



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Huron-Manistee National Forests
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Date: August 20, 2009

Dear Forest Friends:

The Huron Shores Ranger Station is proposing resource management activities to meet management objectives established in the Huron-Manistee National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan (Forests' Plan). This letter is to inform you of the Brittle 2 Fuels Reduction Project. We invite you to help identify opportunities and concerns which relate specifically to this project proposal.

Background

Millions of acres of land nationwide are presently classified as being at risk from catastrophic wildland fires, disease epidemics, and insect outbreaks. Many of the past century's traditional approaches to land management, increasing development in the wildland-urban interface, and increasing ecosystem health problems across the landscape, have contributed to more severe wildland fires and created widespread threats to communities and ecosystems. The Healthy Forests Initiative for Wildfire Prevention and Stronger Communities (2002) and the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (2003) called for administrative improvements that ensure more timely decisions, greater efficiency, and better results in projects that reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and restore forest and rangeland health. Such improvements will help reduce threats to community safety and better protect wildlife and ecosystems, as well as improve water and air quality.

The Huron Shores Ranger Station is proposing hazardous fuels reduction activities within the wildland-urban interface in recognized "at risk" areas, authorized by administrative reforms developed through the Healthy Forests Initiative, and subject to implementing regulations at 36 CFR 215. The activities are proposed to reduce hazardous fuels and improve wildlife habitat through the use of prescribed fire and commercial and non-commercial thinning activities.

Affected Area

The proposed project is located in Iosco County, in all or portions of T23N R6E, Sections 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, Plainfield Township; T24N R5E, Sections 25 and 36, Plainfield Township; T24N R6E, Sections 20, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, and 36, Oscoda Township; T24N R7E, Sections 31, and 32, Oscoda Township; and T23N R7E, Sections 5 and 6, Oscoda Township. These activities are proposed for implementation beginning in 2010. A map of the proposed activities is enclosed.

Purpose and Need for the Proposal

Implementation of site-specific projects is guided by Forests' Plan direction through management prescriptions, which are designed to attain a desired future condition. The Brittle 2 Fuels Reduction Project falls within Management Areas (MA) 4.2 and 4.3D. The purpose of the proposal is to address site-specific needs and opportunities to move the project area from the existing condition to the desired future condition set forth in the Forests' Plan. Proposed project activities would meet MA goals and objectives by emphasizing hazardous fuels treatment in wildland urban interface and intermix areas.



Additionally, the proposed project would restore forest health by improving ecological condition class of fire-adapted ecosystems, improving habitat diversity to meet species viability needs, and preventing or controlling the development of insect and disease problems.

Proposed Actions include:

- Reduce hazardous fuels in the wildland-urban interface by creating fuelbreaks through timber sales and/or hand and mechanical methods. Maintain the fuelbreaks using mechanical methods and/or prescribed fire.
 - Approximately 236 acres of pine and mixed oak/pine stands would be treated to create fuelbreaks along private property boundaries. Jack pine, small-diameter red pine, and poor form oak would be removed. Where present, larger diameter oak, hardwoods, and red and white pine would be retained to establish a semi-open condition and provide wildlife habitat. The fuelbreaks would be maintained in a semi-open condition using mechanical methods or prescribed fire on a three to seven year interval. The frequency of maintenance intervals would depend on the establishment and vigor of new growth.
 - Approximately 58 acres of red pine plantation would be thinned around the Rollways H-4 and H-5 Recreation Residence Groups. Decadent trees and flash fuels would be removed within the 24 acre Rollways H-4 and the 5 acre Rollways H-5 Recreation Residence Tracts.

- Reduce hazardous fuels and restore ecological condition class to fire-adapted ecosystems through use of low to moderate intensity prescribed fire at a landscape level. Manage the landscape to improve forest vigor and resilience to disease, and to maintain fuels reduction.
 - Up to 5,600 acres of National Forest lands would be prescribed burned to reduce fuel loading and promote stand structure and species composition reflective of healthy and productive forested stands. Where possible, existing roads and trails would be utilized as fire control lines for the prescribed burning. Hand removal of ladder fuels within or adjacent to prescribed fire units may be needed to facilitate burning. Fuels reduction and condition class would be maintained through periodic use of prescribed fire on a three to seven year interval.

- Enhance plant and wildlife habitats and restore ecosystem health, diversity, and productivity through creation of pine barrens ecosystems using prescribed fire at a landscape level. Manage the landscape as barrens to maintain viability of sensitive plant and wildlife species.
 - Approximately 5,980 acres of National Forest lands would be designated pine barrens habitat to be managed for sensitive plant and wildlife species.
 - Approximately 5,070 acres of the designated barrens would be prescribed burned to begin the establishment of a mosaic of open to semi-open barrens conditions. Where possible, existing roads and trails would be utilized as fire control lines for the prescribed burning. Hand removal of ladder fuels within or adjacent to prescribed fire units may be needed to facilitate burning. Fuels reduction and barrens development would be enhanced through periodic use of prescribed fire on a three to seven year interval. Additional habitat enhancement projects within the barrens could include topping trees for snag creation, erecting bat boxes, bluebird boxes and kestrel boxes, supplemental planting of warm season grasses, native forbs and nectaring sources, and biological and herbicide treatments of non-native invasive plant species.

