United States Department of Agriculture

Hiawatha Highlights

News

Summer 2016

Spring and Early Summer Updates

Welcome to our latest edition of *Hiawatha Highlights,* covering April, May, June and July. This is our busiest time of year, preparing for and hosting visitors, and setting up and implementing projects. As you thumb through our newsletter, I hope you'll get a sense for the breadth of the work required to manage your public lands for multiple uses. As a manager, I am proud of the work we do each day, but as a citizen I never cease to be amazed and appreciative. I hope you'll feel the same way...

Cid H. Morgan
Forest Supervisor

Contents

♦ **WATA Award**	**1**
♦ **Sustaining:** ***GNA, Restoration, Wildfire***	**2-3**
♦ **Delivering:** ***NCCC/YCC Crew, Kids Fishing Day, Film Crew, Education Outreach, Volunteers, Youth Archaeology, Trails Analysis, Visitor Center Technology, Historic Structures Report, Michigan History Society***	**4-7**
♦ **Parting Shots** ♦ **Calendar**	**8**

Title

The Lake Michigan watershed recently benefited from the enthusiasm and energy of a four-person Superior Watershed Partnership Great Lakes Conservation Corps young adult crew. Hiawatha's west zone Fisheries biologist Mark Ammerman reports that the crew recently helped address fisheries habitat work in two creeks.

"They were an awesome crew who loved to work!" said Ammerman.

The crew helped install "tree groups" in Big Murphy Creek and repaired log bank cover structures on Carr Creek.

Sustain Our Nation's Forests and Grasslands

Good Neighbor Authority

On July 18, the U.S. Forest Service and Michigan DNR announced that the two agencies are completing another step toward implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority in the state. The parties are signing three Supplemental Project Agreements for timber sale work on the Hiawatha, Huron-Manistee and Ottawa National Forests.

The Good Neighbor Authority offers the opportunity to work across jurisdictional boundaries to sustainably manage forest lands by allowing state resources to accomplish work planned on national forest system lands. The projects will maintain and create healthy forest conditions as called for in the national forests' land and resource management plans, while providing additional wood fiber to Michigan's vital forest products industry. A portion of the receipts from the timber sales will reimburse the state for its costs to do the work, with remaining funds available to conduct additional restoration activities on the forest. On-the-ground work is expected to occur in 2016 and 2017.

A separate SPA is being signed for each National Forest by its respective Forest Supervisor -- Cid Morgan for the Hiawatha, Linda Jackson for the Ottawa, and Leslie Auriemmo for the Huron-Manistee – and DNR Director Bill Moritz.

The Good Neighbor Authority provides another collaborative tool to assist the Forest Service in achieving the forest management outcomes described in the forests' 2006 Land and Resource Management Plans. Managing over 3 million acres in the Michigan provides ample opportunity for the Forest Service to partner with the DNR and other land management agencies in a variety of ways, such as trails, fisheries, law enforcement and more.

"The US Forest Service has a legacy of managing National Forest lands in a way that provides a wide range of benefits to all Americans," said Hiawatha Supervisor Cid Morgan. She explained that in addition to the benefit of timber receipts and other payments to local communities, the National Forests in Michigan protect cultural and environmental resources; provide outstanding natural settings and iconic facilities for recreation and tourism; offer employment opportunities; and protect special areas like wildernesses.

The Hiawatha National Forest SPA includes two sales including almost 500 acres of work in aspen, balsam fir, northern hardwoods, and red, white and jack pine forest types starting this year. Forest Service management objectives for these sales include thinning red pine plantations, improving hardwood stands, and regenerating aspen and jackpine as wildlife habitat.

DNR Director Moritz echoed the sentiment that the project outlined in the SPAs will continue the ongoing positive collaborative relationship between state and federal land management agencies.

"We very much appreciate the willingness of our federal partners to undertake this pilot program in Michigan," he said. "This program is a tribute to the leadership of the U.S. Forest Service to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of forest management."

Each National Forest's SPA is supplemental to the state-wide GNA Master Agreement signed in October 2015.

USFS forester determines sale volume on East Zone.

Sustain Our Nation's Forests and Grasslands

Restoration and Prescribed Fire

Fire personnel have worked Rx (above) and Wild (below) fires on the Hiawatha this year.

