning, Burn Plan PMS).

3. The project is not expected to impact any unique geographic area.

Although the project area is diverse, there are no unique geographic areas (wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, ecologically critical areas, prime farmland) in proximity to the project. Design criteria will be implemented to minimize or eliminate potential effects of proposed activities. Alternative III will not affect any unique characteristics of the geographical area (EA, Chapter 3).

4. The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

The project treatments are standard management activities and are not considered scientifically controversial. Based on the level of response to the project and past experience with similar projects, I have determined that the effects on the quality of the human environment as a result this project is not highly controversial. The effects of the project are not likely to be a source of substantial controversial scientific disagreement. This does not mean that implementation of the project will be acceptable to all people, because some people will neither agree nor be pleased with my decision. Issues that were identified through scoping are shown in the EA, Chapter 1.7 and in the project record. Visual concerns that were raised through the initial scoping period are addressed in Chapter 3 of the EA.

5. There are no known effects that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests and the Huron Shores Ranger District has considerable experience with the types of activities to be implemented in this project. The Huron Shores Ranger District has successfully carried out all prescribed activities in many similar projects over the past 20 years. The treatments are routine and proven to be highly effective especially in regards to timber management, hazardous fuel reduction, wildlife habitat improvement, recreation improvement, and rehabilitating user-created resource damage. The effects analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risks (EA, Chapter 3). Alternative III does not involve highly uncertain, unique, or unknown environmental risks.

- 6. The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.**

This decision does not set a precedent for future actions with significant effects because it is similar to projects that have previously been implemented. This project is consistent with the direction put forward by the Forests' Plan. This decision will not direct or limit future management actions.

- 7. The action does not cumulatively reach a level of significance, even when combined with past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions on public and private lands in the area.**

The effects of other foreseeable future actions as well as past actions and ongoing actions were included in the analysis (EA, Chapter 3). There are no undisclosed or related actions that would produce cumulative significant effects on the physical or human environment.

- 8. The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural or historic resources.**

Analysis of the cultural resources of the project area has been completed (refer to the Cultural Resources report in the project file). If during implementation historic properties are found, design criteria have been developed to help protect sites from potential adverse impacts. Management activities are excluded from historic sites through sale design or designation of a reserve area that includes a buffer area adequate in size to protect the known site.

- 9. The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical for these species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.**

Alternative III will have no adverse effects on any endangered or threatened species or habitat that has been determined to be critical (EA pp 55-77). Also refer to the Biological Assessment for the Corsair Project.

- 10. The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.**

Applicable laws and regulations were incorporated into the Forests' Plan Standards and Guidelines (Forests' Plan, I-4 to I-6). None of the actions in Alternative III threaten to lead to violations of federal, state or local environmental laws, or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment (EA, Chapter 3). Additionally, the actions comply with the Forests' Plan.

Additionally, I find that all timber stands to be treated under Alternative III are suitable for management activities. Alternative III also includes measures to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts (40 CFR 1505.2 (c)) (EA Chapter 2 Design Criteria).

Findings under NFMA and Other Laws and Regulations

The management actions in this decision to implement Alternative III of the Corsair Project are appropriate to meet the Standards and Guidelines that apply to all Management Areas (MA) of the Forests' Plan, (Forests' Plan pages II-8 through II-40), as well as the Standards and Guidelines for MA 4.2, 4.4 and 7.1 (Forests' Plan pages III-4.2-1 through 15; III-4.4-1 through 8; and III-7.1-1 through 4).

Other applicable regulatory requirements and law are listed below.

- **National Forest Management Act**

As required by NFMA Section 1604(i), this project is consistent with the Forests' Plan.

- The prescribed actions which alter vegetation are consistent with the Forests' Plan Standards and Guidelines.
- The actions in Alternative III were not chosen primarily because they will give the greatest dollar return or the greatest output of timber, although these factors were considered (Decision - Reasons for the Decision).
- The actions in Alternative III include design criteria to avoid impairment of site productivity and ensure conservation of soil and water resources.
- The actions in Alternative III are expected to achieve the desired effects on regeneration of desired species, residual trees and adjacent stands, wildlife and fish habitat, fire and fuels, recreation, visual values, and other resources (EA, Chapter 3).
- Harvesting and transportation requirements as well as total costs of preparation, logging, and administration are practical.

- **Endangered Species Act**

A Biological Evaluation (BE) and Biological Assessment (BA) were prepared for the Corsair Project (refer to Project Record). The BE and BA evaluated and documented the effects of this project on federally listed or proposed species, designated critical habitat in the project area. The Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with the findings of the BA in a letter dated February 19, 2013. The concurrences included that this project is not likely to adversely affect the Kirtland's warbler.

- Kirtland's warblers are highly unlikely to occupy the areas proposed for management because the habitat is not currently suitable for breeding. Any proposed burning activities or harvest within ¼ mile of occupied stands would occur outside the breeding season (May 1-August 15).

- Machinery may be used to close roads within occupied Kirtland's warbler habitat, however these impacts would occur on the periphery of the stand, be short term in nature (lasting only a few hours), and would occur outside the peak breeding season (May 20-June 30).
- Herbicide application by spot treatment within occupied habitat would occur outside the breeding season (May 1-August 15).

- **Clean Water Act**

This Act is designed to restore and maintain the integrity of water resources. Project activities comply with Forests' Plan Standards and Guidelines for water resources and State of Michigan Best Management Practices (EA, Chapter 3). Any necessary federal, state and local permits would be obtained prior to implementation.

- **National Historic Preservation Act, Archeological Resources Protection Act and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act**

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to take into account the effect of a project on any district site, building, structure, or object that is included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register. The Archeological Resources Protection Act covers the discovery and protection of historic properties that are excavated or discovered on federal lands. Site specific surveys identified cultural and historic sites within the project area and specific mitigation measures have been identified for site protection (See Design Criteria or Chapter 2.5 of the EA). This project will also comply with the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act. If historic properties or artifacts are encountered during project implementation, work will stop and a Forest Service Archeologist will be notified immediately.

- **National Environmental Policy Act**

This Act requires public involvement and consideration of environmental effects. The Corsair Project Record supports compliance with this Act.

Clean Air Act

The effects of the project activities on air quality are expected to be temporary, minor, and localized (refer to the Corsair Fire and Fuels Specialist Report and the Michigan Smoke Management Plan). Smoke, particulate and exhaust emissions, and some additional road dust from logging equipment and the controlled burn activity will negatively affect short-term air quality to residents and visitors immediately adjacent to harvest units, roads used by logging trucks, and controlled burn treatments units. A burn plan will be written for prescribed burn projects that detail the management objectives and the wind and temperature conditions that provide for public safety, private property protection, and maximize smoke dispersal (Burn Plan PMS 484 in the Corsair Project File). According to the State of Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Corsair project is not within a Class I airshed. Class I airsheds include national wilderness areas that greater than 5,000 acres and national parks that are greater than 6,000 acres in size. There are two Class I airsheds in Michigan; Isle Royale and Seney Wilderness. The Corsair project is also not within a non-attainment area for air quality.

Areas that meet the national ambient air quality standard are considered to be in "attainment." Locations where air pollution levels persistently exceed ambient air quality standards may be designated nonattainment. There is one non-attainment area in Michigan in Wayne County (approximately 200 miles south of the project area).

Administrative Review Opportunities

This decision was subject to objection pursuant to 36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B. The Objection Reviewing Officer for this Decision was Leslie Auriemmo, Huron-Manistee National Forests Forest Supervisor.

One objection was received with the reviewing officer issuing the following instructions;

"The Responsible Official in this final Decision Notice will state how many small segments of road (one tenth of a mile or less) will be closed and to provide an explanation for why they are being closed. (The Forest Supervisor) also asked for a description of the actions involved in road closure/obliteration and that a map be provided showing road numbers for the roads to have changes in the selected alternative."

To fulfill these instructions, the number of small segments of road (one tenth of a mile or less) that will be closed/obliterated with the explanation as to why are as follows;

- Three (3) roads will be changed from Level II roads to Level I roads (administratively close portions of road numbers; 2012, 2623, and 4684). The reason why is that these road segments are under or need to be under Special Use permit for private landowner access.
- Seven (7) roads will be changed from unauthorized roads to Level I roads (portions of road numbers; UNC-1, UNC-2 UNC-2235A, UNC-4509B, UNC-4509C, UNC-4656A and one unnamed road). The roads will be added to the Forest Service Level I roads system primarily to allow private land owner access on legal Forest Service roads.
- Sixty five (65) road segments will be closed/obliterated because they are unauthorized user-created roads (refer to Corsair Project record for specific road segments). They will be closed/obliterated primarily because they are causing soil and resource damage, are duplicate roads, or have associated illegal activity such as woodcutting and trash dumping.

Roads will be closed/obliterated using a variety of methods. Methods will depend on topography, as well as the nature of the road itself and its condition. Roads may be closed/obliterated by creating earthen berms or dropping trees across them and allowing the revegetation of the roadbed. Others may be gated (in some cases where special use permits will be used to access private land). Roads may also be closed/obliterated using signage, carsonite posts, wooden posts fencing, and/or guardrail.

A map displaying road numbers for the roads slated to be changed is provided as Appendix A of this Decision.

All instructions given by the Reviewing Officer have been followed. This decision is the agency's final administrative decision.

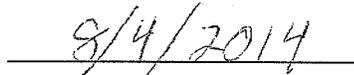
Project Implementation

Implementation of this decision may occur immediately.

Contact

For further information on this decision, please contact myself or Kari Vanderheuel, Natural Resources Planner at the Huron Shores Ranger Station, 5761 North Skeel Avenue, Oscoda, Michigan 48740, or phone (989) 739-0728.

Responsible Official



STEVEN A. GOLDMAN
Mio District Ranger
Huron-Manistee National Forests

Date

Attachment: APPENDIX A; Recreation and Roads Activities Map

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APPENDIX A: Recreation and Road Activities

