

# Need for Change

## Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests

The Huron-Manistee National Forests propose to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for the purpose of revising the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) as amended. This document includes a description of the proposal for revising the Forest Plan and supplementary information. Section IX (pages 38 to 55) contains the Notice of Intent as published in the *Federal Register*.

**USDA-Forest Service  
Eastern Region**

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# Table of Contents

<b>I. Forest Plans and the Forest Plan Revision Process</b> .....	1
What is a Forest Plan? .....	1
What decisions are made in the Forest Plan? .....	1
What factors indicate a need to revise the Forest Plan? .....	2
Why is it time to revise the Forest Plan? .....	3
How did we develop the proposal to revise the Forest Plan? .....	3
<b>II. Tribe, Government, Public, and Employee Involvement</b> .....	4
<b>III. Applicable Forest Plan Revision Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Direction</b> ....	6
<b>IV. Forest Niche and Summary of Current Forest Plan</b> .....	9
1. Huron-Manistee National Forests' Niche .....	9
2. Summary of Current Forest Plan .....	12
<b>V. Planning Criteria for Developing the Revised Forest Plan</b> .....	13
<b>VI. The Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan</b> .....	17
<b>1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions, and Uses</b> .....	17
A. Management Areas and Desired Conditions .....	17
1. Management Areas .....	17
2. Desired Conditions, Goals, and Objectives .....	18
B. Wildlife and Rare Plants .....	19
1. Regional Forester Sensitive Species .....	19
2. Grouse, Deer, and Wildlife Emphasis Areas .....	24
C. Research Natural Areas .....	24
D. Management Indicator Species and Monitoring .....	25
E. Timber Management .....	26
<b>2. Watershed Health</b> .....	27
A. Aquatics Ecological Classification and Inventory System .....	27
B. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) .....	27
C. Aquatics Standards and Guidelines.....	28
<b>3. Recreation</b> .....	28
A. Semiprimitive Recreation Areas .....	28
B. Aesthetics .....	28
C. Access .....	30
<b>4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers</b> .....	30
A. Wilderness .....	30
B. Wild and Scenic Rivers .....	30
<b>5. Wildland Fire and Fuels Management</b> .....	31
A. Fire Management .....	32
B. Fuels Management .....	32

<b>6. Minerals</b> .....	33
<b>VII. Issues Not Addressed in This Forest Plan Revision Process</b> .....	33
1. Editorial Changes.....	34
2. Implementation Items.....	34
3. Issues Adequately Addressed in the Forest Plan.....	35
4. Issues Outside Forest Service Jurisdiction.....	35
5. On-Going and Future Amendments.....	36
<b>VIII. Next Steps in the Forest Plan Revision Process</b> .....	36
<b>IX. The Notice of Intent</b> .....	38

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# I. Forest Plans and the Forest Plan Revision Process

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## What is a Forest Plan?

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 require that a Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan or Plan) be prepared for each national forest. The Forest Plan is a management strategy that guides all natural resource management activities for the national forest for a 10-to 15-year period.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests' Forest Plan provides guidance for the implementation of project-level decisions. All projects must be in compliance with the Forest Plan, or the Plan must be amended so as to authorize the project.

## What decisions are made in the Forest Plan?

The Forest Plan provides a programmatic strategic framework for natural resource management on National Forest System lands. Within the Forest Plan, decisions are made in the following six areas (Code of Federal Regulations: 36 CFR 219):

1. ***Establishing Forest-wide Multiple Use Goals and Objectives*** (36 CFR 219.11 (b)). A **Goal** describes a desired condition of the land to be achieved in the future. In the Forest Plan, a goal responds to a management problem. An **Objective** is a concise, time-specific statement of measurable, planned results that responds to pre-established goals. The Forest Plan uses objectives to discuss the plan's emphasis by resource area.
2. ***Establishing Forest-wide Management Requirements (Standards & Guidelines)*** (36 CFR 219.13 to 219.27). The Forest Plan established forest-wide management requirements in the form of standards and guidelines that are applied to all management activities. Standards and guidelines establish the "bounds" or "rules" which are applied to management practices to achieve the Forest Plan's goals and objectives.
3. ***Establishing Management Areas and what can occur in them*** (36 CFR 219.11). Management Areas are "subdivisions" of the forest with their own sets of goals, objectives, desired conditions, and standards and guidelines. Each management area has a unique purpose, desired condition, and management prescriptions to move the land toward that desired condition.

4. ***Determining Lands Suited for Timber Management and the Allowable Sale Quantity*** (36 CFR 219.11):

- a. **Land Suitability:** Forestlands are analyzed for suitability for timber management when a Forest Plan is developed. Forestland can be classified either suitable for timber production or one of several categories of lands not suited for timber production.
- b. **Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ):** The ASQ is the quantity of timber that may be harvested from lands suitable for timber production covered by the Forest Plan. The ASQ is the maximum level - not a target or goal - which cannot be exceeded by the end of the Forest Plan period.

5. ***Monitoring and Evaluation Activities*** [36 CFR 219.11 (d)]: Monitoring and evaluation of the Forest Plan determines progress in meeting Forest Plan direction. This direction includes monitoring and evaluating the management goals, objectives, practices, and standards and guidelines. Through this process, any necessary changes to the Forest Plan can be identified and amended as necessary.

6. ***Recommendations for Wilderness Areas or Wild and Scenic Rivers:***

**The Wilderness Act of 1964** defines wilderness as an area of undeveloped federally-owned land, designated by an Act of Congress (36 CFR 219.17).

**The Wild and Scenic River Act of 1968** allows rivers and their immediate environments that possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, be preserved in free-flowing condition to be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

## **What factors indicate a need to revise the Forest Plan?**

The National Forest Management Act of 1976 provides direction for revising the Forest Plan. In addition to the prescribed timeline for revisions (at least every 15 years), four additional indicators can direct the need for a revision. According to those indicators, we may revise the Forest Plan:

- When conditions of the land or demands of the public have changed significantly.
- When changes in agency policies, goals, or objectives would have a significant effect on forest programs.
- When an interdisciplinary team recommends a revision during the monitoring and evaluation process.
- When new information suggests that a revision is necessary as stated in the Forest Service handbook on environmental policy and procedures (FSH 1909.15).

## **Why is it time to revise the Forest Plan?**

The Regional Forester approved the original Huron-Manistee National Forests' Forest Plan on July 16, 1986. The Forest Plan has had twenty-four (24) amendments and amendment 25 to update federally-listed endangered species direction is imminent.

At this time, there are three reasons to revise the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Forest Plan:

1. The National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that Forest Plans be revised at least every 10-15 years.
2. National guidance for strategic planning and programs has changed since 1986. The Agency goals and objectives, along with other national guidance for strategic plans and programs, have changed.
3. Standards and guidelines should be revised to address new information and changed conditions. New research and information is available regarding management of forestlands.

## **How did we develop the proposal to revise the Forest Plan?**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests developed the proposal to revise the Forest Plan through a Forest Plan Need for Change Process. The Need for Change process consisted of the following eleven (11) efforts:

1. Listening to the tribes, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, local governments, cooperating federal agencies, "friends of the forests", publics, and employees. Suggestions were made relating to what people liked about the current Forest Plan and what they felt needed to be changed.
2. Discussing during public workshops key Forest Plan issues such as access, timber management, old growth, wildlife habitat, recreation, and monitoring.
3. Reviewing information such as:
  - 1986-2001 Monitoring and Evaluation Reports
  - The Forest Plan and project-level appeal issues and decisions
  - Lawsuit issues and decisions
  - New scientific information
  - Changed conditions of the land
  - The USDA-Forest Service Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan (2000)
4. Conducting assessments such as:
  - Michigan National Forests Species Viability Evaluation

- Michigan National Forests Social and Economic Assessment
  - Fire and Fuels Management Assessment
  - Roadless-Wilderness Assessment
  - Wild and Scenic River Assessment
  - Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Assessment
  - Management Area Ecological Consideration Review
5. Conducting a content analysis designed to group and categorize comments.
  6. Documenting direction and information found in the current Forest Plan.
  7. Documenting the current situation.
  8. Identifying proposed changes to the Forest Plan with rationale for change.
  9. Reviewing proposed changes to the Forest Plan by an Interdisciplinary Team of Huron-Manistee National Forests' employees.
  10. Reviewing the Interdisciplinary Team's recommendations and approving proposed changes to the Forest Plan by the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Leadership Team.
  11. Reviewing and validating the Forests' Leadership Team proposed changes decisions by the Eastern Region (Region 9) Regional Office.
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## **II. Tribe, Government, Public, and Employee Involvement**

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The Huron-Manistee National Forests initiated the Forest Plan Revision Need for Change process in May 1996. At that time, a letter was mailed to approximately 1,400 organizations and publics, news releases were issued, and public notifications were published in the official newspapers of record inviting the tribes, governments, publics, and employees to participate in identifying what needs to be changed in the Forest Plan by attending listening session meetings or submitting comments in writing.

In September 1996, the Forests conducted a content analysis designed to group and categorize comments.

In October 1996, the Forests reported back in writing (by mail) and conducted meetings to share the results of the listening sessions. The Forests solicited the following information:

- Are there any new suggestions?
- Are the suggestions stated as intended?
- Are the suggestions categorized properly?

From June through October 1997 a series of public workshops were held to discuss the following major issues:

- Ecosystem Management
- Natural-Native Forests
- Semiprimitive Recreation Opportunities
- Access: Roads and Trails
- Timber Management
- Silvicultural Systems
- Old Growth
- Aspen-Early Successional Habitat
- Neotropical Migratory Birds
- Monitoring

The 1998 Congressional Appropriation Act included direction to not move forward with the revision process until new forest planning rules and regulations were in place. The Huron-Manistee National Forests ceased the revision process after completing preparation of the preliminary Need for Change Assessment and April 30, 1998, Summary of Proposed Changes.

In August 2002, the Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee, and Ottawa National Forests (Michigan National Forests) informed via mailings and personal contacts the tribes, governments, publics, and employees that Forest Plan revision would commence in October 2002 and invited them to participate in the Need for Change process.

In October 2002, the Huron-Manistee National Forests mailed information to approximately 1,400 organizations and individuals and issued news releases and public notifications in the official newspapers of record on the Forests' 1996-1998 Forest Plan Revision Need for Change effort and results. The Forests invited the tribes, governments, publics, and employees to review the information and submit comments by speaking at listening session meetings or in writing.

In December 2002, the Forests conducted a content analysis designed to group and categorize comments.

In February 2003, the Forests reported back in writing and at meetings the results of the listening sessions and preliminary Forest Plan Revision Need for Change findings.

In June 2003, the Forests mailed Forest Plan Revision Newsletters to the tribes, government, public, and employees providing an update of the Forest Plan Revision progress.

It should be noted that the Forests keep the web site current with Forest Plan Revision information.

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### **III. Applicable Forest Plan Revision Laws, Regulations, Policy, and Direction**

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There are a number of laws, regulations, policy, and direction that have effects on the National Forests and Forest Plan Revision process:

#### **Laws:**

**1897 Organic Administration Act as amended:** Created the National Forests and established purposes.

**1906 Preservation of American Antiquities Act:** Provides direction to protect, inventory, and manage cultural resources on lands owned by the government of the United States.

**1911 Weeks Law as amended:** Authorized the purchase of forested, cutover, or denuded lands. The Eastern National Forests were established as a result of the Weeks Law.

**1948 Clean Water Act as amended:** Provides direction to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's water.

**1955 Clean Air Act as amended:** Provides direction to protect and enhance the quality of the Nation's air resources so as to promote the public health and welfare and the productive capacity of the population.

**1960 Multiple-Use Sustained Yield Act:** Established multiple-use and sustained-yield policies for the management of the National Forests.

**1966 National Historic Preservation Act as amended 1980 and 1992:** Established a program for preservation of historic properties throughout the nation. The National Register of Historic Places established regulations for the maintenance and expansion of this list are found at 36 CFR 60. This Act required the establishment of regulations to provide for curation of historical properties, the regulations are at 36 CFR 79. Further protection for archaeological resources is in 36 CFR 296.

**1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as amended:** Provides for a National Wild and Scenic Rivers system through designation processes and prescribing standards for management of study and designated rivers.

**1968 National Trails System Act:** Provides for the establishment of a national trails system.

**1969 National Environmental Policy Act:** Established the Forest Service's decision-making process and how to document the effects of our actions. Committed the federal government to a policy of creating and maintaining "conditions under which people and nature can exist in productive harmony."

