



O·T·T·A·W·A
NATIONAL FOREST

The Ottawa in Review 1999 and 2000

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Ottawa National Forest Annual Report

USDA-Forest Service
Ottawa National Forest

December 2000

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The Ottawa In Review

Capturing all that happens on the Ottawa National Forest is quite a challenge. After all, the Ottawa is a work in progress. The beauty, wealth and potential of the Forest that visitors see today is the outcome of activities and events begun nearly 70 years ago when the national forest was proclaimed, as well as actions that have taken place over the last two years. This monitoring report focuses on some of the actions taken recently that were aimed at implementing our Forest Plan, maintaining healthy ecosystems, and supplying valued products and services to people who live within or value the Ottawa National Forest.

The Ottawa was born of tax delinquent lands of the 1920's and 1930's; the "lands nobody wanted." From this harsh and often barren landscape a new and vibrant forest was begun. People and the Forest with its natural recuperative powers, took up a complementary relationship that continues today.

The wealth of the Forest is its many scales of ecosystems made up of soils, landforms, waters, climates and vegetation. Its million acres hold a great variety of animal and plant habitats and populations ranging from common to rare. It is the permanent home to hundreds of species and a temporary hospice to those that migrate through it on their way to other parts of the world. The Forest is also home to hundreds of lakes and wetlands and thousands of miles of creeks and streams. Together this flora, fauna and earth form a resilient forest that produces a natural diversity, clean air, and clean water.

The Ottawa is also about people and their needs for products made of wood, as well as recreation away from crowded cities. It is valued for its photogenic natural beauty, unique landscapes and habitats. It is about secluded places to fish and hunt, and to collect other forest products like birch bark, berries, tree boughs and mushrooms.

As managers, much of our work entails investing in the man-made and natural capital that we know as the Ottawa Forest. Through good management we can both sustain natural ecosystems and their functions and supply many products and services for people. We are working with many partners to manage today's forest with tomorrow's forest and people in mind.

In the years just ahead national forests across the country, as well as the Ottawa National Forest, will be responding to changing national direction concerning federal forest management. These changes dealing with how we manage our road system, the protection of roadless areas, as well as how new forest plans are built set the stage for a new level of public interaction with our many partners in the future. We look forward to the ongoing challenge of managing your national forest.

Forest Management: Forest Products

The Ottawa utilizes the Forest Product program to accomplish numerous objectives; some of these are to improve, restore, and maintain healthy forest ecosystems, and to protect and improve TES habitats. We strive to be proactive and not reactive to the issues of healthy forests and ecosystem restoration.

As a forest, we have consistently ranked among the top in meeting timber offer objectives as well. We faced many challenges in 2000, which have led us to make changes in our standard mode of operation. In the future we will be emphasizing out-year planning and rebuilding forest product sale opportunities. This will be accomplished through site-specific silvicultural examinations and increased NEPA workloads. Commercial timber sales from a forest provide needed raw materials for products that society demands, such as lumber for construction and furniture, pulp for paper, poles, post and other products. These sales generate revenue to the U.S. Treasury, and also create jobs in logging and in the manufacture of primary and secondary products.

LUCID (Local Unit Criteria and Indicator Development Project)

The Ottawa is a “pilot” forest for the Forest Service to develop criteria and indicators of forest sustainability at the forest management unit level. Derived from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the project is working to define ecological, social and economic criteria to assess sustainable ecosystem management.

The Ottawa Team is working to develop and test a suite of indicators to assess sustainable ecosystem management, derive pertinent local ecologic, social and economic data, develop methods to examine the linkages between indicators, and aggregate the results for reporting on sustainability and adaptive management.

