

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Forest Resources Division

And

Wildlife Division

**Western Upper Peninsula  
Regional State Forest Management Plan**

**December 2013**

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# Regional State Forest Management Plan Western Upper Peninsula – Executive Summary

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In Michigan, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) works hard to sustainably manage state-owned forest land for the many economic, recreational and environmental values that are part of those forest lands. To accomplish this, the DNR manages state forest lands using an ecosystem-based approach in a way that meets our current forest needs while not compromising the needs of future generations.

The DNR has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative; both of these agencies have audited the DNR's current forest management practices against biological, social and economic standards and independently certified those practices to be in compliance with such standards.

The Regional State Forest Management Plan (RSFMP) for the western Upper Peninsula (WUP) ecoregion is one of three plans that will help bridge the planning and communication gaps between the 2008 Michigan State Forest Management Plan and annual inventory and planning performed by the local management unit. The RSFMP is intended to help achieve the planning requirements of Part 525 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, as well as forest certification standards. This is an operational plan that is intended to provide landscape-level direction that will guide the local management decisions affecting forest types and related habitat.



## Plan Origins

There has been a need for a landscape level plan since the Escanaba River State Forest Plan expired several years ago. With additional feedback from the 2004 and 2005 forest certification audits, the planning process moved forward. In 2005, a series of stakeholder input sessions identified the following categories of interests that the public wanted to see addressed in the state forest plans:

- Public recreation
- Biodiversity – old growth
- Wildlife habitat and management
- Invasive exotic species
- Roads
- Land use
- Timber and vegetation management
- Riparian management zones
- Planning process
- Interagency cooperation
- Spirituality – solitude
- Public education and awareness.

Internal and external input went into the development of the WUP plan outline. The internal process of grouping state forest lands into management areas, based on similar ownership, socioeconomic and ecological attributes, culminated with public meetings in 2009 to review the management area boundaries. Management direction for the WUP management areas (including the development of the model to project timber harvest levels based on DNR inventory data) was developed by DNR district and state planning staff. These draft management area plans were reviewed by unit and other regional-level DNR staff in a series of internal meetings throughout 2012 and revisions were made based on this input. In October 2012, the full draft WUP regional plan was released to the public.

## Plan Content

The western Upper Peninsula RSFMP contains six major sections, plus appendices, a glossary and citation of literature.

## **Section 1**

This section is an introduction to the plan that describes its purpose and organization, geographical context and intended implementation.

## **Section 2**

This section provides a history of forests in the WUP, the origin of the present state forest system, and a look at the 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century periods of large-scale extraction of natural resources and how those extractions have influenced the forest composition and present management of forest resources.

## **Section 3**

An understanding of the history in Section 2 sets the stage for Section 3, which describes current forest conditions and trends related to:

- Forest resources
- Forest health
- Featured wildlife species and habitat needs
- Water and fish habitat
- Socio-economic context of the plan (including timber production; forest recreation and tourism; hunting, trapping and fishing; oil and gas production; and mineral extraction).

Specifically, this section touches on the following topics:

- State forest timber sales in the WUP over the past decade have fluctuated between 10,000 and 15,000 acres per year from approximately 686,700 acres of actual forested land.
- A number of forest insects and diseases are present and threaten forest conditions in the WUP; the most significant of these are *Hypoxylon* canker, white trunk rot, emerald ash borer and spruce budworm.
- Featured wildlife species in the WUP are the American marten, American woodcock, beaver, black bear, blackburnian warbler, bobolink, Canada goose, eastern bluebird, gray jay, Kirtland's warbler, moose, northern goshawk, pileated woodpecker, red crossbill, red-shouldered hawk, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, spruce grouse, upland sandpiper, white-tailed deer, wild turkey and wood duck.
- There are many inland lakes and more than 12,000 miles of streams in the WUP, including the watersheds of the Presque Isle, Ontonagon, Sturgeon, Huron, Yellow Dog, Dead and Carp rivers.
- As of 2005, there were more than 3,000 jobs in forest product industries in the WUP. There were more than 170 businesses involved in forestry and logging, and wages for the forestry and logging, wood products and paper manufacturing sectors in the WUP totaled over \$90 million.
- The state forests of the WUP provide almost 883,000 acres of land for hiking, biking, riding, hunting, fishing, camping, bird watching and other recreation activities. There are many state-managed pathways providing 80 miles of hiking, biking and skiing trails; 15 forest campgrounds providing more than 240 campsites; 2,000 miles of snowmobile trails as well as off-road vehicle, and equestrian trails.
- As of 2011, there were nearly 700,000 deer hunters, more than 100,000 turkey hunters, over 250,000 small game hunters and more than 1.2 million anglers in Michigan. In 2006, estimated statewide expenditures for hunting and trapping topped \$900 million, while fishing brought in some \$1.6 billion. Additionally, wildlife watchers contributed another \$1.6 billion in annual economic activity. State forests in the WUP contributed to a large portion of this activity.
- Although there is no oil- and gas-production in the WUP, there are over 200 state metallic leases covering more than 53,000 acres of state land and exploration activity continues. Mineral leases on state forest lands in the WUP annually generate revenue that is directed to the State Park Endowment Fund.

## **Section 4**

This regional plan provides specific management direction for each of the 35 state forest management areas in the WUP. The management direction for each management area focuses on forest type and related wildlife habitat. Section 4 is comprised of 35 management area-specific plans, each containing:

- A summary of use and management;
- An introduction, which includes a projection of harvest acres in this 10-year planning period;

- Management direction for each of the major and some of the minor forest cover types in the management area, including current conditions, desired future conditions, 10-year management objectives and long-term management issues;
- Featured wildlife species and habitat specifications; and
- Discussions of rare fish, wildlife and plant management, forest health management, aquatic resources, fire management, recreation, access and other region-specific issues, such as oil and gas development.



Management direction related to other issues or uses (forest health, fire management, recreation, access or oil and gas development) is only provided in the context of forest type management. The plans do not contain specific goals related to recreation or mineral infrastructure placement and/or development. These are addressed in other DNR planning documents, such as the 2008-2012 Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Plan sections on special resource areas (special conservation areas, high conservation value areas and ecological reference areas) also address management direction for other uses and values (e.g., recreation).

The DNR uses a modified area control approach to maintaining the sustainability of timber on state forest land.

Consistent with this approach, the balancing of age and basal area classes over the rotation period for various forest types is a long-term desired future condition within most management areas. Each management area plan contains a calculation of projected harvest levels, which is framed in terms of projected harvests (in acres) for the major and minor cover types for the following decade. Specific highlights include:

- A breakdown of the dominant forest types: aspen (28 percent), northern hardwoods (18 percent), cedar (10 percent), and lowland conifer (9 percent);
- Proposed timber sales on approximately 136,000 acres over the next decade (an average of about 13,600 acres per year that is subject to year-of-entry variability and other factors);and
- Opportunities to increase harvest prescriptions in lowland deciduous and conifer cover types – for which assessments are currently in progress.

## **Section 5**

The plan concludes with Section 5, which describes monitoring, reporting, review and revision requirements. It includes:

- Information on monitoring directives;
- DNR protocols for inventory and assessment, surveillance and assessment, compliance monitoring, effectiveness monitoring, validation monitoring and reporting;
- A 10-year review and revision periodicity; and
- Known deficiencies in the plan that will need to be addressed in future revisions.

The concepts and actions outlined in the WUP Regional State Forest Management Plan are part of a 10-year plan, one that will be expertly reviewed and revised along the way – ensuring sound and sustainable forest treatments in all management areas.

## **Section 6**

Appendices

## **Section 7**

Forest Planning Glossary