**1973 Endangered Species Act as amended:** Provides a means whereby the ecosystems upon which endangered and threatened species depend may be conserved and provides a program for conservation of such species.

**1973 Rehabilitation Act as amended:** Provides for universal access to facilities and programs.

**1974 Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act as amended:** Provides for the preparation of a strategic plan for all National Forests based on an assessment of renewable natural resources.

**1974 Preservation of Historical and Archaeological Data Act:** Provides for the preservation of historical and archeological data which might otherwise be irreparably lost or destroyed.

**1975 Federal Noxious Weed Act:** Provides for the control and management of nonindigenous weeds that injure or have the potential to injure the interests of agriculture and commerce, wildlife resources, or the public health.

**1976 National Forest Management Act as amended:** Provides standards and guidelines for National Forest planning and management. Currently there are two sets of rules that are available for Forest Planning-1982 and 2000 Planning Rules. The Michigan National Forests have decided to use the 1982 Forest Planning Rules because the 2000 Planning Rules were determined to be neither straightforward nor easy to implement because of the number of very detailed analytical requirements, lack of clarity regarding many of the requirements, lack of flexibility, and lack of recognition of the limits of agency budgets and personnel.

In 2002 Proposed Rules were published in the Federal Register with the intent of maintaining many of the underlying concepts of sustainability, monitoring, evaluation, collaboration, and use of science. The Proposed Rule is intended to provide a planning process which is more readily understood, is within the Forest Service's capability to implement, is within anticipated budgets and staffing levels, and recognizes the programmatic nature of planning. When the 2002 Planning Rule is approved, the Michigan National Forests will review the transition advice contained in the Rule and determine how best to proceed with Forest Plan Revision.

**1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act:** Protects and preserves for American Indians their inherent right of freedom to believe, express, and exercise their traditional religions.

**1979 Archaeological Resources Protection Act as amended 1988:** Provides protection of archaeological resources and sites which are on public lands and Indian lands.

**1987 Michigan Wilderness Act:** Provides for the designation of wilderness on National Forest System Lands in the state of Michigan.

**1987 Federal Onshore Oil and Gas Leasing Reform Act:** Authorized the Forest Service to determine which lands with oil and gas potential could be leased and for specifying resource protection lease stipulations.

**2000 Revised Forest Service Strategic Plan (<http://www.fs.fed.us/plan>):** Established the goals and objectives for the Forest Service for the next five years to comply with the Government Performance and Results Act. The strategic plan included the mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Michigan National Forests' Revised Plans will work toward achieving the long-term goals of the Strategic Plan.

### **Policy and Direction:**

**Transportation Rule:** A National Forest System Road Management Policy was published on January 12, 2001, which contains direction on analysis standards for: assessing the need for new road construction; evaluating the existing road network to determine what roads are necessary for future management; and identifying what roads can be decommissioned. Site-specific road management decisions will not be resolved within the revised Forest Plan. The Forest Plan revision will, however, set the desired conditions, objectives, and standards for roads on the Forests.

**Roadless Area Conservation Rule:** The USDA-Forest Service released the Roadless Area Conservation Rule on January 12, 2001. The Forest Plan revision effort will inventory and evaluate any roadless area that may be suitable for Congressional designation as wilderness per existing planning rules. We will also be guided by public comment and concern for what types of activities should occur in these areas.

**Report of the National Tribal Relations Program Task Force: A Vision for the Future.** Published August 2000. The National Tribal Relations Task Force provided a set of recommendations designed to improve the consistency and effectiveness of program delivery and to institutionalize long-term collaborative relationships with tribal governments. The recommendations were focused on pervasive problems and concerns that surfaced repeatedly in different contexts and were symptomatic of underlying problems in working relationships between the Forest Service and the Tribes. The recommendations were grouped in three categories designed specifically to improve program delivery: administrative, policy, and legislation. The Report of the Tribal Relations Program Implementation Team was published in June 2003.

### **Forest Service Priorities:**

**National Fire Plan:** The National Fire Plan protects communities, natural resources, and the lives of firefighters and citizens. It is based on ongoing cooperation and communication among federal agencies, states, local governments, tribes, and interested publics. The federal wildland fire management agencies worked closely with partners to prepare a 10-year comprehensive strategy, which was completed in 2001.

**Healthy Forest Initiative:** In an effort to improve regulatory processes to ensure more timely land management decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires by restoring forest health, the President has introduced the Healthy Forest Initiative during 2003. This includes:

- Improving procedures for developing and implementing fuels treatment and forest restoration projects in priority forests and rangelands, in collaboration with local governments.
- Reducing the number of overlapping environmental reviews by combining project analysis and establishing a process for concurrent project clearance by federal agencies.
- Developing guidance for weighing the short-term risks against the long-term benefits of fuels treatment and restoration projects.
- Developing guidance to ensure consistent NEPA procedures for fuels treatment activities and restoration activities, including development of a model Environmental Assessment for these types of projects.

**Four Threats to National Forests:** The Michigan National Forests is committed to focusing on stewardship for the long-term desired future condition of the land. Land management issues that we are focusing on as an agency are:

- **Fire and fuels** -- Many forests have become overgrown and unhealthy. In a drought, all those trees can fuel a catastrophic fire. We must return forests to the way they were historically, and then get fire back into the ecosystem when it is safe.
- **Invasive species** -- Invasive species affect half of all imperiled species in the United States. To meet landscape-level challenges like invasive species, we must consider long-term outcomes across the entire landscape.
- **Habitat fragmentation** -- America is losing wildlife corridors and interior forest habitat as working forests adjacent to national forest lands are sold and developed.
- **Unmanaged recreation** -- Outdoor recreation has grown by leaps and bounds on the national forests and grasslands, and it will only continue to grow. Light recreational use did not need management, but heavier use now does.

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## IV. Forest Niche and Summary of Current Forest Plan

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### 1. Huron-Manistee National Forests' Niche:

**Introduction:** Lying between the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron in the northern half of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, the million-acre Huron-Manistee National Forests are located in a transition zone between forested lands to the north and agricultural lands to the south. Formed by glaciers thousands of years ago, these lands are 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, oak savannahs, fens, bogs, and marshes.

Prior to Michigan Statehood, many of the lands that presently make up the Forests had been sold by the United States government to lumber companies. Homesteaders claimed other lands. These lands were exploited by wholesale clearcutting, burning, and poor farming practices around the turn of the twentieth century. The diverse, maturing forest ecosystems that exist today are the result of nearly a century of forest management by the Forest Service and our conservation partners.

Native Americans 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.

The Forests serve as a “backyard” playground for many Midwest residents. Much of the Forests’ lands lie adjacent to private and state lands and other recreational facilities. Over 60 million people are within a day’s drive of enjoying the Forests’ recreation opportunities.

**Programs, Activities, and Uses:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests’ physical location enables us to “link lands and people together.” One example of this link is the Forests’ trail system, including the North Country National Scenic Trail, crossing multiple administrative boundaries and land ownerships. The nationally known “Friends of the Forests” group links people together to participate in how the Forests should be managed. Cooperative partnerships in fisheries, wildlife, and recreation programs are critical to the management and stewardship of the Forests.

Water resources on the Huron-Manistee National Forests include 1,800 miles of streams and 17,000 acres of lakes. The Forests contain legendary 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 and rivers, making this one of the most popular fisheries in the State of Michigan. The Huron-Manistee National Forests are also recognized as a premier forest for river watercraft use and outfitters and guides in the State of Michigan.

Due to the Forests' proximity to population centers and our dense road network, we experience 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. “Special places” for berry picking, mushrooming, and plant gathering can also be found. Diverse recreational opportunities across the Forests range from the tranquil solitude found in the Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness Area to the more developed settings found at the Lake Michigan Recreation Area, Lumberman’s Monument, or along the River Road National Forest 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 people who use the Forests. Our vegetation management program is the primary tool for restoring and providing a diverse range of

sustainable habitats for many species, supporting forest health, and providing wood fiber. Our timber sales, prescribed fires, and noncommercial mechanical treatments are carefully planned, helping us meet the Forests' management objectives.

The Forests provide unique habitats for a variety of rare and sensitive fish, plant, and animal species. We manage approximately one-half of the known breeding habitat in the United States for the endangered Kirtland's warbler. Populations of this songbird have increased six-fold statewide in the last 15 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. The Forests also provide habitat for a variety of game species (such as grouse, deer, and turkey). Approximately 35 percent of the registered hunters in Michigan hunt on the Forests.

Jack pine forests, one of the most volatile fuel types, are intermingled with 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 24,000+ acres within six hours. The Forests have initiated a program to lessen the fire risk within this wildland-urban interface.

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

**Challenges:** The increasingly urban setting and scattered private land ownership make it difficult to integrate the Forests' management objectives with those of the local users. Increasing populations, development, and use put pressure on the Forests' resources and make it hard to maintain the usual characteristics of a forest. Under federal law, the Forests are required to provide a variety of uses and sustain a supply of goods and services to the public in an environmentally sound manner. At times, this seems like an overwhelming task.

Some of the specific challenges facing the Forests include:

- Managing the Forests' lands for the wants and needs of so many people while maintaining ecological biodiversity.
- High road densities fragment the National Forests and provide easy access. User disregard for road closures, unauthorized off-road vehicle use, and other activities such as trash dumping affect resources such as water quality, botanical and heritage resources, and sensitive soils.
- Fire prevention and suppression in the wildland-urban interface.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests remain confident that together with the participation and cooperation of the tribes; federal, state, and local agencies; "friends of the forests"; partners; and the public the high quality management and stewardship of the Huron-Manistee National Forests will continue for future generations.

## **2. Summary of Current Forest Plan:**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests' Forest Plan was approved in 1986. Through implementation of the Forest Plan, the Huron-Manistee provides for a variety of resource uses, recreational opportunities, and services to the public while ensuring protection of soil, water, visual and cultural resources, and all native plant and animal species. The original Forest Plan responded to six management opportunities: recreation, transportation, wildlife and fish, vegetation, wilderness, and special areas.

The Forest Plan also established a Forest vision for the future, which defined the role the Huron-Manistee has in providing public benefits, protection of resources, providing for social needs, and providing for biological diversity. Standards and guidelines were designed to provide management direction to be used in attainment of the desired condition of each management prescription described in the Forest Plan.

The following summarizes the Forest Plan's three major emphasis items:

**Providing Recreation Opportunities:** The current Forest Plan ensures providing recreation opportunities for the public. The Huron-Manistee National Forests offer a wide spectrum of camping experiences, motorized and nonmotorized trails, Scenic Byways, and federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. Hunting is a major recreational activity on the Huron-Manistee National Forests, with prime habitat for deer, ruffed grouse, woodcock, and wild turkey. The abundance of lakes and rivers makes the Forests a premiere fishing and watercraft use destination.

For those people seeking a more remote experience, the Huron-Manistee is home to one wilderness area and seventeen semiprimitive areas. The Nordhouse Dunes Wilderness area is managed to maintain those characteristics which promote a wild and remote experience. Semiprimitive areas are designed for providing non-motorized and motorized trail remote opportunities. It should be noted that due to the presence of roads, many semiprimitive areas are aspiring to meet the established semiprimitive desired conditions and goals.

**Providing Habitat for Wildlife, Plants, and Fish:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests are managed to provide habitat conditions for all desirable native and non-native species of wildlife (including game and non-game species), plants, and fish. These conditions include old growth, young forests, snags, cavity trees, lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, riparian areas, and openings. The Forests provides habitat for species such as federally-endangered Kirtland's warbler, bald eagle, and pitcher's thistle, game species such as deer, grouse, and wild turkey, non-game species such as northern goshawk, American marten, wood turtles, fish species such as salmon, trout, lake sturgeon, and panfish, and plant species such as ram's head orchid, American ginseng, purple milkweed, side oats grama, and rough fescue.

The Forest Plan also provides habitat for Regional Forester Sensitive Species (wildlife, plants, and fish) to meet habitat requirements to maintain minimal viable populations of these species.