This spring and summer, there have been 26 wildfires on the Hiawatha National Forest, burning about 135 acres. Of those, the two largest were both lightning caused and were located on the East Zone. The Wilwin Fire, detected June 29, was located in a remote wetland area near Trout Lake. It burned about 65 acres before it was fully contained. The Pine Plantation Fire, detected July 13, was located in a red pine plantation southwest of Raco. The fire burned about 56 acres before firefighters were able to stop the fire's advance. A portion of the North Country Trail and Soldiers Lake Campground were temporarily closed. The Forest Service appreciates the fire personnel from USFS, Michigan DNR, USFWS, NPS and BIA, who have assisted so far this season.

The lessons learned on the Wilwin fire have proved invaluable. This natural ignition that burned in a dune and swale landscape has validated current efforts to plan and implement restoration treatments in that same type of fire-dependent ecosystem. In the next few years, working with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the Hiawatha is planning large landscape scale projects intended to address the three primary factors of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.

"With the reintroduction of fire to broad areas, these projects will restore and maintain resilient landscapes regardless of agency boundaries; create fire adapted communities that can than withstand an unplanned ignition; and build strong relationships that will foster future efficiencies in wildland fire response," said Eric Rebitzke, Assistant Fire Management Officer for Hiawatha and Ottawa National Forests. "We intend to use existing natural and manmade barriers as control features, and to employ various firing techniques including aerial ignition to reduce our impact in these sensitive areas."

The Landscape Treatment Designer is a spatial prioritization and optimization software program that allows planners to quickly model and test different land management strategies in terms of management priorities, tolerance of fire risk or loss, implementation time frames and budget constraints.

For several years, Hiawatha's fire personnel have been leading the Forest toward an integrated approach to fuel treatment using the Landscape Treatment Designer program. Simultaneously, the forest has been making strides to increase its prescribed fire program substantially to achieve three primary goals:

- Reduce hazardous fuels (e.g. in our jackpine stands);
- Enhance habitat (e.g. Kirtland's warbler); and
- Implement "the cohesive strategy"

Ultimately, the Forest's fire management team would like to work toward a "landscape scale" approach to planning so that the Forest Service is working in unison with other land management organizations and adjacent private landowners to implement fire management on "all lands."

Deliver Benefits to the Public: Strengthen Communities

NCCC/YCC Crew

Hiawatha National Forest continues to lead the way with innovative, collaborative approaches to education outreach. In July the Forest hosted a crew consisting of national YCC youth and with Americorps NCCC leaders. During the group's 3-week stay, participants experienced a wide range of work and recreation time activities. The hard-working crew installed trail re-routes on Bruno's Run Mountain Bike and Hiking Trail, removed Non-Native Invasive Species on Grand Island National Recreation Area, and marked timber sale boundaries. They also participated in a faux firefighting scenario. In their free time, crew members explored local National Forest and National Park sites. Stationed at the Hiawatha's Clear Lake Education Center, they enjoyed quiet time outdoors using CLEC's dock, canoes, kayaks and other equipment. Some saw wildlife for the first time. These young people had the experience of a lifetime and forged connections with outdoors public lands!

Action!

US Forest Service Washington Office and USDA Office of Communication visited the Forest's NCCC/YCC crew in late June to film the crew at work. The footage will be used as part of a nationwide educational video to explain the NCCC and YCC programs.

Many of the crew members, leaders and Forest Service liaisons were interviewed as part of the filming project..

Deliver Benefits to the Public: Connect People to the Outdoors

Kids Fishing Day Events

The Hiawatha and its community partners sponsored two wildly successful Kids Fishing Day events again this year, one at Camp 7 Lake Campground (West Zone) and the other at Castle Rock (East Zone). Over 400 youth plus their families attended the events. For its 25th Anniversary, the Camp 7 event was supported by 80 businesses and 65 volunteers. Similarly, the 20th annual event at Castle Rocks benefited from over 100 hours of volunteer time. We would like to thank our partners for their ongoing dedication to connecting youth to the outdoors! We are already looking forward to next year!

Deliver Benefits to the Public: Connect People to the Outdoors

Education Outreach

Every summer for many years, Michigan State University Extension has hosted a multiple-event "Life of Lake Superior" (LOLS) program that gives youth hands-on experiences related to Lake Superior including its natural, cultural and recreational features. Hiawatha National Forest recently hosted a LOLS program on Grand Island National Recreation Area. Here are some highlights of that day:

Youth participants in LOLSs contributed toward restoration of the old field site on Grand Island NRA by planting hundreds of native pollinator-friendly plants..