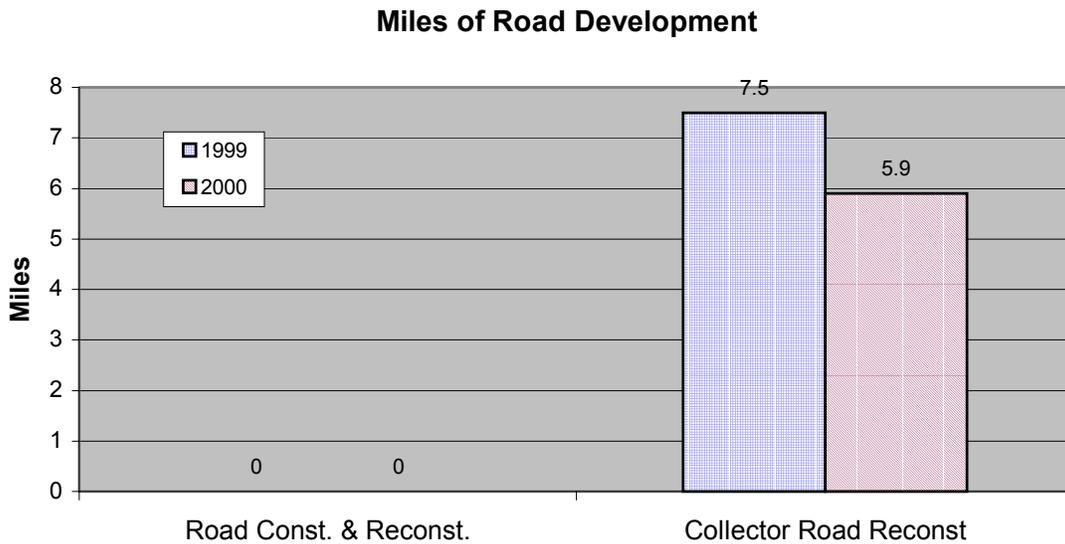
The results of this work, along with similar work on other “pilot” Forests, will be used to examine linkages between forest management level monitoring and national level monitoring, including establishing links to the Montreal Process to identify research needs related to local level criteria monitoring, and to develop a strategy to implement local unit monitoring on national forests across the country.

On the Ottawa, the results of this work will be used to supplement our annual forest plan monitoring, identify future resource data needs, and provide background to the upcoming forest plan revision process.

Roads

Nearly all Forest users from hunters to cross-country skiers to wildlife researchers use roads to access the Ottawa. Our roads provide access to boat launches and campgrounds, timber sales, walk-in hunting areas and colorama tours. Portions of the Forest with different road densities, from no roads to many roads, help shape the landscape of the Ottawa.

Maintaining forest roads is as important to safe travel as it is to the healthy condition of soils and waterways next to where those roads run. The road system of the Ottawa is essentially in place, and our attention is focused on tackling the large backlog of collector road reconstruction we can accomplish as funds are made available. Reconstructing a road returns it to its best condition, maintains the road investment, ensures safer use and environmental quality.



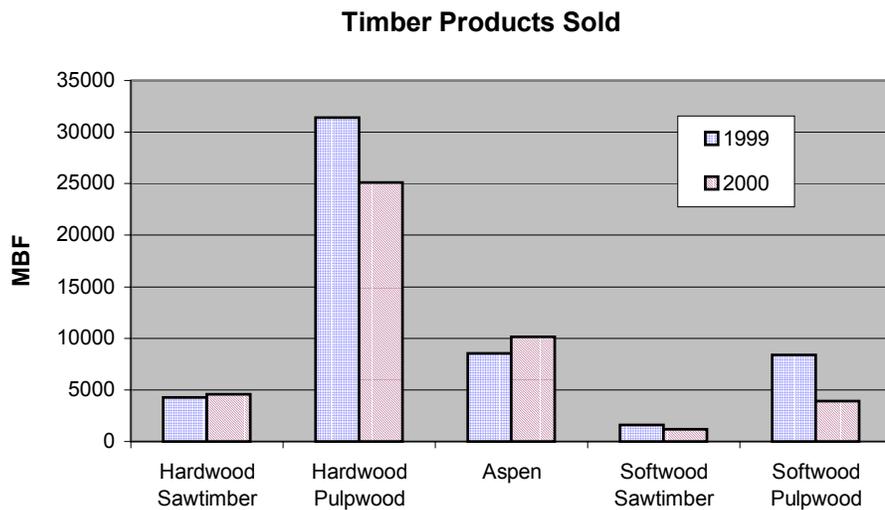
Timber Production

Since the adoption of the Ottawa Forest Plan 14 years ago, the average annual timber **offered** for sale was 66.6 million board feet (MMBF) of timber (97 percent of our target).

Timber **sold** in 1999 and 2000 was 54.2 MMBF and 44.9 MMBF, respectively.