Comments on the Proposal

We would like to know your thoughts concerning the project proposal. Any suggestions you have regarding the site-specific activities will be considered as we identify issues and further develop the proposal. Please call or provide written comment before September 11 to Becky Riegler or Brian Stearns at the phone number and address on the letterhead, above, or submit comments electronically to bstearns@fs.fed.us. Comments received in response to this project will become a matter of public record. If you have questions or need further information regarding the proposal, please don't hesitate to call.

For information on fire prevention and reducing hazardous fuels on your private property, please contact our office about the *FIREWISE* program, or visit the *FIREWISE* website at www.firewise.org.

Sincerely,

/s/Becky Riegler
Becky Riegler
Project Leader

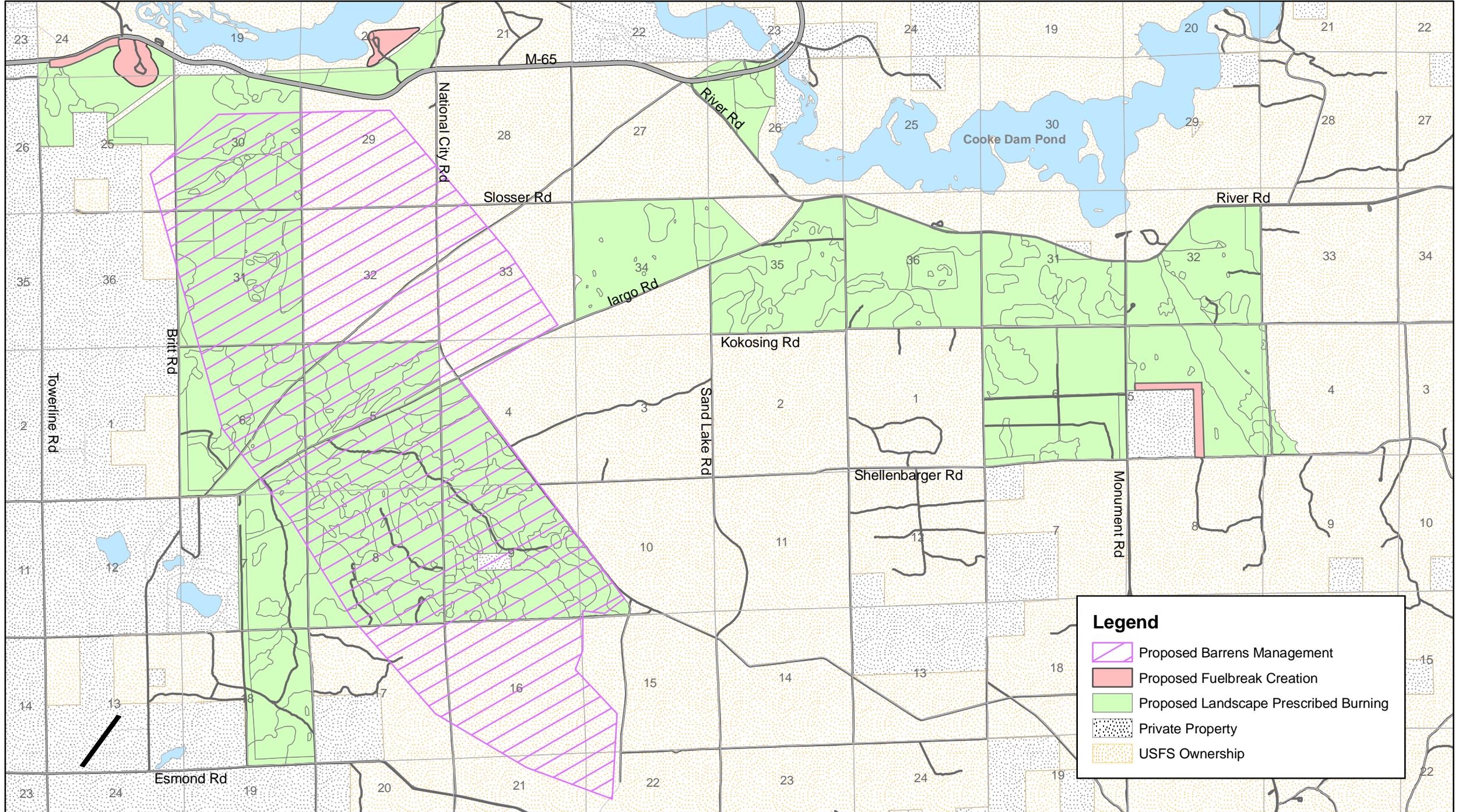
Attachments: Project Proposal Maps

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, those who submit such comments will not have standing to appeal the subsequent decision under 36 CFR 215. Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27 (d), any person may request that a submission be withheld from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that confidentiality is granted in only very limited circumstances. The Forest Service will inform the requester of its decision regarding a request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the submission will be returned and the requester notified that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address.