Over 80 people participated in the event, including thirty-five LOLS youth, young adults from AmeriCorps, YCC, Great Lakes Conservation Corps and Marquette Conservation District.

Participants planted 3,330 native nectar plants from Hiawatha National Forest seed. Nine hundred of these plants were common milkweed for monarch butterflies.

Participants toured the Island on the bus, learning the story of the island including its formation during glaciation, native American settlements, trading post era, resort era, logging era, and the current public land era. Participants also learned to flint knap, making their own arrowheads.

Partners in the day's events included Superior Watershed Partnership, Grand Island Association, Central Upper Peninsula Cooperative Weed Management Area and Michigan State University Extension.

Another LOLS event will occur at Little Bay de Noc Campground in August.

Join Us in Welcoming New Volunteer Caretakers at Point Iroquois Lighthouse

Doug and Peggy Hoort are the new Point Iroquois Lighthouse volunteer caretakers. The caretaker appointment involves a two-year commitment to oversee operations at this beautiful structure on the Forest's Whitefish Bay Scenic Byway near Brimley, Michigan. Doug and Peg are both veterinarians who come to us from Lake Odessa, Michigan. As volunteer caretakers, the Hoorts will be responsible for many aspects of the Point Iroquois operation including year round maintenance of the site, daily operations of the museum and gift shop, building and grounds maintenance, and special projects. Tasks include everything from cleaning to mowing to snow blowing; from operating the gift shop to keeping records and greeting guests.

Deliver Benefits to the Public: Preservation 50

Youth Archaeology Workshop

In July the Forest hosted the 2016 Youth Archaeology Workshop on Grand Island. Over the past 18 years, this remarkable program has resulted in at least 3 youth eventually pursuing graduate degrees and professional careers in archaeology! This year, 10 area youth ages 11 to 15 spent three days with Forest Service Archaeologist and Heritage Program Manager, Eric Drake, conducting archaeological investigations on Grand Island National Recreation Area. Students conducted an archaeological survey on the island and also excavated a 1,500- to 2,500-year-old site that was being threatened by erosion. The results of the work will assist the Forest in relocating a campsite and evaluating a heritage site for the National Register of Historic Places, respectively. Students also gained hands-on experience with experimental archaeology as they learned to make stone tools and cordage from natural plant fibers found on the island. Eric Drake was assisted by the Hiawatha's Interagency Education Specialist, Melissa O'Donnell, as well as three volunteers who participated in the 2015 Grand Island/ Illinois State University Archaeological Field School.

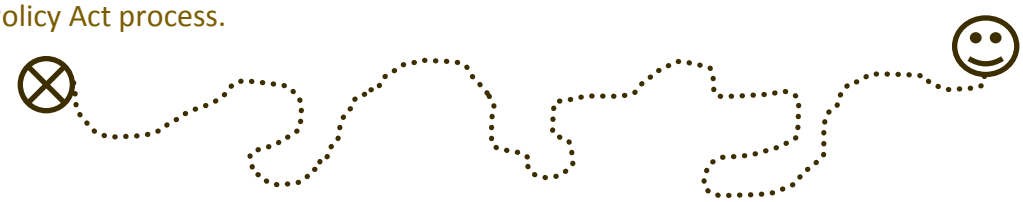
Visitor Center Pilots New Technology

Inspired to seek creative solutions to address increased tourist demand, the Hiawatha's Munising Visitor Center has installed outdoor information screens and a stand-alone wifi server that delivers digital information directly to visitors' hand-held devices. This year, the District is collaborating with CIO to upgrade the product delivery platform.

Deliver Benefits to the Public

Trails Analysis

Who uses trails on the Hiawatha? All-Terrain Vehicle riders, single-track motorcyclists, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, oversnow fat tire bikers, day hikers, backpackers, canoeists, kayakers, cross-country skiers, snowshoers, dog sledders, equestrians — to name a few! Given the limited resources available for trails management, the Forest Service plans to begin a comprehensive review of the existing trail system. While not a decision-making process, the part of the trails study process may include gathering a working group of user group representatives who would develop mutually agreeable management recommendations within sideboards set by the agency. The Forest Service could then use those recommendations to develop future proposals for environmental analysis and public involvement in the National Environmental Policy Act process.