**Providing Timber Products:** Ensuring long-term forest health is a Forests' priority and provided for in the current Forest Plan. Healthy forests enable us to continue to provide a variety of benefits to the people who use the Forests. Timber sales are used to accomplish a variety of objectives. Commercial timber sales are designed to not only provide raw timber products, but to improve the diversity of wildlife habitat and overall vegetative conditions, reduce fire risks to urban-rural interface to acceptable levels, and to improve and maintain healthy, sustainable forest ecosystems. Harvests are carefully designed and administered following Forest Plan standards and guidelines and site-specific environmental analysis for the individual project. Monitoring of our actions is part of our project work.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests have the opportunity to continue to focus on ecosystem management and providing biodiversity characteristics of the Forests by promoting the presence and management of species native to ecosystems found in the Northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The Forests aggressively work to develop and apply ecosystem principles and information, which managers use to define goals and apply treatments consistent with ecological capabilities.

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## **V. Planning Criteria for Developing the Revised Forest Plan**

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The National Forest Management Act [36 CFR 219.12(c)] requires Forest Planning criteria to guide the planning process that achieves the objective of maximizing the net public benefits from management of National Forests.

These planning criteria may be derived from a variety of sources, including:

- Laws, executive orders, regulations, and agency policy as set forth in the Forest Service Manual.
- Goals and objectives derived from the Resource Planning Act Program and 2000 USDA-Forest Service Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan.
- Recommendations and information developed from public issues, management concerns, resource use, and development opportunities.
- Plans and programs of other federal agencies, along with those of state and local governments.
- Ecological, technical, and economic factors.
- Resource integration management requirements in 36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27.

The Huron-Manistee National Forests identified and used the following criteria to develop the proposal for revising the Forest Plan:

### **1. Role in Providing Public Benefits**

The Revised Plan will describe the role of the Huron-Manistee National Forests in order to identify and emphasize the values and benefits the Forests are best able to provide in the Northern Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

- The Revised Plan will consider: 1) the scarcity or abundance of resources, ecological conditions, and public uses in the region's forests; 2) the ability of the national forests to provide these benefits; and 3) the costs associated with providing them.
- The Revised Plan will concentrate on identifying the unique role of the Huron-Manistee National Forests in providing goods, services, and forest uses.

### **2. Integrating Program Goals and Protecting Resources**

The Revised Plan will comply with National Forest Management Act management requirements (36 CFR 219.13 through 219.27) including requirements for integration of program goals for air, soil, water, fire, fish, wildlife, vegetation, timber, and recreation.

Additional requirements exist for resource protection, vegetative manipulation, silvicultural practices, riparian areas, soil and water, and biological diversity.

### **3. Conserving Biological Diversity**

The Revised Plan will provide for diversity of plant and animal communities and tree species consistent with the overall multiple-use objectives of the planning area.

While the legal planning area is the area within the national forest boundary, the landscape includes areas outside the planning area and under other ownership and management. In the planning process we will consider the effects of surrounding land management and use as it relates to the conservation of biological diversity. We will apply the concepts of planning at appropriate landscape scales, considering spatial distribution of habitat.

### **4. Social Needs**

The Revised Plan will meet a range of public needs, expectations, and concerns in a way that maximizes net benefits [36 CFR 219.12(c)]. Recognizing that many paths to achieving ecological sustainability exist, the Revised Plan will seek to integrate public needs, expectations, and concerns about the Forests into the decisions about how to maintain ecosystem health and diversity, while providing for social needs, goods, and services.

## **5. Collaborative Stewardship**

The Revised Plan will be a product of working collaboratively with the tribes, local governments, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, “friends of the forest”, cooperating federal agencies, the public, private landowners, and Huron-Manistee National Forests’ employees. This will ensure that decisions will consider the plans, ideas, and concerns of others.

## **6. Consistency Among the Michigan National Forests**

The Revised Forest Plan will strive for consistency among the three Michigan National Forest Plans, to provide for more consistent management and better service to the public.

## **7. Tribal Consultation**

The Forest Service will continue to work collaboratively through the consultation process as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Tribal – USDA Forest Service relations On National Forest Lands within the Territories Ceded in Treaties of 1836, 1837, and 1842 (Sec. VI. B), in consideration of Executive Orders, EO11593 Protection and Enhancement of Cultural Environment, EO13007 Indian Sacred Sites, EO13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments.

## **8. Need for Change Proposed Actions**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests identified the following criteria for identifying Forest Plan Revision Need for Change proposed actions:

### **a. Forest Plan Proposed Changes:**

These are Forest Plan proposed changes that are directly related to the six major decisions made in a Forest Plan and there is clear rationale for a warranted change.

### **b. Forest Plan Editorial Changes:**

These are Forest Plan changes that are editorial in nature. These changes provide improved understanding of the current Forest Plan. These changes do not represent a change in the Forest Plan direction, goals, or objectives. The intent is to improve the clarity of the Forest Plan.

### **c. Forest Plan On-Going Amendment Changes:**

These are Forest Plan changes that are currently on-going through an existing Forest Plan Amendment effort. Such a change to the current Forest Plan is warranted and is being addressed through the amendment process. It is anticipated that the amendment will be completed prior to revising the Forest Plan.

**d. Forest Plan Future Amendment Changes:**

These may be Forest Plan proposed changes that will be addressed in future amendments. A determination has been made that the proposed change is not “ripe” (ready) to be included in the Forest Plan revision process. For example: information may not be currently available to adequately address the issue or complete the change in a timely manner.

**e. Addressed in Assessments/Analysis:**

These are suggestions or issues that will be addressed in Forest Plan Revision assessments and/or environmental analysis. Generally, these suggestions and/or issues are questions pertaining to the effects or outcomes of Forest Plan program, activities, uses, and proposed changes.

**f. Scientific Research Needed:**

These are suggestions or issues that require scientific research in order to evaluate if a change is needed.

**g. Implementation Item:**

These are suggestions that are not changes related to Forest Plan decisions, but rather the way the Forest Plan is being implemented. These suggestions are better addressed through Forest Plan implementation, project-level analysis, or at the administrative level.

**h. Outside Mission or Authority of Forest Service:**

These are suggestions for change that are beyond the authority or outside the mission of the Forest Service.

**i. Addressed in Forest Plan or Recent Decision:**

These are suggestions that have been addressed in the current Forest Plan or through a recent Forest Plan amendment or Forest Service decision. Sufficient information or rationale was not provided to support a change to the Forest Plan, recent amendment, or Forest Plan environmental assessment decision.

Little or no change will be made to those areas of the plan which are not addressed here, unless compelling and substantive information is developed.

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## VI. The Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan

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The following is a summary of the Huron-Manistee National Forests' proposed changes to the Forest Plan as a result of the Forest Plan revision "Need for Change" process. For a detailed description of the Forest Plan Revision Need for Change results, the Huron-Manistee National Forests have prepared an Analysis of Current Management Situation report which is available upon request.

### 1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions, and Uses

#### A. Management Areas and Desired Conditions

##### 1. Management Areas

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan Management Areas takes into consideration broad land type associations and recreation opportunity spectrums. New information such as Michigan Department of Natural Resources-USDA-Forest Service Land Type Association by Albert et. al., USDA-Forest Service Disturbance Regime mapping by D. Cleland, resource and program assessments, and changes in land use is available and was used to evaluate the management areas.

##### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Forest activities should be described and prescribed on disturbance regimes associated with Land Type Associations.
- Use ecosystem approach to management.
- Management areas should provide opportunities for all users and interests.
- Management Areas should be consolidated, larger and coincide with Land Type Associations.
- Ensure Settlement Agreements are addressed in Forest Plan Revision.

**Rationale for Change:** Management Area proposed changes were a result of reviewing the latest ecological information; rural development and fire risk; and proposed special area designations such as wild and scenic designated and study rivers, candidate research natural areas, and semiprimitive areas.

**Proposed Changes:** A number of proposed changes resulted from new information.

The following table summarizes the proposed management area changes to the Forest Plan:

**Table 1: Proposed Management Area Changes**

Management Area (MA) Description	Proposed MA (Total acres)	Change from Existing MA +/- (acres)
<b>2.1 and 4.1: Roaded Natural Rolling Plains and Morainal Hills</b>	141,682	-17,068
Deer Emphasis	0	0
Wildlife Emphasis	245	-313
Grouse Emphasis	29,366	-1,678
<b>2.2 and 4.2: Roaded Natural Sandy Hills and Plains</b>	286,272	-59,695
Deer Emphasis	3,690	-2,088
Wildlife Emphasis	7,966	+1,669
Grouse Emphasis	14,974	-3,795
Kirtland's Warbler Emphasis	109,450	+86
<b>2.3 and 4.3: Roaded Natural Wetlands</b>	62,153	-4,752
Deer Emphasis	15,152	-16,423
Wildlife Emphasis	22,466	-4,414
Grouse Emphasis	14,243	+2,126
<b>2.4 and 4.4: Rural: Variety of Land Type Associations</b>	123,841	+74,289
Wildlife Emphasis	732	732
Grouse Emphasis	4,732	+4,732
<b>5.1: Wilderness</b>	3,375	0
<b>6.1: Semiprimitive Non-motorized</b>	64,682	+4,983
<b>6.2: Semiprimitive Motorized</b>	16,968	+5,485
<b>7.1: Concentrated Recreation Areas</b>	3,110	+3,110
<b>8.1: Wild and Scenic Rivers</b>	19,749	1,260
<b>8.2: Research Natural Areas</b>	383	0
<b>8.3: Experimental Forests</b>	7,452	0
<b>8.4: Special Designations</b>	264	0
<b>9.1: Candidate Research Natural Areas</b>	9,570	+9,570
<b>9.2: Candidate Wild and Scenic Rivers</b>	9,325	+9,325
<b>9.3: Custodial Management</b>	4,602	0

## 2. Desired Conditions, Goals, and Objectives

**Current Situation:** For most resources and programs the Forest Plan adequately describes the desired conditions, goals, and objectives at the Forest Program and Management Area levels. Some resources and programs need minor updating, while others are not discussed in the Forest Plan.

### Representative Comments on Need for Change:

- Revise costs, objectives, activities, and outputs.
- Set realistic goals and objectives consistent with budgets and manpower.

**Rationale for Change:** Desired conditions, goals, and objectives are Forest Plan requirements. New information, direction, and decisions made in the Forest Plan revision process warrant desired condition, goal, and objective changes to be made.

**Proposed Changes:** The following resources or programs need their desired conditions, goals, and objectives described:

- Aquatic and Riparian Resources
- Undesirable Invasive Species
- Fire Management
- Hazardous Fuels Management
- Oil and Gas Resources

The following resources or programs need their desired conditions, goals, and objectives updated:

- Vegetation
- Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants
- Soil
- Semiprimitive Recreation Areas

## **B. Wildlife and Rare Plants**

### **1. Regional Forester Sensitive Species**

**Current Situation:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have conducted a preliminary Species Viability Evaluation to assess the likelihood of providing well-distributed habitat to meet minimum species viability requirements. The Forests have also developed, through an interdisciplinary process, proposed conservation measures designed to provide for the viability of species requirements.

#### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Update endangered, threatened, and sensitive species list.
- Standards and Guidelines for northern goshawk, bats, America marten, and common loon.
- Include raptor nest needs.
- Re-evaluate Kirtland's warbler openings.
- Manage for sensitive species before they are listed.
- Update sensitive species list and create standards and guidelines.
- Add Eastern massasauga to sensitive species list with standards and guidelines.
- Add botanical standards and guidelines.
- Add standards and guidelines to maintain/enhance habitat for saprophytes.
- Create plant emphasis areas.

**Rationale for Change:** Proposed changes are needed to meet species viability requirements.

**Proposed Changes:** The following are proposed wildlife and rare plant resource changes designed to meet minimum species viability requirements:

The following general Regional Forester Sensitive Species direction will guide the management of rare species and landforms:

- Manage the Regional Forester Sensitive Species according to the Eastern Region Regional Forester's Sensitive Species Framework.
- The Regional Forester Sensitive Species and rare landforms lists will be referenced and updated as needed.
- The following are guidelines for Regional Forester Sensitive Species and rare landforms:

- Restore and maintain large-scale openings such as grasslands, prairies, savannahs, and oak-pine barrens:

In land type associations 1 and 2, small grasslands (at least 25 acres in size within a mile of each other) and large grasslands (at least 75 acres in size within a mile of each other) will be restored and maintained for bobolink and Henslow's sparrow surrogate species habitat. These grassland openings will be part of the Forests' upland opening program (approximately 5 percent).

