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Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

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File Code: 1950
Date: February 12, 2009

Dear Friends of the Forest,

Thank you for your interest in the management of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. This letter is to inform you that I have made a decision to implement Alternative 3, as analyzed in the Mast Lake Environmental Assessment. We received four comments during the 30-day comment period. These did not result in changes to the document, therefore, a copy of the environmental assessment is not enclosed. The comments that were received and my response to these comments is located in the Project File at the Baldwin-White Cloud District Office.

A copy of the Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Mast Lake Project is enclosed. The Notice of Decision will be published in the "Lake County Star". If you have any questions please contact Christopher Frederick. I appreciate the time you spent reviewing and commenting on this project.

Sincerely,

/s/ Leslie E. Russell
LESLIE E. RUSSELL
District Ranger

Enclosure

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DECISION NOTICE
AND
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
FOR THE
MAST LAKE PROJECT

USDA Forest Service
Huron-Manistee National Forests
Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District

INTRODUCTION

This Decision Notice (DN) documents my decision that I have made to implement the activities within the Mast Lake Environmental Assessment (EA), on the Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District of the Huron-Manistee National Forests. The Mast Lake Project Area (Project Area) is located in:

- T14N, R11W, Sections 13, 14, 16, 21-23, and 25-36 of Goodwell Township, Newaygo County, MI
- T13N, R11W, Sections 5-7, 17-20, 29, and 30 of Big Prairie Township, Newaygo County, MI

The activities occur within Compartments 564, 565, 566, 567, 570, and 572 (see attached maps for Alternative 3). This document also describes the reasons for my decision and my findings for not preparing an Environmental Impact Statement. This finding is in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The decision and findings are based on an EA of the proposed activities and alternatives to those actions.

In developing the EA, DN, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), I recognize that less than complete knowledge exists about many relationships and conditions of wildlife, fish, forests, jobs, and communities. The ecology, inventory, and management of a large forest area are a complex and constantly developing science. The biology of wildlife species prompts questions about population dynamics and habitat relationships. The interaction between resource supply, the economy, and communities is not an exact science. Perfect knowledge and absolute guarantees are not attainable, no matter how much we wish it to be otherwise.

The data and level of analysis used in the EA were commensurate with the importance of the possible impacts (40 CFR 1502.15). When encountering a gap in information, the interdisciplinary team concluded that the missing information frequently would have added precision to estimates or better defined a relationship. However, the basic data and central relationships are sufficiently well established in the respective sciences and the new information would be very unlikely to reverse or nullify understood relationships. Thus, new information would be welcomed and would add precision, but is not essential to a reasoned choice among the alternatives.

DECISION

This Decision Notice documents my decision to implement Alternative 3 as documented in the Mast Lake EA. Alternative 3 will be referred to as the **Selected Alternative** from this point forward. This decision meets the Purpose and Need for the project, is consistent with the Forests' Plan, and is responsive to issues raised during scoping, data collection, and resource assessment.

The following is a description of the activities that will be implemented under the Selected Alternative (measures are approximate):

- ✓ 349 acres of red pine thinning
- ✓ 23 acres of red pine regeneration
- ✓ 116 acres of aspen regeneration
- ✓ 40 acres of jack pine regeneration
- ✓ 23 acres of Scotch pine removal
- ✓ 35 acres of mixed oak management
- ✓ 52 acres of opening maintenance
- ✓ 63 acres of opening expansion
- ✓ 24 acres of non-commercial aspen felling
- ✓ 38 acres of aspen expansion
- ✓ a resulting road density of 4.1 mi/mi²
- ✓ 15 permanent and temporary road improvements
- ✓ 17.7 acres of NNIS treatment
- ✓ 83 acres of dry sand prairie restoration
- ✓ trash removal on 20 sites
- ✓ ORV restoration on 2 sites
- ✓ 57 acres of Land Suitability Class changes
- ✓ Stand boundary adjustments
- ✓ Acquisition of easements

Alternative 3 is described on pages 2-3 and 2-4 of the Mast Lake EA.

MITIGATION

The following mitigation measures pertain to the Selected Alternative. Mitigation measures specific to a treatment unit are listed in Chapter 2 of the EA.

Cultural Resources

The following measures would be applied to Treatment Units that contain known cultural resource sites:

1. Known heritage resource sites will be protected. A buffer of 20 meters (66 feet) will be established around sites identified during the survey period. Cultural Resource Reserve Areas consist of high probability locations that were not adequately tested for cultural resources. Until adequately tested, the Reserve Areas will be protected as heritage resource sites. The Reserve Areas will be buffered areas extending 60 meters (200 feet) from terrace/slope breaks or 30 meters (100 feet) from the edge of streams or creeks. If additional heritage resource sites are found during project implementation, the Zone Archaeologist will be informed and work will be suspended until adequate protection measures are undertaken.

General Timber

The following measures would be applied to all Treatment Units that are prescribed for any type of harvest treatments:

1. Recommendations included in the Water Quality Management Practices on Forest Land (MDNR 1998) and Forest Service Handbook 2509.18 will be incorporated to provide protection of soil and water resources.

2. Commercial timber harvesting activities will be excluded from riparian areas by a distance of approximately 100 feet. These areas are identified by the presence of water, vegetative composition, and soil type.
3. Some stands typed as openings will be used for landings and skid trails. Whether or not slash is left in these openings will be determined on a site-by-site basis. Site-specific characteristics of individual openings will be maintained. Rehabilitation of these openings will occur as needed.
4. On slopes of 15-35%, trees will be processed at the stump retaining slash at the individual tree felling site. Skid trail gradients should not be greater than 15%, with the exception of short, steep gradients not to exceed 20%. Skidding on slopes of 15-20% should be dispersed. No mechanical harvesting on slopes greater than 35%.
5. Skid trails, temporary roads, and other areas throughout the Project Area will be rehabilitated, to reduce soil erosion and restore herbaceous and woody vegetation after harvest activities are completed. Landings will be rehabilitated after the harvest activities are completed to reduce erosion potential and compaction and to promote re-vegetation. Slash will be redistributed at landings throughout the units so as to not exceed 3 inches in depth to promote re-vegetation. Landings will be treated to a minimum depth of 12 inches (where stumped), planted immediately with a cover crop, and reseeded with native seed.
6. Logging slash will be removed within 25 feet of adjacent Newaygo County roads.
7. Only native species or non-persistent non-native species will be planted in areas where re-vegetation is needed.
8. In all regeneration treatment units, commercial harvest operations will occur between October 1 and March 30.