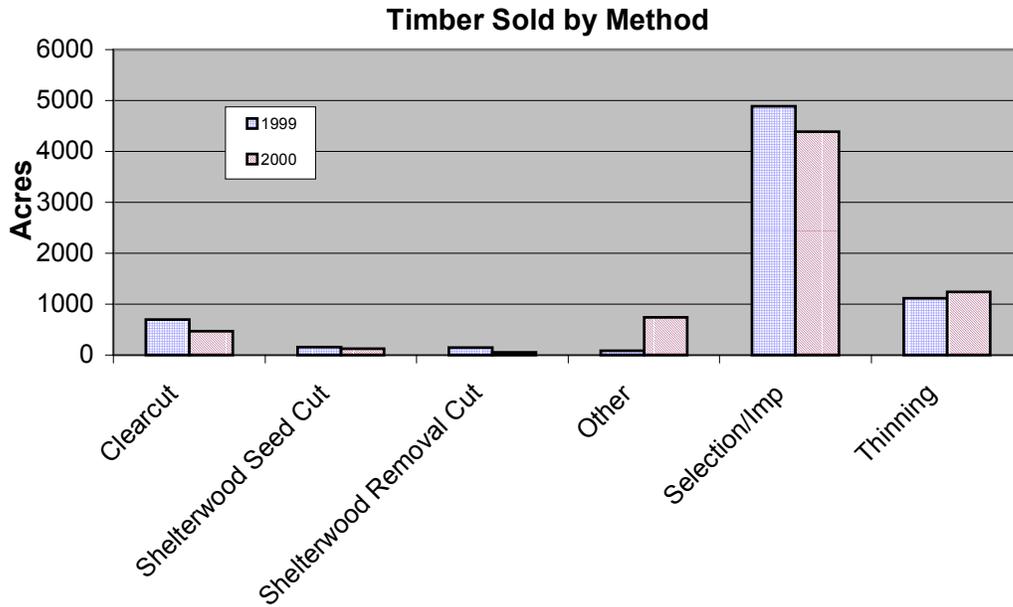
The actual average volume of timber **harvested** over that time period was 7.14 MMFB, of which 85 percent was pulpwood and 15 percent saw timber products.

The average stumpage value has gone from under \$20 in 1987, to over \$75 per thousand board feet in 2000.



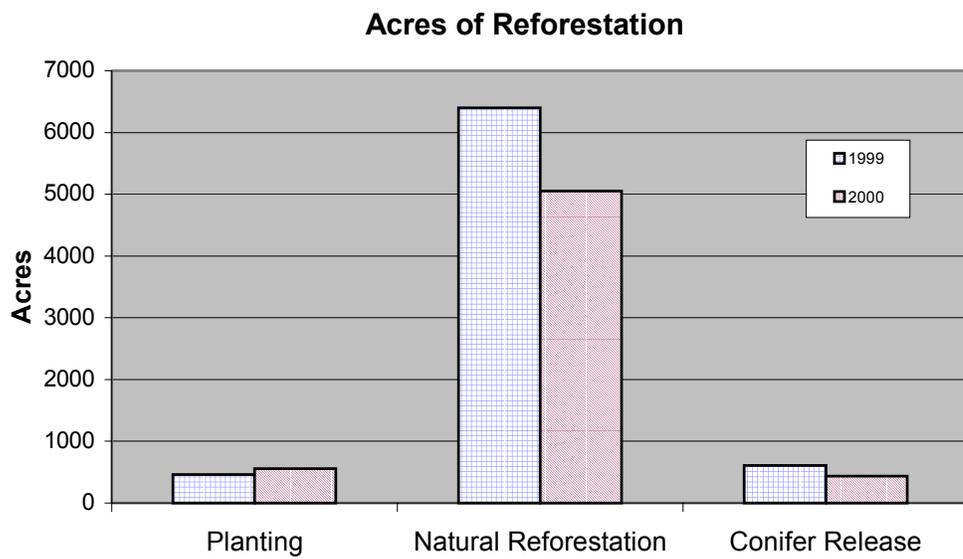
Timber Sales

During 14 years of Forest Plan implementation, timber has been sold on an average of 12,200 acres. While this number is lower than projected in the Plan, it is higher than might be expected for the volume sold. This is because of our Forest emphasis on hardwood selection/improvement sales that ensure a perpetual forest canopy of trees. In addition, we have reduced the number of acres sold of aspen and other species which typically use clearcut harvest to remove existing timber and regenerate new stands of trees.