In land type associations 1 and 2, prairies, savannahs, and oak-pine barrens (approximately 500 acres in size) will be restored and maintained for dusted skipper surrogate species. The amount of large-scale openings may be up to approximately 10 percent (approximately 58,600 acres). This includes up to 1,800 acres of prairies.

In land type associations 3 through 7, large grasslands (at least 75 acres in size) within a mile of each other will be restored and maintained for Henslow's sparrow surrogate species habitat. These grassland openings will be part of the Forests' upland opening program (approximately 5 percent)

In savannahs (red headed woodpecker surrogate species), maintain 10 snags per acre where possible favoring mast trees.

- Protect resource values by managing the following landforms consistent with natural disturbance regimes: coastal plain marshes, marshes, intermittent wetlands, mesic wet prairies, mesic sand prairies, fens, Great Lakes marshes, marshes, bogs, mesic prairies, cedar swamps, hardwood-conifer swamps, subirrigated forests, swales in oak, and swales in pine.

- Restore Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat by:

Increasing the minimum Kirtland's warbler breeding pair viable population goal from 400 to 420 pairs.

Increasing the designated Kirtland's warbler essential habitat by approximately 18,300 acres.

Increasing the Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat creation objective from 1,070 acres per year to 1,600 acres per year (an increase of 530 acres per year).

Where possible, providing 15 to 25 snags per acre in Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat unit.

Increase maximum harvest unit size for Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat to approximately 550 acres.

Where possible in Kirtland's warbler essential habitat, consider providing winter habitat for species such as spruce grouse through planting of spruce.

- Provide for semi-open drainage or mesic depression in hardwood/conifer forests (northern wild comfrey habitat) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Maintain a minimum of 60 percent canopy cover and do not allow mechanical or prescribed fire (before bolting in the spring or after fruit dispersal in the fall) disturbance up to 3 tree lengths from the edge of known occurrences of northern wild comfrey.

- Provide for American Ginseng by adding the following goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines:

Managing core ginseng habitat areas (northern hardwood sites with site index greater than 65 and older than 60 years of age) on approximately 23,000 acres on the Manistee National Forest and approximately 3,300 acres on the Huron National Forest.

Protecting (no active management) 80 percent of the high quality ginseng habitat (approximately 9,000 acres on the Manistee National Forest and 3,300 acres on the Huron National Forest) within the core ginseng areas. The remaining 20 percent of the high quality ginseng habitat area can be managed at no less than 80 percent of crown closure.

Managing high quality ginseng habitat adjacent to the core area that is not on northern hardwood types (approximately 8,000 acres) by actively managing towards conversion to northern hardwood types.

Maintaining northern hardwood types adjacent to the core area that are potential ginseng habitat at no less than 80 percent of the crown closure.

- Provide for the Northern Goshawk and Red-Shouldered Hawk by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Protecting known nest areas with 30 acres of no adverse management around the nest, maintaining 60 percent ground canopy cover within 300 feet of the no adverse management area, and protecting nests during nesting season from human disturbance by seasonally restricting or closing roads within 960 feet of the nests and discouraging uses.

Providing two alternative 30-acre nesting areas greater than 660 feet from the active nest site. Alternative sites will be managed in a manner similar to the known nest sites.

Providing post fledging habitat at the nest site of approximately 400-500 acres in size (1/2 mile radius from the nest) that contains approximately no more than 20 percent of the area in upland openings or 0-9 year old age class and a mosaic of vegetation types and structural stages including: small openings 1/3 to 4 acres in size (no greater than 400 feet in width) and approximately 60 percent of the area greater than 30 years of age with management on a 100-year rotation. Management Areas that emphasize species such as Kirtland's warbler, Karner blue butterfly, and ruffed grouse will consist of approximately 44 percent of the area in a forested condition greater than 30 years of age and managed on a 55-year rotation.

Huron-Manistee National Forests biologists will determine the foraging area. Where possible, foraging areas will reserve, create, or provide for the replacement of 2 snags per acre (approximately 10 inches dbh and 10 feet in height) and 3 pieces of large woody debris per acre (approximately 10-12 inches in diameter and 10 feet long).

- Provide for lowland conifer boreal mid- to late-successional habitat (black-backed woodpecker surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Leave a portion of areas that have been adversely affected by fire, insects, diseases, etc., in an unsalvaged condition.

- Provide for riparian/lowland hardwood early- to mid-successional habitat (Eastern massasauga rattlesnake surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Roads and ORV trails should avoid habitat.

Activities should:

- Limit heavy equipment, pesticides, and prescribed burning when snakes are present.
- Mow habitat when snakes are less likely to be active.

Manage hydrological changes that may affect wetlands to not adversely affect snakes during hibernation.

Maintain approximately 50 to 70 percent ground canopy or canopy cover and avoid harvesting of lowland conifer wetlands in known snake habitats.

- Provide for riparian/lowland hardwood mid- to late-successional habitat (cerulean warbler surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Timber management and road construction activities should not occur in occupied habitat during the breeding/nesting habitat.

- Provide for lake habitat (common loon surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Where possible and needed, place closure orders around nesting sites or nesting islands during nesting periods and create artificial nesting rafts.

Manage lakes consistent with natural processes to enhance potential loon habitat and maintain forage base.

Protect loons during fish surveys or fish removal studies.

Coordinate with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources when necessary for closure of lakes to motorized watercraft or establishment of “no wake” areas, the management and removal of competing species, and the control of water levels on reservoirs to avoid fluctuations during the nesting season.

- Provide for early-successional scrub/shrub habitats (golden-winged warbler surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Early-successional scrub/shrub habitats will be maintained or enhanced within riparian areas either by natural processes or active management.

Approximately 1,250 acres per Forest (2,500 acres) of early-successional scrub/shrub habitat will be maintained or enhanced.

Early-successional scrub/shrub habitat locations where active management is necessary will be prioritized by grouse, wildlife, and deer emphasis areas and existing early-successional vegetation, such as aspen and birch types.

Early-successional scrub/shrub habitat will be at least 25 acres in size.

- Provide for jack pine early-successional habitat (Michigan bog grasshopper surrogate species) by adding the following standards and guidelines:

Allow for early-successional habitat in filter strips along bogs and Land Type Association 1.

## 2. Grouse, Deer, and Wildlife Emphasis Areas

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan designated approximately:

- 62,300 acres of grouse emphasis areas
- 37,400 acres of deer area emphasis areas
- 33,800 acres of wildlife area emphasis areas

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Reassess wildlife areas in terms of location and size.
- Habitat management for game species should be the highest priority.
- Maintain deer, grouse, hare, and rabbit habitat.

**Rationale for Change:** Proposed changes are needed because the Nordhouse Dunes Semiprimitive Area is better suited as a grouse management area. A change to the amount of grouse, deer, and wildlife emphasis areas is warranted due to the need for establishing Research Natural Areas to protect and conduct scientific research in rare plant communities and semiprimitive areas to provide remote and quiet recreational experiences.

**Proposed Changes:** The following changes are proposed to grouse, deer, and wildlife emphasis areas:

- Nordhouse Dunes North Semiprimitive Area is better suited as a grouse emphasis area
- Approximately 1,385 more acres of grouse emphasis areas
- Approximately 18,511 less acres of deer emphasis areas
- Approximately 2,326 less acres of wildlife emphasis areas

## C. Research Natural Areas

**Current Situation:** Research Natural Areas are areas of unique or representative vegetative, aquatic, or geological characteristics. The primary purpose of Research

Natural Areas is to conduct non-destructive research, observation, and education. The Forest Plan includes three designated research natural areas and four candidate research natural areas. During the last few years, the Forests have been inventorying and assessing potential candidate research natural areas.

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Update Research Natural Area candidates.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed change is warranted in order to protect unique or representative areas and conduct research, observations, and education.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change to the Forest Plan is to add the following 19 candidate research natural areas (approximately 9,570 acres):

**Proposed Candidate Research Natural Areas**

<b>Ranger District (RD)</b>	<b>Candidate Research Natural Area</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Baldwin-White Cloud RD	White River (North Branch)	450
Baldwin-White Cloud RD	Big South (Whelan Lake)	1840
Baldwin-White Cloud RD	Toft Lake	170
Baldwin-White Cloud RD	Pearl Lake	50
Baldwin-White Cloud RD	Loon Lake	440
Cadillac-Manistee RD	South Olga Bog	30
Cadillac-Manistee RD	BrandybrookWetlands	1300
Cadillac-Manistee RD	Bear Swamp (includes Yonker's Meadow)	2140
Mio RD	Hunter's Lake	30
Mio RD	Foley Bog	105
Mio RD	O'Brien Lake	130
Mio RD	McMaster's Bridge Bog	85
Mio RD	Blockhouse Swamp	1010
Tawas-Harrisville RD	Black River Complex	750
Tawas-Harrisville RD	McDonald Creek Forest	105
Tawas-Harrisville RD	Trout Lake	185
Tawas-Harrisville RD	Loud Creek	175
Tawas-Harrisville RD	Vaughn Lake	200
Tawas-Harrisville RD	Honawan Lake Forest	375
<b>Total</b>	<b>19 Candidate Areas</b>	<b>9570</b>

**D. Management Indicator Species and Monitoring**

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan includes management indicator species to determine the effects of various management practices and strategies on fish, wildlife, and plants and monitoring requirements.

The Forests have conducted monitoring and prepared an annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (1986-2001). Budgets have been a limiting factor in monitoring the Forest Plan. New information is available on species that may be better suited as management indicator species and monitoring needs and methodologies.

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Change species in Management Indicator Species List.
- Add plant taxa to Management Indicator Species List.
- Revise monitoring and evaluation section and develop an affordable check on the condition of the land.
- Evaluation criteria for old growth effectiveness.
- Add monitoring and evaluation requirements for heritage resources.
- Establish air quality monitoring and evaluation program.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed change is warranted because new information is available and there is a need to evaluate the effects of management on wildlife, fish, and plants. There is also a need to monitor in a manner that is effective and cost efficient.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed changes are to assess and revise management indicator species and monitoring requirements. The proposed changes will be developed during the preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and draft Forest Plan.

**E. Timber Management**

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan calculated the long-term sustained yield at 261 MMBF per year. The Allowable Sale Quantity was set at 82.2 MMBF per year. The Allowable Sale Quantity was based on and reflected the Forests' historical (prior to 1986) maximum timber sale program.

Since 1986, the Forests have sold an average of 63.8 MMBF per year (76 percent of the Allowable Sale Quantity). During the last three years, the Forests have sold an average of 34 MMBF per year.

The Forests also sells timber that is not charged against the Allowable Sale Quantity (Non-Chargeable). Timber volume from unsuited for timber production lands is derived from activities such as old growth and wildlife opening restoration and fuels barrier development. The Forests track this timber volume separately from the Allowable Sale Quantity.

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Update timber suitability analysis.
- No comments received pertaining to long-term sustained yield proposed changes

**Rationale for Change:** These changes are warranted for the following reasons: The amount of lands that are suited for timber production has changed since the 1986 Forest Plan. Additional changes as a result of proposed changes to the Forest Plan during the Forest Plan revision process should be anticipated. The amount of timber sold from unsuited for timber production lands is expected to increase due to efforts to develop permanent fuels barriers, restore forests to old growth conditions, and provide habitat (permanent opening such as grasslands, prairies, savannahs, and oak-pine barrens) for federally endangered, Regional Forester Sensitive, and other species needs

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed changes for timber management are:

- Calculate the long-term sustained yield.
- The Non-Chargeable volume from activities on unsuited for timber production lands is estimated to be up to approximately 20 MMBF per year.

## 2. Watershed Health

### A. Aquatics Ecological Classification and Inventory System

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan does not include aquatics ecological classification and inventory system information.

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Develop and incorporate an aquatic ecological classification system.

**Rationale for Change:** Proposed changes are needed because the aquatics ecological classification system contains new and relevant information that will provide better guidance on the management of our aquatic systems.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change is to incorporate by reference the aquatics ecological classification system. Information contained in this system will be used in developing desired conditions, goals, and objectives for respective management areas.

### B. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan does not contain provisions (direction) contained within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders.

**Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Reference FERC license order provisions in the Forest Plan

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are needed to include the terms and conditions by which the FERC license order requires the aquatic and riparian areas and other resources to be managed by.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change is to incorporate by reference the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders.

### C. Aquatic Standards and Guidelines

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan contains guidance on vegetation attractive to beaver within 200 feet of State-classified trout streams and trophic indexes of lakes.

#### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Management for early successional habitat near streams can create beaver habitat to the detriment of fish migration and possibly water temperatures.
- Establish a management class for high quality sensitive lakes with a goal of no decline in the Carlson trophic state index as a result of activities on the National Forest.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are warranted to improve aquatic and riparian conditions based on the latest and best scientific information available.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change is to update the guidance on vegetation attractive to beaver within 200 feet of State-classified trout streams to manage closer to ecological disturbance regimes and in consideration of Regional Forester Sensitive Species habitat needs, and the best information available.

A proposed change is to categorize lakes in terms of baseline trophic status and morphological/hydrological sensitivity.

## 3. Recreation

### A. Semiprimitive Recreation Areas

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan designated approximately 59, 700 acres of semiprimitive non-motorized and approximately 11, 500 acres of semiprimitive motorized recreation opportunities. Many of these areas have roads; therefore, the Forests are working towards the desired condition of semiprimitive recreation (few, if any, roads).

#### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Increase semiprimitive areas
- Provide more quiet areas.
- Designate Brandybrook as a semiprimitive area (MA 4.1).
- Designate Briar Hills as a semiprimitive motorized area.
- Designate Nordhouse Dunes as a semiprimitive non-motorized area.
- Evaluate attributes for semiprimitive areas.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are warranted to better manage lands consistent with their capability and use, finalize the semiprimitive terms and conditions of the original Forest Plan, and provide a network of semiprimitive areas for the use and enjoyment of future generations.

**Proposed Changes:** The following is a summary of the approximate proposed semiprimitive acre changes:

- Nordhouse Dunes North Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 2,190 acres dropped
- Nordhouse Dunes East Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 80 acres dropped
- Reid Lake Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 445 acres dropped
- Brandy Brook Semiprimitive Motorized 3,805 acres added
- Wakeley Lake Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 1,198 acres added
- Whitewater Creek Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 4,177 acres added
- Cooke Pond Semiprimitive Non-Motorized 4,003 acres added

Total Semiprimitive Non-Motorized and Motorized Added: 10,468 acres

- The southern portion of Briar Hills Semiprimitive Non-Motorized area (approximately 3,000 acres) is proposed to be managed as a semiprimitive motorized recreation area.

## B. Aesthetics

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan includes information on Scenic Classes. The Forests have not completed development of Visual Quality Objectives as agreed to in the terms and conditions of the original Forest Plan.

There is a new visual management system (National Scenery Management System) that links ecological considerations with visual management.

### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Convert to National Scenery Management System.
- Update scenery management to current conditions.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed change is warranted to provide consistent, ecologically- and socially-integrated direction for visual (aesthetics) management.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change is to incorporate Scenery Management System visual integrity and sensitivity principles in a manner that integrates ecological and social considerations.

## C. Access

**Current Situation:** The Forest Plan provides direction on the type, density, and environmental and social considerations of trails. There are over 400 miles of non-motorized and 1,100 miles of motorized trails on the Forests. A large portion of the trail system is multi-use. The Forest Plan does not address mountain biking or future unknown trail uses and equipment. There is a large interest and demand for mountain biking on the Huron-Manistee National Forests.

### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Restrict or ban mountain biking.
- Allow mountain bikers on trails.
- No new motorized or bike trails.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are warranted because mountain biking is a legitimate national forest use. New trail uses need to be evaluated to insure they are consistent with Forest Service outdoor recreation vision and environmentally acceptable.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed change is to allow mountain biking on trails unless posted closed (prohibited). As “new uses occur”, the Forests will evaluate as needed and incorporate into the Forest Plan.

## 4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers

### A. Wilderness

**Current Situation:** There is one wilderness area, Nordhouse Dunes, and one RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluations) area, Bear Swamp, on the Forests.

**Initial Recommendation:** The Forests conducted an initial roadless inventory and found no areas that qualified as roadless. Based on our initial inventory and assessment, no areas will be recommended for wilderness study.

### B. Wild and Scenic Rivers

**Current Situation:** There are five federally designated national wild and scenic rivers: Pere Marquette, AuSable, Pine, and Manistee Rivers and Bear Creek. River management plans have been developed and approved for all five nationally-designated rivers.

The Forest Plan identified four national wild and scenic study rivers: Little Manistee, Little Muskegon, Muskegon, and White Rivers.

### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- No comments received pertaining to wild and scenic river proposed changes.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are warranted because of the need to establish wild and scenic river boundaries that are locatable and provide proper management for designated and study rivers and drop from further study those rivers that do not have the outstanding and remarkable characteristics required for designation.

**Proposed Changes:** The following are the wild and scenic river proposed changes:

- The AuSable River's management area (MA 8.1) boundary is to extend north and south to county roads with the exception of an area of jack pine forest and essential Kirtland's warbler habitat.
- Place the lands between the western boundary of the Pine River Wild and Scenic River to M-55 in "lands in holding" (MA 9.1) as a potential study river addition to the Pine Wild and Scenic River.
- Place lands of the White River Study River in "lands-in-holding" (MA 9.1) until river study is completed.
- Place lands of the Little Manistee Study River in "lands-in-holding" (MA 9.1) until river study is completed.
- Drop the Little Muskegon and Muskegon Rivers from further study due to limited federal ownership and because the amount of development since 1987 has altered the values of the rivers.

## **5. Wildland Fire and Fuels Management**

**Current Situation:** A considerable portion of the Forests lies within a rural-urban interface-intermix due to the highly fragmented land ownership pattern. The Forests are in a fire-dependent ecosystem with aging forests, increasing hazardous fuels, and at times under dry conditions. These overall situations place communities, private landowners, and natural resources at risk from large-scale wildfire.

The Forest Plan provides direction for wildland fire and fuels management. The National Fire Plan provides recent direction for wildfire suppression and hazardous fuels management.

### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Include urban/rural fire interface.
- Need standards and guidelines for fuel breaks/reduction/suppression.

- Areas created for fuel breaks should be taken out of LSC 500.

**Rationale for Change:** The proposed changes are warranted to conduct fire suppression and hazardous fuels management activities consistent with the fire risk associated with the urban-rural interface-intermix in a manner that is integrated with resources and programs.

**Proposed Changes:** The following are proposed goal and objective changes for fire and fuels management:

#### **A. Fire Management**

- The urban-rural interface and intermix encompasses the majority of the Huron-Manistee National Forests.
- The National Fire Plan and the Huron-Manistee National Forests' Fire Management Plan are proposed to be incorporated by reference and the following integrated directly into the Forest Plan:
  - Desired condition, goals, and objectives developed in consideration of management area attributes.
  - Fire risks identified and addressed.
  - Fire suppression is commensurate with the values of the resource to be protected.
  - The urban-rural interface and intermix (MA 2.4 and 4.4) fire response is to be developed.
  - All management areas have been developed with the following considerations: fire history frequency, forest type, fuel loadings, and site factors.
  - Fire management has been integrated with resources and programs.

#### **B. Fuels Management**

- Fuels management shall emulate natural fire regimes.
- Hazardous fuel loadings shall be identified and reduced to avoid catastrophic fires.
- The Forests shall maintain a Hazardous Fuels Risk Map that identifies fire-dependent ecosystems and at-risk urban-rural interface and intermix areas.
- The hazardous fuels programs consists of:
  - Fuel barriers (creation and/or maintenance): approximately 2,000 acres treated per year.
  - Individual fuel barriers may be up to approximately 8 miles in length and wide enough to create a change in fire behavior.
  - Hazardous fuels reduction (initial treatment and/or maintenance): approximately 8,000 acres treated per year.

- Temporary and permanent openings in fuel treatment areas may be up to approximately 500 acres in size in high fuel risk types.
- Integrate natural resources and other program (wildlife, plants, timber, etc.) objectives with fuels management.
- Conduct, as needed, project-level fuels hazard reduction effectiveness monitoring.

## 6. Minerals

**Current Situation:** The Forests have a modest amount of oil and gas development potential. The Forest Plan addresses the availability of oil and gas resources and specified resource protection stipulations (standards and guidelines). Regulations also require Forest Plans to calculate the Reasonable Foreseeable Oil and Gas Development, to analyze the effects of that development, and to identify lands for which the Forests may consent to lease during the planning period. The Forests have 9 Federal wells in production, 22 wells producing reserved/outstanding minerals, and 2 wells being developed for exploration.

### **Representative Comments on Need for Change:**

- Incorporate oil and gas leasing decisions to bring Forest Plan into compliance with Reform Act (1987).
- Develop a forest-wide reasonable, foreseeable development scenario.

**Rationale for Change:** These proposed changes are warranted to meet regulations and determine the lands available for consent to lease over the next 10-15 years.

**Proposed Changes:** The proposed changes for oil and gas resources are:

- Calculate the Reasonable Foreseeable Oil and Gas Development. The Huron-Manistee National Forests have an interim estimation of approximately 100 wells for the next 10-15 years on Forest Service System lands.
- Identify National Forest System lands which may be consented to lease for oil and gas development.

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## VII. Issues Not Addressed In This Forest Plan Revision Process

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The following is a summary of the issues not addressed in this Forest Plan revision process. These issues were categorized into the following categories: Editorial Changes, Implementation Items, Adequately Addressed in the Forest Plan, Outside Forest Service Jurisdiction, and Ongoing Future Amendments. For a detailed description of the Issues Not

Addressed in this Forest Plan Revision Process, see the Forest Plan Revision Need for Change Analysis of the Current Management Situation report. This report is available upon request.

## **1. Editorial Changes:**

There are a number of editorial changes that will better define, clarify, or further explain the intent of the Forest Plan. The following are examples of editorial changes that the Forests' anticipates:

- Define ecosystem management, forest health, sustainability, and barrens and prairies
- Define "old growth" and "over-mature forests"
- Changes in the "old growth design" to add "protected areas" and remove lands better suited for fuels and multiple-use management
- Define and clarify non-native invasive species management
- Define and clarify road management
- Define and clarify universal access direction
- Clarify conversion of present vegetation to other species such as white pine
- Clarify northern hardwood management, Kirtland's warbler essential habitat, and mast producing oak
- Clarify the purpose and uses of the North Country National Scenic Trail
- Clarify the desired condition and standards and guidelines for Semiprimitive Recreation Areas
- Clarify heritage resource standards and guidelines
- Clarify the land adjustment strategy
- Clarify special uses for occupancy and use

## **2. Implementation Items:**

There are a number of implementation items that the Forest Plan allows for depending upon funding and priority setting. The following are examples of implementation items that do not need to be addressed in the Forest Plan revision process:

- Complete the Ecological Inventory and Classification System
- Continue road closures in Kirtland's warbler breeding areas
- Manage for early successional habitats
- Use Michigan Department of Natural Resources Best Management Practices
- Add woody debris to rivers
- Continue to restore watersheds
- Develop more trails but close redundant trails
- Provide increased law enforcement presence
- Complete archeological site inventories
- Clean up trash
- Increase access and camping along rivers
- Increase fire fighting capability

- Monitor Management Indicator Species
- Adherence more closely to allowable sale quantity
- Conduct biodiversity surveys when planning for activities
- Close or keep open roads
- Conduct more information and education programs

### **3. Issues Adequately Addressed in the Forest Plan:**

The following is a list of items and issues the Forests determined were adequately addressed in the Forest Plan. The Forests' Analysis of the Current Management Situation identified that there were no critical or compelling reasons to change the direction or strategy in the Forest Plan for these items. The Forests, unless there is substantive new information, will not include these items or issues in this Forest Plan Revision process.