Aspen and Jack Pine Regeneration and Red Pine Removal

The following measures would be applied to all Treatment Units that are prescribed for aspen and jack pine regeneration and red pine removal.

1. In aspen regeneration units, retain all stem wood < 4"; in jack pine regeneration and red pine removal units complete stem removal is desired.
2. Non-commercial operations will occur from July 1 to August 31 in units with high-water tables and/or with an organic soil horizon greater than 3 inches.
3. Residual trees (not shrubs) 1-5" dbh will be felled in the regeneration units, except reserve trees, to promote natural regeneration. Non-invasive shrubs and apple trees will be protected, where possible, in all units.
4. Surveys will be done in all regeneration units to insure that desired stocking levels have been obtained. Tree planting may be done in units that have not obtained 60% stocking following the third growing season after harvest.

Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species

The following measures apply to Treatment Units where threatened, endangered, or Regional Forester's Sensitive Species could occur:

1. Project activities will not occur within Compartment 572 Stands 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 13 between May 1 and August 31 to protect dispersing Karner blue butterflies.

2. The conservation measures described for unoccupied Karner blue butterfly habitat will be followed within the Project Area.

Table DN-1: Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures

Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures	Occupied Habitat	Unoccupied Habitat
Implement The Karner Blue Butterfly Recovery Plan (USDI Fish and Wildlife Service 2003).	√	√
Trail Management, Vehicle and ORV Traffic, and Camping and Recreation		
Road construction, trail construction, and vegetation management activities will be designed to protect and improve potential Karner blue butterfly habitat.	√	√
Roads and trails will be managed and maintained in a manner to protect or maintain areas with wild lupine. Where this is not feasible and damage is occurring, trails and roads may be relocated or decommissioned.	√	√
Maintenance and use of existing roads and trails will be managed in a manner to protect or maintain occupied habitat and areas with wild lupine. Where this is not feasible and damage is occurring, trails and roads will be relocated or decommissioned.	√	√
Prohibit ORV use with woodland strips or brush piles along trails and roads.	√	
Direct camping to areas outside occupied habitat. Where posted, camping will be prohibited in occupied sites.	√	
Post signs along roads and trails within or adjacent to Karner blue butterfly habitat requesting recreationists to stay on designated roads and trails. If damage from human use is noted within Karner blue butterfly habitat, implement signs and road closures, barricades, or otherwise block public access using a variety of methods such as forest service gates, woven-wire fencing, wind-road slash, rocks, stumps, barrier posts, or cross bucks. Passage for wildlife will be provided regardless of the method used. If closers are needed, a Forest Supervisor's closure order would be written to facilitate enforcement of this protection measure.	√	√
Development		
Oil and gas development will contain a "no surface occupancy" stipulation and will exclude road building.	√	
Habitat Management and Protection		
Conduct annual surveys of proposed treatment units to determine presence/absence of the Karner blue butterfly. These will serve as pre-activity surveys. If the species is found, the Huron-Manistee National Forests will follow the conservation measures for occupied habitat.	√	√
Conduct annual pre- and post-treatment monitoring of habitat conditions (i.e., wild lupine cover, cover of other Karner blue butterfly nectar plants, savanna plant species presence, presence of non-native invasive species, canopy cover) and occurrence or abundance of Karner blue butterflies at selected treatment sites to determine treatment effectiveness and whether measures of restoration success have been accomplished.	√	√
Monitor activities at the project level.	√	√
Maintain or restore Karner blue butterfly habitat using prescribed burning, timber harvest, manual or mechanical vegetation removal, chemical vegetation removal, soil scarification, and seeding/planting methods as outlined in the Forest Plan, Chapter II, and the Final Recovery Plan for the Karner Blue Butterfly, Appendix G.	√	√
Within treatment units managed for Karner blue butterfly, provide savanna-like conditions with an average of 25-50% crown closure and openings with an abundance of wild lupine and other Karner blue butterfly first and second flight nectar plant species.	√	√

Table DN-1: Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures (continued)

Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures	Occupied Habitat	Unoccupied Habitat
Within treatment units managed for Karner blue butterfly, maintain savanna-like conditions by removing woody encroachment and promoting the growth of savanna plant species.	√	√
Within treatment units managed for Karner blue butterfly, provide dispersal corridors in order to facilitate dispersal between occupied and unoccupied areas (suitable habitat sites).	√	√
The application and use of herbicides or pesticides is prohibited in and adjacent to occupied Karner blue butterfly habitat between April 1 and August 15, except when the wind is not blowing toward the habitat and there is a minimum buffer of 100 feet (30 m) between the habitat and the treatment area. Avoid wild lupine during application.	√	
Cutting of trees is prohibited between March 15 and August 15 in occupied sites. Cutting is restricted to a four-year frequency. Allow cutting of trees that pose a safety hazard.	√	
Cutting trees with non-mechanized equipment such as chainsaws is preferred in occupied sites. Other mechanized tree cutting equipment may be allowed by exception. If possible, mechanical and hand pruning of shrubs and tress should be done under frozen ground conditions.	√	
Pile slash not to exceed 20 percent of an occupied site, burning slash piles during the winter and avoiding piling slash in areas containing concentrations of wild lupine.	√	
Locate logging roads, skid trails, and log yards to avoid or minimize impact to occupied sites. Where possible, place landings ≥ 200 m from historically or recently occupied sites.	√	
Mowing and/or brush hogging activities are prohibited between March 15 and August 15 and on a four-year frequency in occupied sites. If possible, mow after August 31 under frozen ground conditions with the mower blade set at 6-8 inches above the ground.	√	
When mowing in occupied sites, divide areas into at least 2 units, each of which supports lupine and nectar sources. At least one unit will remain untreated each season unless there is colonization source within ¼ mile that has the capability to re-colonize the area. Leave cut vegetation on site that may contain eggs, unless the cut vegetation is collected and placed in another suitable habitat site.	√	
When conducting prescribed burns in occupied sites, divide sites into at least three burn units based on numbers of butterflies and burn no more than 1/3 of a site in any one year. If there are less than 10 individual butterflies during the first flight survey, then the entire site can be burned. Create firelines between areas to burned and unburned to protect against wildfire or other chance events. When possible, minimize soil disturbance when constructing firelines by using rotovated or disced breaks.	√	
Keep unburned occupied patches within ¼ mile (0.5 km) of burned occupied sites to aid re-colonization.	√	
Use patchy burns in occupied sites. Design burn areas with irregular shapes and small-scale unburned vegetation-skips.	√	
In occupied sites, use an approximate four-year burning frequency.	√	
Site scarification is prohibited within occupied sites between March 15 and August 15 and on a four-year frequency. Expose mineral soil to aid seeding of native nectar plants. Leave 25 to 50 percent of an occupied site undisturbed. Protect concentrations of wild lupine or other nectar plants.	√	
Propagate wild lupine, nectar plants, and savanna plant species by using seeds with a locally-based genotype when possible. If collected from the site, limit the collection to no more than 25 percent of available seeds and collect after July 1.	√	√