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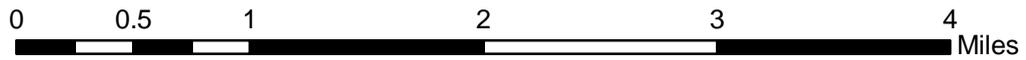
Brittle 2 Fuels Reduction Project

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Huron-Manistee National Forests



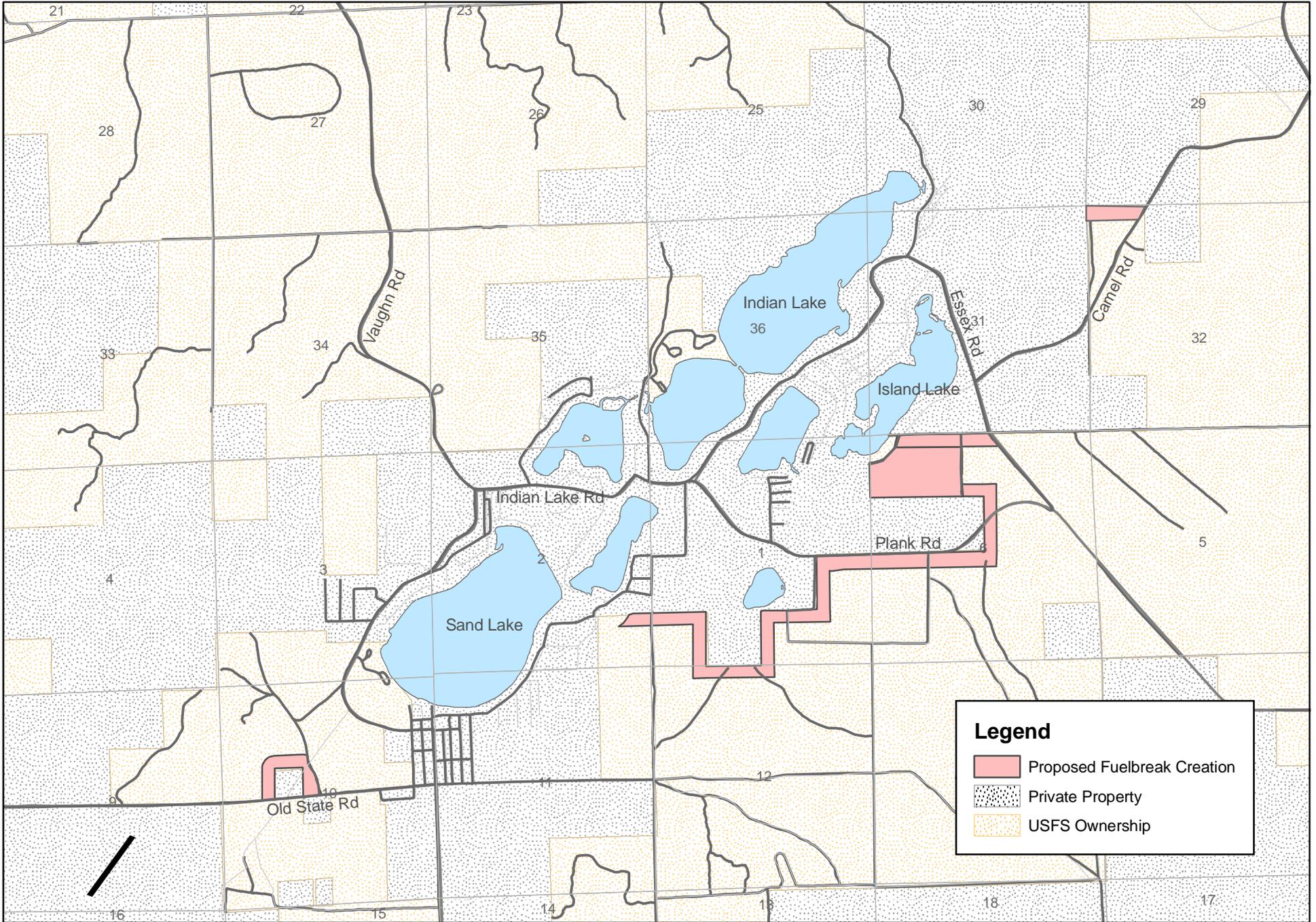
Legend

- Proposed Barrens Management
- Proposed Fuelbreak Creation
- Proposed Landscape Prescribed Burning
- Private Property
- USFS Ownership



Brittle 2 Fuels Reduction Project (Map 2)

Huron Shores Ranger Station
Huron-Manistee National Forests



Legend

- Proposed Fuelbreak Creation
- Private Property
- USFS Ownership