- Wildlife upland openings and waterhole development
- Federally-endangered species management, such as Kirtland's warbler
- Old growth amount and management
- Aspen early successional habitat
- Soil, water, riparian, and air resources
- Developed and dispersed recreation
- Access (roads and trails)
- Heritage (cultural resource)
- Wilderness land adjustments
- Forest pests (insects, diseases, and non-native invasive species)
- Red and white pine management
- Oak-northern hardwood and white cedar management
- Silvicultural systems
- Allowable sale quantity (82.2 MMBF per year)
- Special uses
- Range
- Partnerships
- Information and education
- Law enforcement

### **4. Issues Outside Forest Service Jurisdiction:**

There are a number of items that are outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service and not included in the Forest Plan. The following are examples of items that are outside the mission or authority of the Forest Service that do not need to be addressed in the Forest Plan revision process:

- Implement solutions to global warming
- Restore the Forests to historical vegetative conditions, circa 1825-1850
- Re-introduce extirpated species

- Prohibit deer baiting
- Too many deer; reduce the size of the deer population
- Create areas closed to bear hunting
- Provide protection of wetlands next to county drains\
- Only stock native species, not desired non-native fish, birds, etc.
- Identify the need for fish passage at non-Great Lakes-connected dams
- Eliminate motorboats on rivers in semiprimitive areas
- Build golf courses and softball fields
- Implement “dark sky” ordinances
- The Allowable Sale Quantity should be a range
- Change the Roads Analysis Process
- Wood burning plants are wasting timber

## **5. On-going and Future Amendments:**

The following are on-going and future Forest Plan amendments:

- On-going Amendments:
  - Federally Endangered Species environmental assessment: Amendment 25. Provides habitat and protection measures for piping plover, piping plover critical habitat, Indiana bat, Karner blue butterfly, and pitcher’s thistle.
- Future Amendments (after the Forest Plan is revised and dependent upon availability of funding):
  - Update of Pere Marquette River Management Plan.
  - If needed, prepare river management plans for the White River and Little Manistee Wild and Scenic River when studies are completed.
  - If needed, update river management plans as capacity studies or new information indicates a change is warranted for the AuSable, Pine, and Manistee, and Bear Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers.

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## **VIII. Next Steps in the Forest Plan Revision Process**

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### **Stage 1: Notice of Intent (NOI) (September 2003):**

The purpose of the Notice of Intent is to inform the tribes; public; and federal, state, and local governments that the Michigan National Forests are proposing to revise Forest Plans and invite the public to participate in the process by commenting on the proposed revision items.

## **Stage 2: Content Analysis (2003):**

The Forests will conduct a content analysis on all comments received during the Notice of Intent 60-day comment period. Comments will be assessed for issues and suggested alternatives, then grouped when similar.

## **Stage 3: Developing Alternatives (2004):**

During this stage, the Forests will work with the tribes, governments, and public to develop a range of alternatives to address issues within the scope of the proposed revision changes. Alternatives will be developed according to themes derived from the issues and suggestions from the content analysis.

## **Stage 4: Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Revised Forest Plan (2005):**

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared that displays and compares alternative ways of managing the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The draft environmental impact statement will describe the anticipated physical, biological, social, and economic effects at the broad landscape-level for each alternative. The Forests will identify a preferred alternative and a proposed revised Forest Plan. The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement and proposed revised Forest Plan will be 90 days from the date it is published in the *Federal Register*.

## **Stage 5: Revised Forest Plan (2006):**

The responsible official will consider the comments, responses, and environmental consequences discussed in the final environmental impact statement together with applicable laws, regulations, and policies in making a decision and adopting the final revised Forest Plan. The responsible official will document the decision and reasons for the decision in the Record of Decision. That decision would be subject to appeal in accordance with federal regulations (36 CFR 217).

The revised Forest Plan will set the management direction for the Huron-Manistee National Forests for the next 10-15 years.

Under current direction, the responsible official is the Regional Forester, Eastern Region, Gaslight Building, 626 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202.

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## **IX. The Notice of Intent:**

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[3410-11-P]  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE

**Revised Land and Resource Management Plans for the Huron-Manistee National Forests** (Alcona, Crawford, Iosco, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Ogemaw, Oscoda and Wexford Counties, Michigan); **the Hiawatha National Forest** (Alger, Cheboygan, Chippewa, Delta, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette and Schoolcraft Counties, Michigan); **and the Ottawa National Forest** (Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Marquette and Ontonagon Counties, Michigan).

**AGENCY:** Forest Service, USDA

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to prepare Environmental Impact Statements

**SUMMARY:** The USDA Forest Service intends to prepare three separate and individual Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) documents for revising the **Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha and Ottawa National Forest** Land and Resource Management Plans (Forest Plan) pursuant to 16 U.S.C. 1604(f) (5) and USDA Forest Service National Forest System Land and Resource Management Planning regulations. The National Forests in Michigan are concurrently starting the revision process for each of the three National Forests. The Revised Forest Plans for each Forest will supersede the existing Forest Plans, which were approved in the mid-1980's, and any amendments associated with those individual Forest Plans. This Notice describes the focus areas of change, the estimated dates for filing the EIS, the information concerning public participation, the names and addresses of the responsible agency official and the individual who can provide additional information for each of the three National Forests in Michigan. In an effort to create efficiencies in the process, the Michigan National Forests are identifying areas of Plan Revision where resources, information needs, data assessments and public involvement can be cooperatively accomplished by all three Forests.

**DATES:** Your comments are needed on this Notice of Intent (NOI) in writing on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. The Draft EIS documents should be available for public review by March 2005. The Final EIS and Revised Forest Plans should be completed by March 2006. Comments should be addressed to the appropriate National Forest as shown below.

**ADDRESSES:**

Send written comments to:

<b>Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forests</b> NOI - FP Revision Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forest 1755 S. Mitchell St. Cadillac, MI 49601	<b>Hiawatha Nat'l Forest</b> NOI – FP Revision Hiawatha Nat'l Forest 2727 No. Lincoln Rd. Escanaba, MI 49829	<b>Ottawa Nat'l Forest</b> NOI – FP Revision Ottawa Nat'l Forest E6248 US Hwy. 2 Ironwood, MI 49938
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Or direct electronic mail to (type: **NOI – FP Revision in the subject line**):

Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forest:	<a href="mailto:r9_huronmanistee_revision@fs.fed.us">r9_huronmanistee_revision@fs.fed.us</a>
Hiawatha Nat'l Forest:	<a href="mailto:r9_hiawatha_revision@fs.fed.us">r9_hiawatha_revision@fs.fed.us</a>
Ottawa Nat'l Forest:	<a href="mailto:r9_ottawa_revision@fs.fed.us">r9_ottawa_revision@fs.fed.us</a>

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

<b>Huron-Manistee Nat'l Forests</b> Forest Planner 231-775-5023 Fax: 231-775-5551 TTY: 231-775-3183 <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf">www.fs.fed.us/r9/hmnf</a>	<b>Hiawatha Nat'l Forest</b> Forest Planner 906-786-4062 Fax: 906-789-3311 TTY: 906-789-3337 <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha">www.fs.fed.us/r9/hiawatha</a>	<b>Ottawa Nat'l Forest</b> Forest Planner 906-932-1330 Fax: 906-932-0122 TTY: 906-932-0301 <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa">www.fs.fed.us/r9/ottawa</a>
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**RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL:** Randy Moore, Regional Forester, Eastern Region, 626 East Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53202.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Regional Forester for the Eastern Region gives notice of the Agency's intent to prepare three separate EIS documents to revise the **Huron-Manistee**, **Hiawatha** and **Ottawa** National Forest Plans. The Regional Forester approved the original National Forest Plans in the mid-1980's. These plans guide the overall management of the Michigan National Forests. The six primary decisions in the Forest Plan are:

1. Forest-wide multiple-use goals and objectives
2. Forest-wide management requirements
3. Management area direction
4. Lands suited and not suited for resource use and production (timber management etc.)
5. Monitoring and evaluation requirements
6. Recommendations to Congress (such as wilderness), if any

By the requirements of the National Forest Management Act, National Forests must revise the Forest Plan every 10-15 years (U.S.C. 1604[f][5]). At this time, there are three reasons to revise the current Forest Plans: (1) the National Forest Management Act of 1976 requires that such plans be revised every 10-15 years; (2) New research and information is available regarding management of forestlands; and (3) agency goals and objectives, along with other national guidance for strategic plans and programs, have changed. The agency Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan (2000) provides guidance to forest planning.

**PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR REVISING THE FOREST PLANS:** Across the state of Michigan, people value the opportunities public forests provide for enjoying recreation, solitude, nature study, and scenic beauty. People also expect important products from managed forests, such as wildlife species and habitats, recreation opportunities and events, wood products, and other forest products. The Michigan National Forests are integral to the sense of place for communities across the State, as well as adjoining states.

However, each of the three Michigan National Forests also serves local communities with diverse needs and unique expectations. When making decisions in the revised plans, economic and social impacts will be examined. Each National Forest has proposed to focus analysis on topics identified as being most critically in need of change for their individual National Forest. These were identified through public comment, monitoring and evaluating implementation of the current forest plan.

### **HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST REVISION TOPICS:**

#### **1. Sustainable Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses.**

The Hiawatha National Forest has diverse ecosystems that provide habitat for numerous plants and animals, serve as a setting for recreational activities, and provide a mix of forest products. Since the implementation of the Forest Plan, new information on the ecological function and capability of the forest landscape has been developed. The Hiawatha has also completed mapping of ecological units using updated criteria and information, which will be used, along with other resource information, to:

- ◆ Determine the most effective mix of tree species, their sizes and locations;
- ◆ Determine how the vegetation composition and structure will provide conditions that contribute to species viability, habitat for game species, recreation, and forest products;
- ◆ Determine the best locations to manage for old growth characteristics;
- ◆ Determine what lands are suitable for timber harvests.

The Hiawatha National Forest proposes the following revisions to the Forest Plan:

A. **Vegetation Management:** Some of the Plan's vegetation composition and structure goals have not been met. This is due to numerous factors, including changed market demand, natural events (such as insect and disease infestations, wind events and fire), and the discovery of new rare plant and animal species. Species most affected were jack pine and the aspen group. The Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Review and change, where necessary, the vegetation goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines.
2. Use improved information about the Forest's ecosystems to better align management prescriptions where ecosystem capabilities favor their applications.

- B. Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, Sensitive and Management Indicator Species:** The Hiawatha has many threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species. These species require a diverse array of ecological conditions. Based on species viability evaluation and review of the current Forest Plan, the Hiawatha proposes to:
1. Revise desired future conditions, goals, objectives and standards and guidelines to address rare species.
  2. Incorporate by reference designated federally threatened, endangered and proposed and Regional Forester Sensitive Species.
  3. Evaluate and change Management Indicator Species, as necessary, based on monitoring and new information.
  4. Assess current and projected Canada lynx habitat to determine the amount and distribution of suitable habitat. Develop standards and guidelines that incorporate the Canada Lynx Conservation Strategy, when appropriate.
- C. Land Suitability:** The Plan classifies lands as suited and unsuited for timber production. Because of improved ecological classification information there is a need to review the Hiawatha's lands allocated as suited and unsuited for timber production. The Hiawatha proposes to review and change, as necessary, lands identified as suitable and not suitable for timber production incorporating new information on ecosystems sustainability and capability.
- D. Old Growth:** The Forest Plan provides for a minimum of 51,988 acres of lands classified as suitable for timber production to be designated as old growth. This implies that timber harvest could occur because suited lands are available to contribute the Forest's timber volume goals. The plan also provides guidance on the amount and species composition by management area. New ecological information and monitoring of designated old growth stands indicates some adjustments to the old growth system are needed. The Hiawatha proposes to:
1. Review the old growth system design focusing on ecological function.
  2. Designate core old growth areas that include: wilderness, research natural areas, semi-primitive non-motorized areas, and Grand Island National Recreation Area.
  3. Maintain current plan minimum of 51,988 acres of designated old growth in addition to core areas; however, re-classify designated old growth stands from suited to unsuited for timber production.
  4. Develop forest-wide desired future conditions, goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines for old growth.
- E. Management Areas:** The Hiawatha has 26 different management areas. Each area has a desired condition, prescriptions and standards and guidelines. The Hiawatha has mapped its ecological land types (ELT) to better define the inherent ecosystem capabilities that change across the forest. There is a need to modify management goals and objectives so that management is better aligned with the inherent capability of the land and other multiple use objectives. The Hiawatha proposes to review and change management areas to incorporate ecological land types, new information on

ecosystems, sustainability and capability concepts and other pertinent resource information.

- F. **Research Natural Areas:** Research Natural Areas are examples of important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics to complete the national network of research natural areas (RNAs). The Hiawatha has 3 designated and 18 candidate RNAs. The Hiawatha proposes to review the existing candidate RNAs using new ecological information (ecological land-type mapping).
- G. **Timber Output:** The Hiawatha's projected timber harvest may change in response to changes to land suitability, management prescriptions, and vegetation goals. Any changes to lands identified as suited for timber production, as well as vegetation objectives, may have an affect on timber volume. The Hiawatha proposes to adjust, as necessary, the Plan's timber projections based on changes to land suitability, vegetation goals and management areas.