Table DN-1: Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures (continued)

Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Measures	Occupied Habitat	Unoccupied Habitat
Apply treatments to no more than 1/3 of any particular occupied habitat patch within a calendar year. Treatment will be conducted first on the most degraded third of a patch. This approach will reduce take of Karner blue butterfly and facilitate re-colonization of recently treated portions.	√	
Treatment of more than 1/3 of any particular occupied habitat patch within a calendar year may be conducted when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatment of a larger area is necessary to prevent the spread of invasive species and disease outbreaks which threaten the viability of Karner blue butterfly. • A large viable Karner blue butterfly metapopulation is identified, expanding the focus for treatment from the level of individual habitat patches to the level of the metapopulation complex as a whole. • An occupied habitat patch is less than 1 hectare. A patch this size may be treated in its entirety within a single calendar year if a suitably connected source population exists within 1 kilometer. • Experimental management techniques require testing. 	√	
Avoid spreading seeds of weedy exotic plants via equipment. Monitor for invasion of aggressive exotic plants and remove them.	√	√
Activities will be scheduled and completed when they are least likely to impact any life stage of the butterfly.	√	
Watershed management activities that are incompatible with Karner blue butterfly will be excluded.	√	
Monitoring and Evaluation		
Monitoring for Karner blue butterfly and habitat including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual sampling each of the Brohman Metapopulation Area during the first or second flight period to determine population size. Preference should be given to the second flight period because this is when the greatest number of butterflies would be present. - Determining and tracking the amount and condition of habitat maintained and restored annually. - Identifying threats and disturbance factors affecting the Brohman Metapopulation Area and habitat a minimum of every three years. - Assessing the connectivity of subpopulations every three years to confirm that subpopulations remain connected. 	√	
Implement recovery measures: inventories, management plans, information and education, restoration, and studies as appropriate.	√	

3. To protect the 2 historically occupied Karner blue butterfly sites that occur adjacent to stands proposed for treatment, herbicide application will be prohibited in U.S. Forest Service Compartment 572 Stands 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, and 13 between April 1 and August 15, except when the wind is not blowing toward the occupied habitat and there is a minimum buffer of 100 feet (30 m) between the occupied habitat and the treatment area.

4. Implement the conservation measures for species viability for the dusted skipper, Ottoe skipper, red-headed woodpecker, whip-poor-will, eastern massasauga rattlesnake, and eastern box turtle outlined in the Programmatic Biological Evaluation for the Huron-Manistee National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2005) on sites where these RFSS are documented or found within the Project Area. The conservation measures outlined for the dusted skipper and Ottoe skipper will be implemented where hill-prairie spittlebug and Sprague's pygarcia are documented or found. Hill-prairie spittlebug and Sprague's pygarcia are documented to occur within or adjacent to U.S. Forest Service Compartment 572 Stands 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 20, 21, 22, and 29. To protect sites occupied by the hill-prairie spittlebug, project activities within U.S. Forest Service Compartment 572 Stands 4, 7, 10, and 29 are prohibited between

May 1 and August 31. In addition, herbicide application will be prohibited in these stands between April 1 and August 15, except when the wind is not blowing toward the occupied habitat and there is a minimum buffer of 100 feet (30 m) between the occupied habitat and the treatment area.

5. Implement the conservation measures described in the Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk on the Huron-Manistee National Forests (USDA Forest Service 1993), The Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis atricapillus*) in the Western Great Lakes Region: A Technical Conservation Assessment (Roberson et al. 2003), the Conservation Assessment for Red-Shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) (USDA Forest Service 2002a), and the Programmatic Biological Evaluation for the Huron-Manistee National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2005) on sites where nesting northern goshawks or red-shouldered hawks are documented or found within the Project Area. Active northern goshawk nests are documented to occur and/or were found during field surveys within U.S. Forest Service Compartment 563 Stand 1, and Compartment 572 Stands 34 and 35. Primary and secondary buffers around these active nests, as directed by The Management Recommendations for the Northern Goshawk on the Huron-Manistee National Forests (USDA Forest Service 1993), incorporate the following stands proposed for treatment: U.S. Forest Service Compartment 565 Stands 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12; Compartment 572 Stands 24, 34, 35, and 36; and Compartment 570 Stands 1, 2, 4, and 34.
6. In areas with documented occurrences of active northern goshawk nests or where active northern goshawk or red-shouldered hawk nests are found during project activities, management activities will be prohibited between March 1 and August 31 within primary buffers (660 feet) of active nests. Active nests and at least two alternate nest sites within a 660 foot radius of active nests will be retained. Management activities will not reduce the crown closure within a 660 foot radius of active nest sites below 60%. Activity on Forest Service local roads within secondary buffers (960 feet) of active nest sites will be seasonally restricted or closed. At least 2 large (>10 inch DBH, >10 feet tall) snags per acre and at least 3 large (>10 to 12 inch diameter mid-point, >10 feet long) downed logs per acre will be retained or created within a 0.5 mile radius of active nests. Only management activities with minimal human presence will be permitted within the 0.5 mile radius from March 1 through August 31.
7. Implement the conservation measures described in the Bald Eagle Management Plan for the Huron-Manistee National Forests (USDA Forest Service 2006c), the Northern States Bald Eagle Recovery Plan (USDI Fish and Wildlife 1983), and the Forest Plan's standards and guidelines (USDA Forest Service 2006b) on sites where nesting bald eagles are documented or found within the Project Area. The closest active bald eagle nest is documented approximately 0.5 miles from the Project Area on Croton Dam Pond.
8. Implement the conservation measures outlined in the Marten Conservation Strategy (HMNF 1996), and the conservation measures for species viability for the American marten outlined in the Programmatic Biological Evaluation for the Huron-Manistee National Forest (USDA Forest Service 2005) on sites where the American marten is documented or found within the Project Area.
9. Implement the conservation measures described in the Conservation Approach for Eastern Massasauga (*Sistrurus C. Catenatus*) (USDA Forest Service 2002b) on sites where eastern massasauga rattlesnakes are documented or found within the Project Area.
10. Implement the conservation measures outlined in the Programmatic Biological Evaluation for the wood turtle and Blanding's turtle (USDA Forest Service 2005), the R9 Species Conservation Assessment for Wood Turtle – *Glyptemys insculpta* (USDA Forest Service 2004b), and the Conservation Assessment for Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) (USDA Forest Service 2002c) on sites where Blanding's turtles, wood turtles, or spotted turtles are documented or found within the Project Area. Blanding's turtle and spotted turtle were observed within U.S. Forest Service Compartment 566 Stand 34 during field surveys.