Reforestation

Whenever timber harvest occurs on the Ottawa, managers are quick to ensure sites are reforested, soils stabilized and watersheds protected. All sites are monitored to ensure they are adequately stocked with trees. As shown in the chart, natural seed sources and root suckering provide for most reforestation needs on the Forest and actual plantings of seedlings is a small portion of our work.



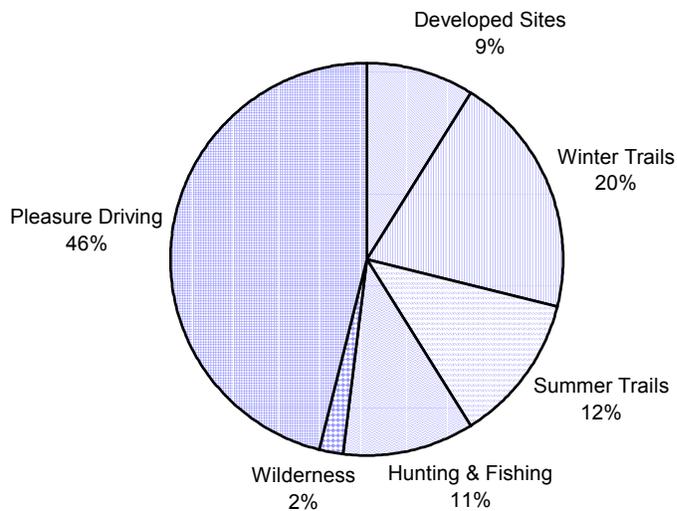
Recreation

The Ottawa National Forest has a menu of recreation choices for every visitor's taste. Settings range from developed campgrounds, to wilderness canoeing, to backcountry hiking and snowmobile trails, to auto routes on scenic byways.

Overall, recreation use during the past two years has averaged about 3,400,000 visits. The Forest operates 96 developed sights including campgrounds and swimming beaches. Over the past decade, visitor days spent at these facilities has increased about 60 percent. We've been investing our maintenance funds in health and safety needs, maintenance of facilities, and improving universal accessibility to improve the range of services available to all visitors.

Recreation is now the fastest growing product on the Ottawa. The added growth in visitors from outside our local area has increased the demand for lodging, restaurants and other locally provided services.

**Recreation User Visits By Type
1999-2000**



Trails

Trails and trail use are growing on the Ottawa. Today, the Forest boasts over 730 miles of recreation trails, including 275 miles for snowmobiles and ATV's and nearly 350 miles of hiking or mountain biking trails. In both 1999 and 2000, Forest staff completed 12 miles of reconstruction or re-location of snowmobile and interpretive trails to improve safety and quality. In addition, recently completed GPS (global positioning system) mapping of our trails will help us produce more accurate maps and pinpoint maintenance needs.

Wilderness Areas

Three wilderness areas on the Ottawa National Forest: the Sylvania, McCormick and Sturgeon River Gorge provide three very different environments of visitor opportunities on the Forest. Use of these unique areas has steadily grown over the past years to nearly 75,000 visits each year. Forest staff have worked over the past two years to improve boundary signing at Sturgeon River Gorge which helps prevent encroachment and misuse, and rehabilitating or maintaining hiking trails at McCormick. In addition, a new entrance station at Sylvania will help us to enhance our “Leave No Trace” wilderness program and provide additional services to our customers. Fees collected from Sylvania visitors will be used to construct this new facility planned for 2001-2002.

Hunting/Fishing

Hunting use on the Ottawa National Forest has remained relatively steady over the years and has been strongly linked to population trends of white-tailed deer and ruffed grouse. These trends are linked to habitat conditions, but are also strongly influenced by weather conditions. Hunting use dropped after the severe winters of 1993-1996, but has increased over the past three years due to mild winters and increases in deer and grouse populations. Populations of ruffed grouse are estimated to be at their highest levels in ten years.