## 2. Watershed Health.

Approximately 46 percent of the Hiawatha National Forest is designated as wetlands. It includes nearly 1,850 miles of streams and 28,700 acres of lakes and ponds. Based on new ecological information, monitoring, and review of existing Plan direction, the following areas need to be updated:

- A. **Watershed, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat:** The Hiawatha proposes to:
  - 1. Develop a desired future condition, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for watershed, riparian and aquatic resources.
  - 2. Incorporate by reference the State of Michigan Water Quality Management Practices on Forest Land (BMPs).
  - 3. Establish watershed, riparian and aquatic monitoring protocol and standards.
- B. **Soils:** The Hiawatha proposes to:
  - 1. Develop a desired future condition, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines to insure that soil productivity and function is maintained in conjunction with new ecological information.
  - 2. Incorporate by reference regional soil standards.

## 3. Recreation.

- A. **Access:** Recreation use and demands for access have changed since the Forest Plan was developed. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized recreation users have increased and demands for access to inland lakes and the Great Lakes continue to rise. The Hiawatha National Forest proposes to develop forest-wide and/or update management area desired condition statements, goals, objectives, standards and guidelines for recreation access. It will include direction for:

1. Motorized and non-motorized access that provides opportunities for future loop and connected trails.
2. Forest-wide direction for OHV (off highway vehicles) use.
3. The quantity and development level for inland lakes and Great Lakes boat accesses.
4. Providing access to both motorized and non-motorized recreation settings on inland lakes.

**B. Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.** Forest plan Amendment 5 (which resolved the appeal(s) of the Forest Plan in 1986), allocated the areas of Delia's Run, Boot Lake and Buck Bay Creek to a "semi-primitive non-motorized (SPNM) recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS). Prior to the amendment, these areas were allocated to a "roaded natural" ROS. These areas do not meet the desired future condition for management for the SPNM recreation setting because there is a historic pattern and significant motorized use throughout these areas and the quality of the setting is not beneficial to SPNM recreation. The Hiawatha proposes to change the ROS classification for these areas from semi-primitive non-motorized to semi-primitive motorized.

#### 4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

**A. Wilderness Areas:** The Hiawatha National Forest has six wilderness areas (Rock River Canyon, Big Island Lake, Mackinac, Round Island, Delirium, and Horseshoe Bay) and two RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) Areas (Government Island and Fibre). The Forest conducted an initial roadless inventory and found no areas except Fibre that qualified as roadless. Based on our initial inventory and assessment, only Fibre will be further evaluated for wilderness study.

**B. Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The Forest Plan identified the Indian, Carp, Whitefish, Sturgeon, and East Branch Tahquamenon Rivers as "study rivers" for evaluation of their potential for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System (WSR). They were allocated to Management Area 8.4, with management direction that would not diminish their river values or free-flowing condition. As a result of the Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991, these rivers were designated as Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers. Those segments with primarily National Forest ownership were designated as wild and scenic rivers, while those segments with primarily private ownership were designated as study rivers. The Hiawatha completed resource assessments for all five rivers and amended the plan with comprehensive management plans for the Indian and Carp Rivers.

The Hiawatha proposes to:

1. Incorporate specific river management plans and establish final corridor boundaries for the designated sections of the East Branch Tahquamenon, Sturgeon and Whitefish Rivers.

2. Incorporate new information and update management direction for National Forest lands within the study river segments.

**YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US:** Your comments about the Hiawatha National Forest’s proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicated that you are referencing the Hiawatha National Forest’s proposed changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forest in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern.

The document titled “Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Hiawatha National Forest” provides additional details on the revision topics and is available upon request. You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request this additional information by calling the number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forest’s web page.

See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation".

#### **HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS REVISION TOPICS:**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests have completed the Forest Plan Revision “Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests.” The following summarizes the proposed changes to the Forest Plan that are necessary to bring the 1986 Forest Plan as amended up-to-date.

#### **1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses.**

A. **Management Areas:** The Huron-Manistee National Forest’s management areas are based on ecological and social economic considerations. Each management area has unique desired conditions, goals and objectives. There is a need to change management areas, desired conditions, goals and objectives because there is new ecological and social information and conditions. The Huron-Manistee National Forests propose to:

1. Increase ruffed grouse emphasis areas by 1,400 acres; Rural areas by 74,300 acres; Semiprimitive Areas by 10,500 acres; and candidate Research Natural Areas by 9,600 acres; and decrease the sandy hills and plains management area by 59,700 acres and deer and wildlife emphasis areas by 20,800 acres.
2. Establish desired conditions, goals, and objectives for the aquatics and riparian, undesirable invasive species, fire and hazardous fuel management, and oil and gas resources.
3. Update the desired conditions, goals and objectives for vegetation, wildlife, fish, rare plants, soils, and semiprimitive recreation areas.

- B. Wildlife and Rare Plants:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have many threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species. These species require an array of ecological conditions. Other wildlife changes are proposed because areas are better suited for specific wildlife species, semiprimitive recreation opportunities, or candidate research natural areas. Based on species viability evaluation and review of the current Forest Plan, the Huron-Manistee National Forests propose to:
1. Manage the Regional Forester Sensitive Species according to the Eastern Region Regional Forester's Sensitive Species Framework.
  2. Restore and maintain large-scale openings for grassland, prairie, savannah, and oak-pine barrens up to approximately 10 percent of the sandy hills and plains land type associations (approximately 58,600 acres). The size of openings may be up to approximately 500 acres.
  3. Restore Kirtland's warbler nesting habitat areas up to approximately 550 acres in size.
  4. Protect resource values by managing landforms such as coastal plain marshes, bogs, swales, fens, and mesic prairies consistent with ecological processes.
  5. Improve habitat conditions for species such as: American ginseng, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, red headed woodpecker, Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, cerulean warbler, and common loon.
  6. Change the Nordhouse Dunes North Semiprimitive Area to a grouse emphasis area.
  7. Increase the amount of ruffed grouse emphasis areas by approximately 1,400 acres and reduce the deer emphasis areas by approximately 18,511 acres and wildlife emphasis areas by approximately 2,326 acres in order to establish candidate research natural areas and semiprimitive areas.
- C. Research Natural Areas:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests presently have three research natural areas and four candidate research natural areas. The Forests have inventoried potential areas for candidate research natural areas and propose to add 19 candidate research natural areas (approximately 9,600 acres) to protect unique or representative areas and conduct research, observation, and education programs.
- D. Management Indicator Species and Monitoring:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have management indicator species and conducts monitoring annually. The Forests annually prepare a monitoring and evaluation report. There is a need to identify management indicator species to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the effects of implementing the Forest Plan and to monitor in an efficient and effective manner. The Forests propose to evaluate, and revise if needed, management indicator species and monitoring requirements during the preparation of the draft environmental impact statement and Forest Plan.
- E. Timber Management:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests Allowable Sale Quantity is 82.2 MMBF per year; Maximum Long Term Sustained Yield Capacity is 261.0 MMBF per year; and little or no timber volume was projected from lands classified as not suitable for timber production. The lands suitable for timber management have changed due to past decisions and proposed Forest Plan revision

changes. The Forests are planning activities, such as stewardship contracts and timber sales, to restore old growth, create small and large-scale openings and create permanent fuel breaks on lands classified as not suitable for timber production. The Forests propose to:

- Recalculate the maximum long-term sustained yield capacity.
- Add an objective/outcome for timber derived from lands classified as not suitable for timber production (non-chargeable to the allowable sale quantity volume) up to approximately 20 MMBF per year.

## **2. Watershed Health.**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests updated aquatic standards and guidelines in 2003 through Forest Plan Amendment number 24. Based on a review of the Forest Plan, the Forests propose the following changes:

- A. Incorporate Aquatic Ecological Classification and Inventory System information into the aquatics desired condition.
- B. Categorize lakes in the desired conditions, goals and objectives in terms of baseline trophic status and morphological/hydrological sensitivity in order to better manage our lakes.
- C. Incorporate by reference the terms and conditions of applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders as standards and guidelines.
- D. Update the guideline to manage vegetation attractive to beaver in riparian areas to closer mimic natural disturbance regimes.

## **3. Recreation.**

- A. **Semiprimitive:** The Forests reviewed existing and potential semiprimitive areas for suitability and propose the following changes:
  1. Add approximately 5,000 acres of semiprimitive non-motorized recreation areas.
  2. Add approximately 5,500 acres of semiprimitive motorized areas.
  3. Change the southern portion of the Briar Hills Semiprimitive Non-motorized Area to a semiprimitive motorized area.
- B. **Aesthetics:** Visual quality objectives have been replaced by the National Scenery Management System which incorporates ecological and socio-economic considerations in scenery management. The Forests propose to incorporate the Scenery Management System visual integrity and sensitivity principles to better integrate ecological and social considerations.
- C. **Access:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have adequate Forest Plan direction for access (roads and trails). The Forest Plan did not consider new uses such as mountain bikes. The Forests propose to allow mountain bikes on trails unless posted closed. Evaluate and incorporate into the Forest Plan, as needed, new trail uses as they occur.

#### **4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.**

- A. **Wilderness:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have one Wilderness Area, Nordhouse Dunes, and one RARE II (Roadless Area Review and Evaluations) area, Bear Swamp. The Forests conducted an initial roadless inventory and found no areas that qualified as roadless. Based on our initial inventory and assessment, no areas would be recommended for wilderness study.
- B. **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The Huron-Manistee National Forests have five federally designated national wild and scenic rivers. River management plans have been developed and approved for all rivers. The Forests have four study rivers. Some of the wild and scenic or study rivers boundaries need to be established or improved. Recent changes in land uses have altered the values of some of the study rivers. The Forests propose to:
1. Change the Au Sable River management area boundary to extend to roads on both sides of the River.
  2. Place the White River, Little Manistee River, and a portion of the Pine River up to M-55 in “lands-in-holding” status until river studies are completed.
  3. Drop the Little Muskegon and Muskegon Rivers from further Wild and Scenic River study because of limited federal ownership and private development along the rivers.

#### **5. Wildland Fire and Fuels Management.**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests’ Forest Plan contains general guidance on fire and fuels management. The Forests are comprised of land type association and vegetative communities that are fire dependent. The Forests are also highly fragmented with private ownership and an increasing number of new homes and cabins. The Forest Service, through the National Fire Plan, is emphasizing fire and fuels management. The Huron-Manistee National Forests reviewed the current situation, new information (ecological, social and Forest Service direction) and propose to:

1. Add a standard to integrate fire and fuels management with natural resources and programs.
2. Include a description of the urban-rural interface (mixed forests and dense housing areas) and intermix (mixed forests and sparse housing areas) within the desired condition of Management Areas 2.4 and 4.4 (approximately 77,500 acres).
3. Include a description of the fire history, forest type, fuel loadings and risks, fire suppression strategy, and fire response in the desired conditions of each management area.
4. Include a guideline to manage hazardous fuels by mimicking natural fire regimes in fire-dependent ecosystems and at-risk urban-rural interface and intermix areas.
5. Add an objective/outcome to annually initiate, create or maintain approximately 2,000 acres of fuel barriers and 8,000 acres of hazardous fuels reduction.

6. Add a guideline to limit fuel barrier creation to be up to approximately 8 miles in length and temporary or permanent openings up to approximately 500 acres in size.
7. Add a guideline to conduct, as needed, project-level fuels hazard reduction effectiveness monitoring.

## **6. Minerals.**

The Huron-Manistee National Forests have a very modest oil and gas program. The Forests have identified National Forest System lands available for oil and gas development and have established adequate standards and guidelines. Regulations require the Forest Plan to include a reasonable foreseeable development of oil and gas resources and the identification of lands which may be leased. The Forest proposes to:

1. Calculate the Reasonable Foreseeable Oil and Gas Development (our interim estimate is approximately 100 wells on National Forest System lands) for the next 10-15 years.
2. Identify National Forest System lands which may be consented to lease for oil and gas developments.

**YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US:** Your comments about the Huron-Manistee National Forests proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicated that you are referencing the Huron-Manistee National Forests' proposed changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forests in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern.

The document titled "Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Huron-Manistee National Forests" provides additional details on the revision topics and is available upon request. You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request this additional information by calling the number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forests' web page.

See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation".