11. In areas with documented occurrences of Blanding's turtles or spotted turtles or where Blanding's turtles, spotted turtles, wood turtles, eastern box turtles, or eastern massasauga rattlesnakes are found during project activities, use a firing prescription during the growing season that allows only a flanking and/or backing flame so animals have a greater chance of escape from lower intensity flames. In addition, prior to burns in late spring and summer, these areas will be walked in a transect fashion, and individuals would be removed to safe areas immediately adjacent to the sites during the burn activities. These individuals can be extremely cryptic necessitating that transects be spaced close together. Results of the searches/surveys for reptiles and actions taken if species are found will be recorded and copies given to the District Wildlife Biologist. Management activities within 0.5 miles of occupied waterbodies will occur between Sept. 15 and May 15 to avoid migrating RFSS reptiles.
12. Implement the Standards and Guidelines for Watershed Management described in the Forest Plan (USDA Forest Service 2006b: pages II-17 – II-22) on sites where wood turtles, spotted turtles, Blanding's turtles, or eastern massasauga rattlesnakes are documented or found within the Project Area.
13. To protect areas of savanna creation and opening restoration from increased recreational use, install signs explaining the benefits of restoring native plant communities and requesting recreationists to stay on designated roads and trails, and implement mitigation techniques that would limit access to managed savannas and openings such as piling brush around the perimeter of treatment areas.
14. Flag or mark the locations of nests, roosts, burrows, or dens of rare or sensitive wildlife species, and carefully perform management activities to avoid physical injury to such structures and less mobile wildlife. If RFSS reptiles are encountered during project implementation, inform the District Wildlife Biologist, and avoid harming or harassing individuals. Individuals will be moved to a nearby safe area.
15. If nesting activities are noted from any RFSS species, inform the District Wildlife Biologist so that appropriate protection can be administered.
16. The botanical staff will pre-survey areas of proposed treatment for herbicide treatment to minimize negative effects to RFSS in prairie remnants.
17. The botanical staff will clearly mark the location of purple milkweed prior to Forest management activities being implemented.
18. The botanical staff will field review areas not previously surveyed prior to wildlife opening management activities.
19. If other endangered, threatened, or sensitive species are found during project implementation, the project would stop until the District Wildlife Biologist or Botanist is informed and adequate protection measures applied to avoid potential impacts.

Herbicides

The following mitigation measures refer to the use of herbicides in Treatment Units to prevent the spread of non-native invasive species:

1. All guidelines and mitigation measures presented in the Forest Service Manual 2150, *Pesticide Use Management and Coordination*, and in the Forest Service Handbook 2109.14, *Pesticide Use Management and Coordination Handbook*, will be adhered to in herbicide application on the Huron-Manistee National Forests. Also, compliance with all federal, state, and local regulations regarding herbicide use will be met.
2. In general, all treated areas will be identified on the ground, notifying visitors of the herbicide treatment; the signs will be removed when the risk of direct exposure has passed. In areas that may be

difficult to close (such as trailheads), applicators/helpers will stay at the treated location until the treated foliage is dry and the risk of direct exposure has passed.

Table DN-2: General Guidelines for Re-entry into Treated Areas

Herbicide	Non-Worker Protection Standard Used	Restricted Entry Interval (REI) **
Glyphosate	Keep people and pets off treated areas until spray solution has dried.	Minimum of 12 Hours

Data obtained from herbicide product labels.

** The Baldwin-White Cloud Districts of the Huron-Manistee National Forest does not meet the criteria for 40 CFR part 170. 40 CFR part 170 applies to occupational exposures to pesticides used in the production of agricultural plants on farms, nurseries, greenhouses, and forests. Agricultural plant means any plant grown or maintained for commercial or research purposes (USEPA, Office of Pesticide Programs).

3. Notices will be posted near all treated areas and will contain the following information:
 Notice that the area has been, or will be, treated,
 Name of herbicide used,
 Appropriate precautions, and
 Date and time when re-entry is safe.
4. Notices will be removed by Baldwin-White Cloud District personnel when the treated area is considered safe.
5. To minimize herbicide drift, herbicides will be applied only when wind speeds are less than 10 mph. Where possible, the low nozzle pressure and large droplet size will be used as permitted by the label (Forest Service Handbook [FSH] 2109.14, 52.22).
6. Herbicides will be applied in complete compliance with the product label (FSH 2109.14, 52.11).
7. Herbicide application will be performed by certified personnel (FSM 2154.2).
8. Applicators or operators must wear all protective gear required on the label of the herbicide they are using (FSH 6709.11).
9. Herbicide containers will be recycled or disposed of per guidelines in FSH 2109.14, 43.
10. Herbicides will be stored in appropriate buildings or facilities according to label specifications, state, and federal laws, and Forest Service regulations. Containers will be labeled with the following: contents, date mixed, and approximate volume remaining when placed in storage (Pesticide Use Management and Coordination Handbook; FSH 2109.14, 41.11).
11. Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for herbicides will be kept on site (FSH 2109.14, 41.11).
12. To prevent application prior to extreme rain events and prevent runoff to adjacent sites and aquatic systems, herbicide applicators will obtain a weather forecast of the treatment area prior to initiating a spraying project.
13. Temporary covers may be used to protect individuals or populations of threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species during nearby application of herbicides.
14. Herbicide treatment will not occur near active nest sites for threatened, endangered, and sensitive bird species.

15. Mechanically removed specimens of non-native invasive specie(s) having reproductive parts will be placed in containers and disposed of in a manner that reduces the spread of that species.
16. Displaced soil from mechanical removal of non-native invasive species will remain on-site.

Equipment Cleaning

The following mitigation measures refer to the use of use of herbicides in Treatment Units to prevent the spread of non-native invasive species:

1. Equipment shall be cleaned between treatment stands if there is a difference in the composition of NNIS species that are Species of Concern.