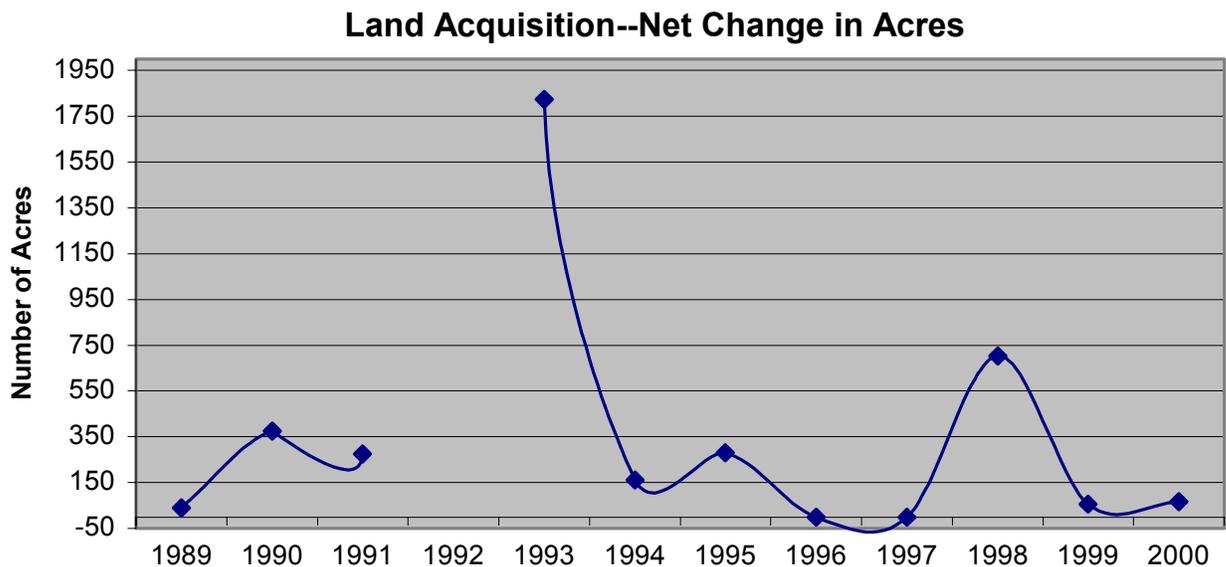
1999/2000 Average Number of Visits



Land Adjustments

Some maps show the Ottawa National Forest as a large, solid green area. In fact the National Forest System lands are a checkerboard of ownership with private land intermixed. The United States owns only 63 percent of the land within the Forest boundary. This ownership pattern provides for a variety of management challenges. Consolidation of ownership reduces the chances of land trespass and the amount of property boundary that must be surveyed and maintained. It also reduces numbers of special use permits needed by adjacent landowners. Special use permits allow adjacent landowners to place needed infra-structure such as access roads, and utility corridors on national Forest system lands. The Ottawa administers over 300 special use permits.

Consolidation also ensures a more continuous type of management and forest uses improving such things as recreational opportunities and protecting special habitats for endangered species or cultural sites. Emphasis is placed on cooperation with local communities. In 1999, no land exchanges were completed. Fifty-six acres were purchased with Land and Water Conservation (L&WCF) funds. In FY 2000, the United States exchanged 54.2 acres for 80 acres owned by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to facilitate the expansion of the Michigan Department of Corrections prison facility near Marinesco, Michigan. Forty acres were purchased with L&WCF.



NOTE: In 1992 over 31,000 acres were purchased.

Minerals

Mineral management on the Ottawa is often categorized into 2 groups: hardrock and common variety minerals. Hardrock minerals include minerals such as copper, silver, nickel, cobalt, platinum, gold, lead, zinc and other precious and semi-precious minerals. Common variety minerals refer to gravel, sand, clay, cobble and boulders.

In fiscal year 1999, the Ottawa administered 69 common variety mineral operations. Gravel was provided to local counties for road maintenance. We processed and/or administered 3,902 acres of BLM hardrock prospecting permits.

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Threatened & Endangered Species

Our native wildlife species are valuable for a large number of reasons. They have aesthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational and scientific value. Special attention is given to species that occur in very low numbers or only in very specific habitats, so that we may help maintain viable populations into the future.