Deliver Benefits to the Public: Preservation 50

Great Lighthouses: Historic Structures Report

We often refer to the Hiawatha as "Your Great Lakes National Forest." The Forest's proximity to three of the Great Lakes affects the cultural and natural heritage of our landscape. Lighthouses (6 of them!) are among the unique cultural resources found on the Hiawatha. The preservation and interpretation of these signature historic structures is an important component of the work we conduct on the Forest, but the continual need for maintenance is sometimes a challenge.

In search of new ways to address the need, this summer the Forest is taking steps to improve future prospects for two of its lighthouses.

Situated on Round Island in the Straits of Mackinac in view of the Mackinac Bridge and along the ferry route to Mackinac Island Historic Park, Round Island Lighthouse is easily the most-viewed historic structure on Hiawatha National Forest. The Forest is thrilled to announce that in June a crew of historic structures experts and engineers made the difficult passage to the little island in order to inventory the maritime structure. Led by Hiawatha heritage program manager Eric Drake, the crew gathered data that will be compiled into a Historic Structures Report, which is a key tool to assist the agency and partners involved in management and grantwriting for restoration of the structure. Often required for grant applications, Historic Structures Reports are a standard way of documenting the story, condition and future vision for a historic building. Similar data gathering was also begun for the Point Iroquois Light Station.

"Our iconic lighthouses represent the maritime history of our area. We are very excited that the completed reports will benefit these structures by helping us partner more successfully for their maintenanace," said Forest Supervisor Cid Morgan.

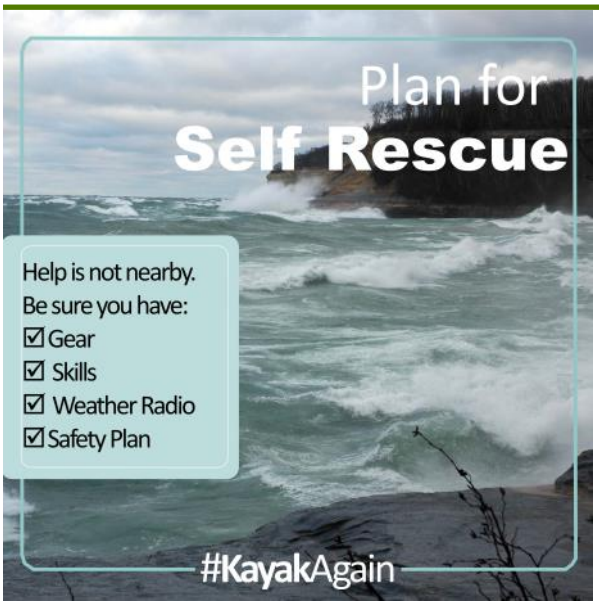
Forest Service employees and historic structures experts John Ferguson and Joel Little arrive on Round Island for Day 1 of Historic Structures Report inventory.

Current and Retired Employees at Historical Society of Michigan Conference

Retired Hiawatha National Forest archaeologist John Franzen and current heritage program manager Eric Drake each made presentations at the recent Historical Society of Michigan conference held in Munising, MI. Mr. Franzen delivered a keynote address entitled "A Grand Adventure: Grand Island National Recreation Area." Mr. Drake provided a concurrent session entitled "Digging Through Time: The Grand Island Archaeological Project."

Hiawatha National Forest

Parting Shot



Kayak Safety Social Media Campaign *— In response to increased tourism, the USFS, NPS and other community partners are working to promote sea kayaking safety in the Great Lakes.*

Calendar

Date	Event
Aug	Christmas Range Light Tours daily 10a.m.
Aug	Ranger Programs Monocle Lake and Brevort Lake Campgrounds
Aug 1-6	Passport in Time: Coalwood Project/ MTU Archaeological Field School
Aug 3-4	Sandtown Native Plant Restoration
Aug 5-9	Our Global Kids @ CLEC
Aug 10-11	Kids in Woods: Little Bay de Noc
Sep 3	HistoriCorps: Soldiers Lake Pavilion
Sep-Oct	Friends Meeting (Date TBD)

(Call ahead; dates subject to change)

Questions? Look us up!
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