MONITORING

It is my decision to conduct the following Monitoring and Evaluation:

Implementation Monitoring

Contract Administration

Objective: Ensure that mitigation measures in Treatment Units are implemented.

Desired Results: All contract requirements are met.

Methods: District personnel will visit all Treatment Units and roads. Reviews will be documented in inspection reports regarding contract compliance.

Responsibility: District Assistant Ranger for Implementation

Effectiveness Monitoring

Reforestation

Objective: Ensure that reforestation occurs within five years of treatment.

Desired Result: Adequately reforested stands.

Methods: Stocking surveys within the first five years after the treatment of a unit.

Responsibility: Shared-Services Silviculturist.

Dry Sand Prairie Restoration

Objective: Ensure that revegetation of a diverse suite of dry sand prairie plants occurs within five years of treatment.

Desired Result: Stands being restored to dry sand prairie are revegetated with a suite of prairie plants and that the presence of invasive plant species is limited to <5%.

Methods: Conduct meandering plant surveys annually for 5 years after conducting restoration activities.

Responsibility: Shared-Services Botanist

Invasive Plants/Noxious Weeds

Objective: Ensure that the presence and spread of invasive plants and noxious weeds is minimized through NNIS treatment.

Desired Result: A reduced presence of invasive plants and noxious weeds would result from the project activities.

Methods: Ocular inspection for the first two years after the treatment of a unit.

Responsibility: Shared-Services Botanist

Road Closures

Objective: Ensure that the road closures are maintained throughout the Project Area.

Desired Result: Roads closed are not re-opened by the public.

Methods: Ocular inspection within the first five years after the road closures occur.

Responsibility: District Assistant Ranger for Implementation

Heritage Resources

Objective: Ensure that there are no negative impacts to heritage resources as a result of treatments.

Desired Result: No damage to recorded archaeological sites within the Project Area.

Methods: Ocular inspection within the first five years after the treatments of the units will occur.

Responsibility: Shared-Services Archaeologist

Erosion

Objective: Ensure that erosion does not occur as a result of mechanical harvesting equipment on slopes.

Desired Result: No erosion would occur.

Methods: Ocular inspection during operations and continuing periodically for five years after a unit is treated.

Responsibility: District Assistant Ranger for Implementation

Raptor Nests

Objective: Ensure that existing raptor territories were protected.

Desired Result: No adverse effects to the existing raptor territories.

Methods: Ocular inspections of territories periodically for five years after the units are treated.

Responsibility: District Wildlife Biologist

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

My decision to implement the Selected Alternative is based on its effectiveness in achieving the Purpose and Need identified in the EA, and represents site-specific application of the goals of Management Prescription Areas 4.2 and 4.4. In evaluating the effects of the proposed alternatives, as described in Chapter 3 of the EA, it is my judgment that the Selected Alternative more effectively achieves the stated Purpose and Need than Alternatives 1 and 2, and brings the Mast Lake Project Area closer to the Desired Condition. The Purpose and Need objectives for this project include the following:

- Maintain the aspen component in commercial forest stands and provide younger aspen age-classes; sustain forest health, individual tree growth rates, and increase vegetative diversity in red pine stands.
- Provide suitable habitat to maintain or increase wildlife diversity.
- Reduce the threat to adjacent landowners and to public resources that is posed by the accumulation of hazardous fuels within portions of the Project Area.
- Identify and develop selected areas for restoration to provide habitat for dry, open sand Regional Forester Sensitive Species (both wildlife and plant).
- Reduce the quantity of trash currently located on National Forest System lands and reduce vehicle access to historic dumpsites.
- Rehabilitate the resource damage related to ORVs.
- Manage the Forest Service roads to bring the Project Area closer to the road density Standards and Guidelines of the Forest Plan (Forest Plan, pp II-39 and 40).
- Prevent the spread of non-native invasive species caused by Forest Service activities.

In making this decision, I have taken into account public concerns and comments (Appendix C of the EA). I have evaluated the adequacy of issue resolution in the EA, the formulation of alternatives to the Proposed Action, management requirements, and the evaluation of the effects of alternatives. I have also taken into consideration the disposition of issues raised during the notice and comment period. There were differing opinions expressed during the analysis by the public. It is not expected that this decision will completely satisfy any one group or individual; however, I have considered the various viewpoints and believe that the decision I have made is a reasonable one. Based on all factors, including commodity and non-commodity considerations, it is my judgment that the Selected Alternative best provides for the greatest net benefit to the public. No single factor determined the decision.

Although both Alternative 2 and the Selected Alternative achieve the Purpose and Need for this project, the Selected Alternative has several characteristics that led to it being chosen for implementation. This choice was based on my review of the EA and a combination of biological, social, and economic factors. It is my judgment after evaluating the effects of the proposed alternatives, as described in Chapter 3 of the EA, that the Selected Alternative has the best balance of benefits related to these factors.

The Selected Alternative will commercially harvest 86 acres that would have been restored to dry sand prairie under Alternative 2. In addition, 6 acres of opening would have been restored to dry sand prairie under Alternative 2 that will be prescribed for wildlife habitat creation under the Selected Alternative. As a result, the Selected Alternative shows a 92 acre reduction in dry sand prairie restoration activities (and the related reductions of herbicidal treatment of NNIS and changes in Land Suitability Class), compared to Alternative 2. In addition, the Selected Alternative offers a 5.0 mile reduction in road closures. The differences between these alternatives were developed in response to the issues brought out by the public during the initial scoping period and through the gathering of new information throughout the analysis process. Some of the differences are based on site-specific recommendations, while others incorporate a landscape perspective of management.

The amount of net revenue under the Selected Alternative will be greater than what would have been generated by Alternative 2. Project costs will be lower under the Selected Alternative than they would have been under Alternative 2, due primarily to the reduction in the acres of dry sand prairie restoration. Other project costs would have been similar under either alternative.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Alternative 1

Alternative 1 was the “No Action” Alternative. Under Alternative 1, the current management direction would have continued. No vegetative treatments or habitat improvement projects would have occurred at this time. Some activities, such as minor road maintenance and resource protection would have continued within the Project Area. Any activities covered by past decisions would also have occurred. Selection of Alternative 1 would not have precluded future analysis or implementation of on-going management proposals within the Project Area. This alternative provided a baseline against which to describe the environmental effects of the action alternatives. Though this was a viable alternative, implementing Alternative 1 would not have met the Purpose and Need objectives for this project.