Canada Lynx

In 2000 the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed the Canada lynx as a “threatened” species over most of its former range in the lower 48 states, including Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. While no occurrences of the lynx have been documented on the Ottawa in at least two decades, the Forest conducted a survey for the presence of lynx in 1999. Survey results did not indicate the presence of lynx and a second survey (which is yet to be analyzed) was conducted in 2000. Today the Ottawa follows specific guidelines meant to maintain quality habitat should the lynx naturally return.

Gray Wolf

The gray wolf was a Federally Endangered species when the Ottawa Forest Plan was approved in 1986, with only a few unconfirmed reports of wolf occurrences in Michigan. Today, there are conservatively 40-50 wolves on the Ottawa, in approximately nine packs. Several of these packs now have at least one radio-collared animal used by the Michigan DNR to track pack movements, so that more can be learned about wolf habitat requirements. The remote nature of the Ottawa, as well as an adequate prey base and strong public support for wolves have all contributed to the upward trend in wolf numbers over the past decade. This trend has occurred across most of the Upper Great Lakes Region, leading the USFWS to recently propose to down-list the gray wolf from “endangered” to “threatened” in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Bald Eagle

Bald eagles, our national symbol, are doing well in the Great Lakes Region and are a common site on the Ottawa. Per our Forest Plan, some 65 existing and potential breeding areas are protected. In 1999, there were 46 active territories followed by 36 in 2000. The numbers of young fledged were 33 and 24 respectively. In July 1999 the USFWS proposed to remove the bald eagle from its threatened and endangered species list in the lower 48 states.

Peregrine Falcon

While peregrine falcons were observed at the Trap Hills area during early spring 1999 for the first time in several years, subsequent monitoring during June through early August resulted in no further sightings. No peregrine falcons were detected in the Trap Hills area during the nesting season in 2000. Nationally, in 2000 the peregrine falcon was de-listed and removed from the Federal list of Threatened and Endangered Species. The long-term goal for the Ottawa continues to be one active nesting pair on the forest.

Wildlife Indicators—Loon & Osprey

The abundant fresh water on the Ottawa is a unique environment that attracts a variety of wildlife species, including the common loon and osprey. During the summer, the haunting sound of the loon echoing across area lakes, or the sight of an osprey flying the shoreline is not uncommon. Population estimates of these birds help managers understand their needs and promote habitat improvements.

33 loon chicks were produced in the summer of 1999, which falls within the decade average of about 30 – 55 loon chicks hatched on Ottawa nesting lakes. The range is most likely due to changing weather conditions during the nesting season. However, the Ottawa is working with researchers who believe that mercury contaminants in the environment may be causing a downward trend in the number of chicks produced in the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan and the ability of loons to maintain their current number.

Active osprey breeding territories on the Ottawa have increased slightly to about eleven. Five young birds were fledged in 1999 and 2000.

Botany

Sustaining viable populations of native plants—our natural diversity—is the focus of the botany program. Maintaining this natural variety is the work of Forest botanists who survey and evaluate nearly every proposed management project site on the Ottawa. Rare species and Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive (TES) species identified and evaluated over the past several years include: large-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria macrophylla*), Assiniboia sedge (*Carex assiniboensis*) and small-flowered blue-eyed mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), fairy bells (*Disporum hookeri*), narrow-leaved gentian (*Gentiana linearis*), butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), port-hole lichen (*Menegazzia terebrata*), giant pinedrops (*Pterospora andromeda*) and spreading woodfern (*Dryopteris expansa*).

With limited funds, we are starting to control non-native invasive species such as purple loosestrife, exotic honeysuckles and spotted knapweed. These aggressive species can crowd out native vegetation, thereby reducing the natural diversity and beauty of the Forest and degrading wildlife habitat. We have focused our control efforts at campgrounds to date and have surveys planned to determine other priority sites.

Soils

Information about forest soils, landforms, potential natural vegetation, and water potentials combines to define ecological units. The Ottawa has hundreds of different units across its nearly 1,000,000 acres. In 1999 and 2000 the Ottawa mapped an additional 63,000 acres. This work was done in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Information about these units helps forest managers better understand land capabilities and design better field projects. For example, they can understand how and where to build or maintain roads, predict the kinds of trees that will naturally grow in different areas as well as predict timber yields and habitat types.