## **OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST REVISION TOPICS:**

### **1. Sustaining Ecosystems, Conditions and Uses.**

Since the implementation of the present Forest Plan began in 1986 advancements have been made in knowledge of ecological capabilities and mapping of ecological units. This knowledge, along with field experience, will be used to reassess the suitability of lands for timber management, enhance the contribution to the viability of plant and animal species, provide for cultural, commercial and personal uses of special forest products, and adjust

management objectives to better match ecosystems capabilities. Specifically, the following will be addressed:

- A. **Invasive Species:** The Forest Plan will be revised to include standards and guidelines outlining a Forest-wide program on non-native invasive plant and animal listing, inventory, mapping, treatment, and monitoring, as the current Plan direction is limited in this area.
- B. **Management Indicator Species:** The Forest will evaluate and change Management Indicator Species (MIS), as necessary, based on monitoring and new information.
- C. **Vegetation Management:** New information concerning: the suitability of lands for timber production, biological diversity, conditions that support the viability of species, cultural, commercial and personal uses of special forest products, and ecosystem capacity offer the Forest an opportunity to better align the management of the resources to ecosystem capabilities.

Through the revision process the Forest proposes to:

1. Review, and as needed, change forest-wide goals and management requirements, location and management direction for individual management areas including standards and guidelines to enhance the contribution to the viability of native and desired non-native species known to reside on the Forest, as well as other multiple use objectives, including cultural uses and values.
2. Change Forest Plan direction as needed to contribute to a diversity of plant and animal communities, and tree species, consistent with the overall multiple-use objectives of the planning area.
3. Change the location and number of acres of land suited and not suited for timber production in order to maintain soils productivity and high quality water conditions.
4. Better align hardwood silviculture (management methods) with ecosystem units which favor its application. This will result in an increase in the number of acres managed uneven-aged versus even-aged.
5. Emphasize the retention and or expansion of white pine and hemlock in northern hardwood stands to improve biodiversity.
6. Increase the number of acres managed for long-lived conifers.
7. Maintain or increase a number of acres of short rotation conifers as needed to further contribute to habitat for native species.
8. Adjust the amount and location of aspen forests to better match ecosystems capabilities, align with new suitable lands information and support conservation of the Canada lynx.
9. Change Forest Plan direction concerning the management of forest stands adjacent to old growth. In addition, old growth management direction may be changed as needed to contribute to species viability.
10. Adjust the amount of managed forest openings to better match ecosystem capabilities and opportunities.

11. Change Forest Plan direction to address the role of wildfire and prescribed fire in fire-prone ecosystems including management areas emphasizing conifer species.

It is anticipated that these proposed actions will lead to a change in species composition objectives in some management areas, and change the location and size of some management areas. As a result, the ability of the Forest to maintain its current and projected levels of timber harvest and contribution to the regional economic market will be reassessed.

- D. **Research Natural Areas:** Research Natural Areas are examples of important forest, shrubland, grassland, alpine, aquatic and geologic types that have special or unique characteristics to complete the national network of research natural areas (RNAs). The Ottawa has 1 designated and 2 candidate RNAs. The Ottawa proposes to review the existing candidate RNAs using new ecological information.
- E. **Canada Lynx:** Management direction for the Forest will provide habitat and management direction that supports the conservation of the threatened Canada lynx.

## 2. Watershed Health.

- A. **Watershed, Riparian and Aquatic Habitat:** The Revised Forest Plan will include standards and guidelines that enhance protections and guide management decisions in riparian areas. These will address riparian function and structure which contribute to biodiversity. These will also address management to improve cold-water stream habitats.
- B. **Management of Dams:** Guidelines will be included in the Revised Forest Plan to be considered with projects involving existing dams , or additions or removals of dams on forest streams. Guidelines will address residual stream flow, habitat for sensitive species, trout fisheries, and recreational values. Guidelines for hydro-power dams on the Forest managed under licenses administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission are contained within their respective licenses.
- C. **Federal Energy Regulatory Commission:** Incorporate by reference the terms and conditions of applicable Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license orders.

## 3. Recreation.

All-Terrain Vehicle/Off Road Vehicle (ATV/ORV) use on the Ottawa National Forest is rapidly changing. Current Forest Service policy is to manage ATV/ORV use. To be consistent with Forest Service policy, the Ottawa National Forest will consider allowing for a designated ATV/ORV system. Current direction on areas and roads open to use needs to be clarified to better manage this use. In addition to developing guidelines that protect natural resources in areas where these uses may occur, the Forest will look for opportunities to coordinate ATV/ORV use and access with adjoining roads, trails and lands held by private and public owners.

#### 4. Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

- A. **Wilderness:** A roadless inventory and potential wilderness evaluation will be part of the revision process. The inventory process will analyze areas for roadless qualities. Those areas that meet basic inventory criteria will be evaluated as potential wilderness study areas. Based on the results of this work, recommendations to Congress may be made for potential wilderness study areas.
- B. **Wild and Scenic Rivers:** The Ottawa is working to complete Comprehensive River Management Plans and finalize river corridor boundaries. Portions of six river systems were designated as part of the National Wild and Scenic River System with Michigan Scenic Rivers Act of 1991. The Forest Plan will be amended in the future, as necessary, based on completion of this work.

**YOUR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO US:** Your comments about the Ottawa National Forest's proposed actions for revising the Forest Plan are important. It would be most helpful if you clearly indicate that you are referencing the Ottawa National Forest's proposed changes and specific items/areas where you are in agreement with the proposal or wish to express a concern or alternative approach. Your rationale for agreeing or providing different viewpoints will assist the Forest's concern in understanding your position, developing alternatives, and/or addressing your concern. Again, please clearly indicate the Ottawa National Forest, your viewpoints, and your rationale.

Additional detail on the revision topics is available on request, in the form of the document titled "Need for Change, Description of Proposal for Revising the Forest Plan of the Ottawa National Forest". You are encouraged to review this additional document before commenting on the Notice of Intent. You may request the additional information by calling the phone number listed above, by writing or e-mailing to the addresses listed in this notice, or by accessing the Forest web page listed in this notice.

See the schedule of public meetings that appears in the section "Inviting Public Participation".

**RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES FOR REVISING THE FOREST PLANS:** A range of alternatives will be considered when revising the Forest Plan for each of the Michigan National Forests. The alternatives will review different options to resolve the revision topics. A "no-action alternative" is required, meaning that management would continue under the existing Forest Plan.

Goals and standards and guides may be proposed to address portions of revision topics and typically will not vary between alternatives. Forest Plan objectives, management area direction, and other recommendations may vary by alternatives. Other minor changes may be made particularly in the guidance chapter of the Forest Plan, to reflect changes made when addressing the above revision topics.

#### **TRIBAL CONSULTATION AND COLLABORATION WITH GOVERNMENT**

**AGENCIES:** The Michigan National Forests will continue to meet trust responsibilities with

Native American Tribes by working collaboratively through the consultation process as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Tribal – USDA Forest Service relations on National Forest System Lands and with Tribes in the Territories Ceded in Treaties of 1836, 1837, and 1842 (Sec. VI.B). Treaty rights are exercised by tribes and tribal members in various ways such as hunting, fishing and gathering. The Forest Service recognizes treaty rights as a matter of national policy and consults with tribes to ensure that Agency decisions do not adversely affect these rights.

In acknowledgment of the Federal Government's obligation to consult effectively with federally recognized Indian tribes, the three Michigan National Forests will conduct government-to-government consultation with tribal governments for all tribes located near or having rights in the Forests, particularly those which retain rights through treaties. Forest Service officials will meet with tribal governing bodies, representatives, and agencies to discuss tribal interests, needs and concerns regarding National Forest management.

The Forest Service will also continue the ongoing relationships with state and federal agencies. This will be accomplished jointly between the three Michigan National Forests and the appropriate State and local agencies to provide for more consistent management and better service to the public.

**INVITING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** Comments and suggestions are now solicited from federal agencies, state and local governments, individuals, tribes, and organizations on the scope of the analysis to be included in the DEIS for the Revised Forest Plan (40 CFR 1501.7). Comments should focus on: (1) the proposal for revising the Forest Plans; (2) possible alternatives for addressing issues associated with the proposal; and (3) identify any possible impacts associated with the proposal based on an individual's civil rights (race, color, national origin, age, religion, gender, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital or family status). Public participation throughout the revision process is encouraged.

With the publication of this NOI, the Forest Service will host a series of public meetings to (1) establish multiple opportunities for the public to generate ideas, concerns, and alternatives, (2) present and clarify proposed changes to the Forest Plan; (3) describe ways that individuals can respond to this NOI; and (4) accept comments from the public on this proposal for revising the Forest Plan.

In the year 2004 work on alternative development and issue validation will be done. Many types of public involvement including public meetings, tribal and governmental consultation, written comments, website, and e-mail will be conducted.

In the year 2005 the proposed Revised Forest Plans and DEISs will be released. Many types of public involvement including a 90-day formal comment period, public meetings, tribal and governmental consultation, and written comments will be conducted.

During 2006 the final Revised Forest Plan, EIS, and Record of Decision will be released. Informational meetings to explain the decision on the final Forest Plan will be held.

General notices on opportunities to participate through mailings, news releases, public meetings, consultations and website will be provided. In addition to formal opportunities for comment, comments will be received and considered at any time throughout the revision process.

A representative from each of the three Michigan National Forests will be in attendance at the series of meetings listed below in the schedule titled "Michigan National Forests."

<b>MICHIGAN NATIONAL FORESTS (Huron-Manistee, Hiawatha, and Ottawa)</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Location</b>
10/20/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m	Open House	<b>Muskegon, Michigan</b> Comfort Inn 1675 E. Sherman Road
	6:30-9:00 p.m	Listening Session	
10/21/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Grand Rapids, Michigan</b> Howard Johnson's 255 28 <sup>th</sup> Street, SW
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	
10/22/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Lansing, Michigan</b> Clarion Hotel/Conf. Center 3600 Dunckel Drive
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	
10/23/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Livonia, Michigan</b> Embassy Suites 19525 Victor Parkway
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Listening Session	

Each of the Michigan National Forests will host open house meetings to (1) answer specific questions relative to the NOI and (2) to provide information on how to comment on the NOI and to accept written comments from the public. Following is a schedule of the meetings:

<b>HIAWATHA NATIONAL FOREST</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
10/20/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	<b>Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan</b> Lake Superior State University Cisler Center
10/21/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	<b>St. Ignace, Michigan</b> Little Bear East Arena & Community Center 275 Marquette Street
10/22/2003	6:30 – 9:00 p.m.	<b>Marquette, Michigan</b> Northern Michigan University University Center, Michigan Room
10/23/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	<b>Escanaba, Michigan</b> Bay de Noc Community College M-tech Building 2000 N 30th Street
10/27/2003	6:30 - 9:00 p.m.	<b>Munising, Michigan</b> Munising Community Credit Union Community Center Main Street & M-28

<b>HURON-MANISTEE NATIONAL FORESTS</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Location</b>
10/14/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Baldwin, Michigan</b> Pleasant Plains Township Hall 885 8 <sup>th</sup> Street
	6:30- 9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/15/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Wellston, Michigan</b> Chittenden Environmental Ctr. The Conifers Building 1070 Nursery Road
	6:30 -9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/16/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Oscoda, Michigan</b> Warrior's Pavillion on Van Ettan Lake 6288 F-41
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/21/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Cadillac, Michigan</b> McGuire's Resort 7880 Mackinaw Trail
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	
10/22/2003	12:00-6:00 p.m.	Open House	<b>Mio, Michigan</b> Mio Community Center 305 East Ninth St.
	6:30-9:00 p.m.	Public Comment	

<b>OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
10/06/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (EST)	<b>Ontonagon, Michigan</b> Ontonagon Area High School 701 Parker Ave.
10/08/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	<b>Ironwood, Michigan</b> Gogebic Community College Room B21/B22 E4946 Jackson Road
10/09/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	<b>Iron River, Michigan</b> Iron River City Hall 106 West Genesee Street
10/15/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (EST)	<b>Baraga, Michigan</b> Best Western Lakeside Inn 900 South US41
10/18/2003	1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (EST)	<b>Ewen, Michigan</b> Ewen -Trout Creek School 144 Airport Road
10/20/2003	6:00 - 8:00 p.m. (CST)	<b>Watersmeet, Michigan</b> Watersmeet Visitor Center Hwy US 2 & Hwy 45

**AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC COMMENT:** Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record for this proposed action and will be available for public inspection.