Alternative 2

This alternative would have implemented an increased area of dry sand prairie restoration (and the related NNIS treatments and changes in Land Suitability Class) and the maximum amount of road closures. The remainder of the proposed activities would have been similar to those of the Selected Alternative. Implementing Alternative 2 would have met the Purpose and Need objectives for this project.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Process

The Forest Service uses public involvement and an interdisciplinary team of specialists to determine issues of concern associated with proposed actions and in developing possible solutions. Opportunities for comments enable concerned citizens, resource specialists from other agencies, and local governments to express their ideas and views.

Public involvement for the project included listing in the HMNFs’ Schedule of Proposed Actions and a direct mailing on January 8, 2008 to approximately 333 landowners, individuals, and agencies that expressed interest in the project or who the Forest identified as possibly having an interest. The Forest Service requested that comments be submitted by February 11, 2008. There were thirty-one respondents

to the scoping letter. A copy of the scoping letter, a list of contacted parties, and comments received can be found in the Mast Lake Project Record.

The IDT developed a list of issues from the external scoping process and internal issues raised during the interdisciplinary process. According to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), issues are points of discussion, debate, or dispute concerning the proposed action of the project. Relevant issues were used to develop alternatives and are addressed in the environmental effects section of the EA. Other issues may be irrelevant to the decision being made or outside the scope of the project. Other issues and management concerns identified were addressed in the EA, but were not used to develop alternatives.

On December 11, 2008, the Mast Lake Project Environmental Assessment was sent out for a 30-day comment period. Four comments were received. The following is a general summary of the comments that were received:

Comment 1 (received on 12-19-08 from Tony Furlich): This commenter supported the selection of Alternative 3 as the preferred alternative for the following reasons: 1) It treated the maximum number of acres of timber proposed, 2) It closed the least number of roads, and 3) It proposed the use of glyphosate herbicide for the removal of NNIS.

Comment 2 (received on 12-20-08 from Lauren Deeter): This commenter had a specific question about the effects of the proposed activities on lady slipper orchids and to determine whether or not she could transplant individual plants from their existing locations to new locations (where timber harvesting activities would not be occurring).

Comment 3 (received on 12-21-08 from Steve Jelsema): This commenter had a specific question about the methods and timing of a road closure that was identified to occur near his property (UC 28 and UC 29).

Comment 4 (received on 1-08-08 from Pat Brower and Gary Greenway): This comment was divided into separate Compartments.

Compartment 564: They supported the vegetation treatments under Alternatives 2 and 3. They preferred the management of the transportation system under Alternative 1, but would support Alternatives 2 and 3, if two exceptions were made. These exceptions were then listed.

Compartment 565: They supported Alternative 3.

Compartment 566: They supported the vegetation treatments under Alternatives 2 and 3. They preferred the management of the transportation system under Alternative 1, but would support Alternatives 2 and 3, if one exception was made. This exception was listed.

Compartment 567: They supported the vegetative and roads treatments of Alternatives 2 and 3.

Compartment 570: They supported the vegetation treatments under Alternatives 2 and 3. They preferred the management of the transportation system under Alternative 1, but would support Alternatives 2 and 3, if one exception was made. This exception was then listed.

Compartment 572: They supported the vegetation treatments under Alternatives 2 and 3. They preferred the management of the transportation system under Alternative 1, but would support Alternatives 2 and 3, if one exception was made. This exception was then listed.

The Compartment-specific comments were followed by additional comments relating to specific roads within the Project Area and specific comments on procedure, mapping, vegetative treatments, and the management of the transportation system as a whole.

The specific comments and the responses to these comments can be found in the Mast Lake Project Record, which is located at the Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District. These comments did not result in the identification of new issues or changes to alternatives, the effects analysis, or the decision to proceed with implementation of the Selected Alternative.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY LAW

In addition to the Acts and Executive Orders listed below, the Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger Districts utilizes “The Principal Laws Relating to Forest Service Activities” (2003) as a reference to guide proposed management activities. A comprehensive understanding of a particular Forest Service program or activity may be gained through familiarity with this reference and committee reports, hearing records, appropriation acts, presidential budget requests, federal regulations, court decisions, and the Forest Service directives system.

National Forest Management Act

It is my finding that the actions of this decision comply with the requirements of the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), NFMA implementing regulations in 36 CFR Section 219, and the 2006 Huron-Manistee National Forests’ Land and Resource Management Plan.

The actions to be implemented are consistent with the Forest-wide Standards and Guidelines listed for Management Prescription Areas 4.2 and 4.4 as described in the Forests’ Plan. The Selected Alternative results in applying management practices that meet the Forests’ Plan overall direction of complying with Federal laws and regulations, and provides an optimum economic mixture of market and non-market outputs and benefits. As required by NFMA, clearcutting has been determined to be the optimal method for those units where it is employed.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)

A Biological Evaluation (BE) was prepared for the Mast Lake Project. The BE evaluated the effects of this project on federally listed or proposed species, designated critical habitat, and Regional Forester’s Sensitive Species that may inhabit or have the potential to inhabit the Project Area by alternative.

Based on the analysis of effects on proposed, endangered, and threatened species and critical habitat listed under the ESA, the BE determined there would be “no effect” on the Karner blue butterfly.

Clean Water Act

This Act is to restore and maintain the integrity of waters. The Forest Service complies with this Act through the use of Best Management Practices. The Mast Lake Project Area occurs within the Muskegon River and White River Watersheds. The Muskegon River begins in the north-central Lower Peninsula of Michigan, flowing from Higgins and Houghton Lakes, southwesterly to the City of Muskegon and discharging into central Lake Michigan. The river is 212 miles long and has approximately 94 tributaries flowing directly into the mainstem. The watershed encompasses over 2,350 square miles of land (O’Neal 1997). The headwaters or portions of State of Michigan designated trout streams Bennett, Flinton, and Fivemile Creeks occur within the Project Area (Michigan Department of Natural Resources 2008). In addition, Pearson, Pickerel, Mud, Mast, Carey, and Round Lakes, Beaver Pond, Dudgeon Swamp, Harness Marsh, and a portion of Thumser Creek also occur within the Project Area. The headwaters of a few unnamed streams occur in Sections 5, 8, 17, and 20 of Big Prairie Township and these streams flow into the Hardy Dam Pond. There are also a number of unnamed ponds and wetlands in the Project Area including one small, unnamed body of water on National Forest System land in the Harness Marsh of Big Prairie Township.