They can also learn how to minimize environmental impacts of projects, maintain soil productivity, as well as lower operating costs.

In 1999 and 2000 the Ottawa joined a multi-agency effort to produce a new ecological inventory map of the Lake States, contributing a wealth of detailed data the Forest has been working on for many years. This new map will be a consistent ecological map across the Lake States and improve interagency coordination and reduce data and management costs.

Heritage

People have been a part of the ecosystems of the western Upper Peninsula for thousands of years, their lives shaped by and then giving shape to the forests we enjoy today. Forest archaeologists help us understand the history of our landscape by identifying and protecting sites ranging from historic buildings, early industrial facilities, and the sites of prehistoric peoples.

Forty-three thousand (43,000) acres of field surveys were conducted in 1999 and 2000 prior to any project (such as road construction or vegetation management) which could potentially disturb heritage sites. As a result of these surveys, 65 new archaeological sites were recorded.

Recreation, education and heritage-tourism opportunities help bring the work of archaeologists to today's Upper Peninsula residents. Recent projects include teaching volunteers and the public about traditional Ojibwe culture through the construction of a birch bark wigwam at Lake Ottawa, and planning for an interpretive hiking trail at the Norwich/Ohio Trap Rock copper mining site, which dates back to the mid 1800's.

Forest Service Expenditures

Category	FY1999	FY2000
Wildlife and Fisheries	547,400	1,038,200
Vegetation/timber	3,240,500	2,801,800
Heritage	75,500	57,300
Ecosystem Plan/Inventory	511,600	672,100
Lands Mgt.	312,700	309,100
Landline Mgt.	153,600	166,000
Minerals Mgt.	102,300	74,100
Recreation/wilderness	1,016,400	843,000
Soil and water	166,700	659,600
Law enforcement	36,700	31,100
General Administration	1,090,200	651,800
KV/Reforestation	771,900	539,900
Salvage sale	580,400	762,000
Timber Sale Prep	46,100	177,700
Facility construction/Mtce	344,100	293,500
Trail construction/Mtce	441,000	197,500
Road construct/Mtce/Hwys	1,296,000	1,186,100
Recreation Fee Demo	64,900	83,300
Hazardous Waste	242,000	169,700
Land Acquisition	145,000	151,000
Fire suppression/fuel	122,800	201,700
TOTAL	\$11,316,300	\$11,066,500

There have been many changes for the Forest Service regarding our budget over the past year. We have implemented a new accounting system, made important strides to improve accountability, revised portions of the budget structure, and strived to provide budget direction in a timely manner to our Program Managers. Financial management is a priority for the Ottawa, as we strive to accomplish our goals in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible

Recreation Fee Demo Program

More and more people recreate on national forests each year. As more people visit us, keeping up with the needs of those visitors and the natural resources becomes difficult. Seeing that forests were suffering from the lack of funding to care for the land, Congress passed a law to test bringing more funds to the land in a new way. The *Recreation Fee Demo* program was established as a test. The intent is to charge entrance and user fees that are re-invested in the lands where people recreate, to maintain and improve the natural resource, recreation facilities and services. The *Recreation Fee Demo* program is a vital tool for the forest to use if we wish to continue offering quality recreation, heritage and wilderness programs to the public. It allows us to keep trails, campgrounds, lake and river access healthy and safe. The Ottawa has two *Recreation Fee Demo Projects*: The Sylvania Wilderness and Recreation Area and the Lake Nesbitt Organizational Camp.

In FY 1999, we collected \$56,000 in fees at the Sylvania Wilderness Entrance Station. Fees collected in 1999 and prior years total over \$130,000 and will be used for site planning and design for replacement of the current permit registration and information station. We anticipate beginning work in 2001.

Collections at Lake Nesbitt Organizational Camp were \$33,700 in fiscal year 1999. Fees collected will be used on backlog maintenance, and creation of accessible walking areas within and around the compound.

PILT/Payments to States

The Forest Service makes two kinds of payments to states in which National Forests reside based on receipts generated and lands in federal ownership. Over the life of the Ottawa Forest Plan these payments in sum have more than doubled.