Harvest activities will not affect floodplains, wetlands, or riparian areas. A distance of at least 100 feet from riparian areas, or to the recognizable area dominated by riparian vegetation, will be excluded from commercial timber harvesting. These riparian areas will remain vegetated, thereby minimizing the potential for soil movement from the harvested stands. Implementation of the recommendations described in the State of Michigan’s Best Management Practices (MDNR 1994) will minimize the impact of the proposed activities on National Forest System lands.

Clean Air Act

The Project Area is not in a protected airshed. Air quality will be affected on a temporary basis by exhaust emissions and some additional road dust from logging equipment. These effects are expected to be minor and localized (EA pg. 3-94 through 3-96).

National Historic Preservation Act, Archaeological Resources Protection Act and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Project Area has been surveyed for cultural resources. All identified sites will be protected as stated in the Mitigation section. If additional cultural resource sites are found during project implementation, the Zone Archeologist will be informed and adequate protection measures applied.

National Environmental Policy Act

This Act requires public involvement and consideration of environmental effects. The entirety of documentation for this decision supports compliance with this Act.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

Invasive Species (Executive Order 13112)

Due to the presence of non-native, invasive species throughout the Project Area, alternatives were designed to reduce the spread of non-native species into new areas as a result of management activities.

Wetlands (Executive Order 11990) (see Clean Water Act above).

Floodplains (Executive Order 11988)

The design of the management activities, and the corresponding mitigation measures for these activities, will protect the floodplains within the Project Area from detrimental effects.

Environmental Justice (Executive Order 12898)

The Selected Alternative is not expected to disproportionately impact human populations for Newaygo County. There is no human health or safety issues associated with the biological or physical factors that are influenced by the Selected Alternative that will effect low-income or minority populations in or around the Project Area. The Selected Alternative is not expected to affect the civil rights of any landowners near the Project Area or other individuals.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

I have determined, based on the discussion of effects in the Mast Lake Environmental Assessment, and from past experience with similar activities, that these actions are not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment (40 CFR 1508.27). An environmental impact statement is not needed. I have made this determination based on the following factors:

1. Both beneficial and adverse impacts are expected. The beneficial impacts will outweigh expected short-term, adverse impacts.

Timber

Aspen occurring on operable sites will be maintained and there will be an overall increase in the 0-10 year age-classes throughout the Project Area. Aspen expansion efforts and non-commercial harvesting will occur to promote the presence of this species in other locations throughout the Project Area. Competition for sunlight, nutrients, and water will be reduced within red pine plantations. The remaining trees in these stands will grow at an increased rate, and other vegetation (such as forbs and shrubs) will have the

opportunity to become established in the understory. The regeneration of jack pine will reduce the fuel hazard within the Project Area. Selected forested (and non-forested) areas within the Project Area will be restored to dry sand prairie, with the intent of re-establishing a once-prevalent habitat that is currently jeopardized. Scotch pine will no longer be a component of the Forest within the Project Area. The further spread of non-native plant species will be reduced. In addition, the Selected Alternative provides a stable supply of timber products to help support the local economy.

Some soil compaction will occur in harvested timber stands, on the skid trails, and within landing sites. Mitigation measures will reduce the severity of the compaction by limiting the locations of harvested areas and skid trails to appropriate areas. Past experience has shown that, through the use of these measures, at-risk areas are avoided and regeneration is not adversely affected. Landing locations will be selected to reduce these impacts as well; however, due to the nature of modern harvesting operations, compaction in these areas is inevitable. Rehabilitative efforts will be made in those landing areas that are identified as being adversely impacted by timber harvesting activities. There will also be a visual difference in forested stands pre- and post-harvest. This will be especially true in the locations of dry sand prairie restoration, due to the long-term management shift in these areas away from forested stands toward open stands. Other forested stands will regenerate and these areas will return to a typical forested landscape. There will also be noise and localized emissions related to the extraction of timber products. These will be limited to the areas identified for commercial harvesting activities and of short duration. Some public displacement will also occur as a result of herbicidal treatments. This displacement will be limited to the treatment areas and will be short-term.

Habitat

Openings will contain predominantly grasses, forbs, berry- and mast-producing shrubs, and limited large woody vegetation. Forest users will experience a variety of changes in the visual characteristics within the openings that will be managed, depending on the site and the desired condition. In addition to maintenance, some of the openings will be expanded to provide for a larger area of use for the species that use these openings to meet habitat requirements. There are also some isolated aspen areas that will be regenerated to provide patches of additional early-successional habitat throughout the Project Area. The restoration of the dry sand prairie will also serve to provide an increase in this type of habitat throughout the Project Area. The level of habitat that is successfully restored to these areas will be dependent on many factors, some of which are not yet evident. There will also be minor noise and emissions related to the habitat improvement work and the use of tools associated with accomplishing this work. Minor and temporary displacement to forest users may occur as a result of the work that is associated with all of these activities.

Natural Scenery

The potential for illegal dumping and illegal hunting stands will be reduced. Resource damage related to OHVs will be rehabilitated. As a result, the visual characteristics related to the presence of these disturbances will be eliminated on National Forest System lands within the Project Area. Further visual changes will also occur within the Project Area as a result of the timber harvesting activities and the dry sand prairie restoration. Initially, the results of these activities will be highly visible. Skid trails, landing sites, and slash from the harvesting operations will be readily apparent within the forested stands. Over time, the skid trails and landing sites will become revegetated and the slash will decompose. Clearcut areas will regenerate and the thinned stands will develop understories that are more densely vegetated than they were prior to conducting the harvesting activities. The areas being restored to dry sand prairie will take on a new look entirely, as the existing woody vegetation of the forested stands will be completely removed. This will provide an immediate visual change in these areas. Over time, the restoration activities will shift these areas away from mono-cultured timbered stands toward a mix of diverse herbaceous dry sand prairie species. Temporary road construction and road reconstruction will impose short-term visual impacts because of the cleared vegetation, exposed mineral soils, and the presence of heavy equipment. The visual impacts related to the presence of roads will decline as temporary roads are closed and soils become revegetated.

Management of the Transportation System

The Selected Alternative will provide a functional transportation system that allows for public access while reducing the potential for erosion, the expansion of user-developed roads, negative impacts on wildlife, and trash dumping. A reduced road system will provide administrative and public access to National Forest System lands but may displace users that have used roads that will be closed. The result will be a manageable system that combines current County and Forest Service Roads. Some of the road closures will displace those who utilize the Project Area for recreation.

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

There will be minimal risks to public health and safety as a result of this decision. These areas of risk will occur where public use of the Forest interfaces in time and space with the carrying out of management activities. Timber sale operations and herbicidal applications will have warning signs posted. Snags that pose a safety hazard to timber sale operations may be removed.

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

There are no caves, mines, or other unusual landforms in the Project Area. The topography in the Project Area is relatively flat (less than 10% slopes), with the exception of a few isolated areas. The Project Area is not in a protected airshed.

4. Based on public participation, the effects on the quality of human environment are not likely to be highly controversial.

Based on the level of response to the proposed project by the public and on past experiences with similar projects, I have determined that there are no highly controversial effects. This does not mean that implementation of the project will be acceptable to all people, because some people will neither agree nor be pleased with the decision. However, the effects of the project are not likely to be a source of substantial controversial scientific disagreement.

5. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

The actions resulting from this decision are similar to many past actions, both in the analysis area and adjacent areas. Management activities on this terrain and timber types are common in this area and have produced no apparent adverse effects.

6. This action will not establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

The decision made on activities within this Project Area does not commit me to actions on lands outside the Project Area.

7. There are no known significant cumulative effects between this project and other projects implemented or planned on areas separated from the affected area of this project.

There are no projects on National Forest System lands currently being implemented that are adjacent to this Project Area. The Big Prairie Township is in the process of conducting dry sand prairie restoration on land within the Project Area that is adjacent to National Forest System lands. Additional restoration activities may occur on non-Forest lands in the future. The potential effects of these activities have been disclosed in the EA.

8. This project will not result in the loss or destruction of any scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

The Project Area has been surveyed for cultural resources. All identified sites will be protected.

9. The proposed actions have been designed to incorporate the needs of threatened or sensitive species or its habitat that have been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

A Biological Evaluation (BE) has been completed and is included in the Project Record. The federally listed species evaluated in the BE include the Karner blue butterfly and the bald eagle. There is no documented occurrence of the bald eagle within the Project Area; however, there was an occurrence within the dispersal area (0.5 miles away from the Project Area). There are documented occurrences of the Karner blue butterfly within the Project Area; however, there are no occupied Karner blue butterfly subpopulations within the stands proposed for treatment and no occupied subpopulations were located during field surveys. In addition, there is no known suitable Karner blue butterfly habitat within the stands proposed for treatment. In 2003 and 2004, Karner blue butterflies were observed in 2 sites that are adjacent to and within dispersal distance of six of the stands proposed for treatment. Mitigation measures have been designed and will be incorporated to protect these areas.

10. These actions do not threaten a violation of federal, state or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment and will not result in a loss of federally controlled wetland or floodplain as defined by Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

Loss of wetlands will not occur as a result of the management activities that will be implemented under the Selected Alternative. For this project, these areas were identified through an interactive database that is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Areas that were identified as potential wetlands were dropped from consideration for commercial vegetative treatments; however, wildlife habitat improvement projects will be included in the management of some of these areas (i.e. non-commercial aspen felling and opening maintenance). These activities will not negatively impact wetlands or floodplains.

11. There would be no known irreversible or irretrievable damage to resource productivity from any of the alternatives.

While the Selected Alternative will include short-term extraction of timber products from the forest, reforestation and revegetation of harvested sites are provided for to ensure that the forest will continue to produce timber and other products for future generations. All alternatives offer reasonable assurance of reforestation and provide for long-term sustained yield on the sites that will remain in the commercial timber base (Land Suitability Class of 500). The areas being restored to dry sand prairie will be removed from the commercial timber base with the expectation that the productivity of these sites will change accordingly. During the adaptive transformation of these areas from forested stands to dry sand prairies, measures will be employed to ensure that the already damaged soils are not further degraded.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this project may occur no sooner than 50 days following the date of publication of this decision in the *Lake County Star*, Baldwin, Michigan. Implementation of all activities authorized by this Decision Notice will be monitored to ensure that they are carried out as planned and described in the EA.

The implementation record for this project will display each harvest unit, road, and other project components as actually implemented. Any proposed changes to the design, location, standards and guidelines, or other mitigations for the project and the decision on the proposed changes will be documented.

PROCEDURES FOR CHANGE DURING IMPLEMENTATION

Proposed changes to the authorized project actions will be subject to the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 and other laws concerning such changes.

If new information or changed circumstances relating to the environmental impacts of the Selected Alternative come to the attention of the responsible official after the decision has been made, the responsible official must review the information carefully to determine its importance (FSH 1909.15 section 18).

If, after an interdisciplinary review and consideration of new information within the context of the overall project, the responsible official determines that a correction, supplement, or revision to the environmental document is not necessary, the implementation should continue. Documentation of the results of the interdisciplinary review will be placed in the Project Record.

Minor changes are expected during implementation to better meet on-site resource management protection objectives. Minor adjustments to unit boundaries or landing locations are likely during final layout for the purposes of improving logging system efficiency. Many of these minor changes will not present sufficient potential impacts to require any specific documentation or other action to comply with applicable laws. Some minor changes may still require appropriate analysis and documentation (FSH 1909.15 section 18).

APPEAL RIGHTS

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to 36 CFR 215. A written notice of appeal must be submitted within 45 calendar days after the Legal Notice is published in the *Lake County Star*. However, when the 45-day filing period would end on a Saturday, Sunday, or Federal holiday, then filing time is extended to the end of the next Federal working day. The date of the publication of the Legal Notice is the only means for calculating the date by which appeals must be submitted; do not rely upon any other source for this information. The Notice of Appeal must be sent to:

USDA Forest Service
Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer
Gaslight Building-Suite 700
626 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

The Notice of Appeal may alternatively be faxed to: 414-944-3963, Attn: Appeals Deciding Officer, USDA, Forest Service, Eastern Regional Office. Those wishing to submit appeals by email may do so to: appeals-eastern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Acceptable formats for electronic comments are text or html email, Adobe portable document format, and formats viewable in Microsoft Office applications. Hand-delivered appeals may be submitted at the above address between 7:30 and 4:00 pm CT Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays.

Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14 and will only be accepted from those who have standing to appeal as outlined at 36 CFR 215.13. It is the appellant's responsibility to provide sufficient project or activity specific evidence and rationale, focusing on the decision, to show why the Responsible Official's decision should be reversed. If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of the appeal disposition.

CONTACT PERSON

For more information about the specific activities authorized with this decision, please contact Christopher Frederick, Baldwin-White Cloud Ranger District, P.O. Drawer D, Baldwin, Michigan 49304; Telephone 231-745-4631 x3138 (email: cfrederick at fs.fed.us).

/s/ Leslie E. Russell

2-11-09

Leslie E. Russell
District Ranger

Date

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