The 25% Payment. Each year the Ottawa National Forest returns 25 percent of all revenues to the State Of Michigan for distribution among the counties whose borders overlap with the Ottawa. These are distributed to counties based on the number of national forest acres within each county, and are to be used for school and road programs.

On October 30, 2000, (Public Law 106-393), H.R. 2389, the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 was signed into law by the President. This legislation provides counties with the option to receive the current 25 percent payments or a more dependable, predictable payment (full payment amount) based on the average of the State's high three payments between fiscal year 1986 and fiscal year 1999. This bill will strengthen the connection of communities to the land and water that sustains them. Counties that elect to receive the full payment amount are required to allocate 15-

20 percent of their funding for investments in county projects or for forest projects that implement stewardship objectives to enhance forest ecosystems, or both. Every two years, counties will be allowed to choose to continue to receive a distribution under the current law or to receive a payment based on the full payment amount. The full payment amount is adjusted annually by 50 percent of the consumer price index. Once a county chooses the full payment amount, such election shall be effective for all subsequent years through fiscal year 2006.

The PILT Payment. Payments In Lieu of Taxes (PILT) are Federal payments to local governments that help offset losses in property taxes due to nontaxable Federal lands within their boundaries. The key law that implements the payments is Public Law 94-565. The Law recognizes that the inability of local government to collect property taxes on Federally-owned land can create a financial impact.

PILT payments help local governments carry out such vital services as firefighting and police protection, construction of public schools and roads, and search-and-rescue operations. These payments are one of the ways that the Federal government can fulfill its role of being a good neighbor to local communities.

Congress appropriates PILT payments each year. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) allocates payments according to a formula in the PILT Act that includes population, receipt sharing payments, and the amount of Federal land within an affected county. These payments are in addition to other Federal revenues that the Federal Government transfer to the States. The BLM has distributed fore than \$2.4 billion dollars in PILT payments to each States since these payments began I n1977.

PILT payments are made annually for tax-exempt Federal lands administered by the BLM, the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlie Service (all agencies of the Interior Department), and the Forest Service.

County (Michigan)	Fiscal Year 1999		Fiscal Year 2000	
Baraga County	\$ 22,160	\$ 63,640	\$ 23,070	\$ 66,480
Gogebic County	151,110	441,370	157,260	461,040
Houghton County	78,110	221,980	81,680	231,880
Iron County	94,560	253,310	98,540	264,800
Marquette County	11,470	17,300	11,970	18,070
Ontonagon County	141,070	404,400	146,890	422,450
TOTALS	\$498,480	\$1,401,990	\$519,410	\$1,464,720

Partnerships

Nearly all of the products, services, opportunities and changes produced on the Ottawa involve partners. Whether they're from the local business communities, volunteer organizations, area tribes, schools, logging operators, local governments, research agencies, environmental groups, hunter/angler associations or others; we couldn't get it done without them.

Partnerships help us meet the objectives of the Natural Resource Agenda of restoring healthy watersheds, providing quality recreation, and sustaining healthy ecosystems and communities; and implementing the Land and Resource Management Plan of the Ottawa National Forest.

Over the past two years we've been extremely successful in establishing new partners, as well as continuing to build positive relationships with our long-time partners.

Some of our specific partnering projects included: fishing derbies, recreation interpretive signing, trail maintenance and construction, campground hosts, ski and snowmobile trail grooming, wildlife habitat restoration, wild rice re-introduction, education focused on migrating birds, loon, timber wolf, trumpeter swan and brook trout.

Some new partnership projects in 2000 included a well-supported and attended conference on the aspen ecosystem, and futuring work on the Bergland Heritage Center.

Specific agreements identifying shared cash and in-kind contribution from participants reach a value of \$314,000 in fiscal year 1999 and \$454,000 in fiscal year 2000.

Since a lot of good work is getting accomplished due to the dedication, energy and commitment of all of the partners of the Ottawa, the staff of the Ottawa wishes to extend a very big thank you to all of the individuals, groups, committees, organizations and agencies that helped make the past two years a huge success!

How to Contact Us

For more information on anything you found within this document, or to receive information on another topic, you may:

- Call the Ottawa National Forest Supervisor's Office at 906-932-1330
- Visit our office at E6248 US Highway 2, Ironwood, Michigan.
- See our website: www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa

