

GRAYLING ADZ
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DNR-military plan to manage Warbler

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Staff Writer

LANSING — A cooperative agreement between the state Dept. of Military Affairs and the state Dept. of Natural Resources has been developed for the management of Kirtland Warbler habitat.

The agreement will mean a reduction of Kirtland habitat on land used for military maneuvers, and management of habitat for the birds in other areas.

According to Greg Huntington, environmental coordinator for the Dept. of Military Affairs, the agreement, which will be signed Thursday, May 22, follows a decade of discussion on the issue.

"We have been trying to come up with a mutual plan for probably 10 years, but it's never really gelled," Huntington said.

"It's kind of a monumental agreement between the two departments," Huntington added. "I think the agreement we've come up with is going to solve a lot of the problems."

The basic problem is that big green tanks and small yellow birds do not cohabitate well.

"We have one real critical area, the Range 30 complex tank range," Huntington said. "The Kirtlands like that because of the fires and new habitat developed."

The Dept. of Military Affairs also considers the acreage important because it is a critical area for tank training, he explained.

An advisory group, the Kirtland Warbler Recovery Team, developed the management plan.

GARY BOUSHELLE, regional DNR wildlife biologist from the Roscommon office, called the memo of understanding "very important."

"It is going to reduce the conflict between military, DNR and federal Fish and Wildlife Service," Boushelle

said. "We are very pleased with this agreement."

He explained that burning of the tank range results in the development of immature jack pine stands, which attract nesting Kirtland Warblers.

"Because of fires, stands of jack pines ideal for nesting habitat for Kirtland Warblers develop," Boushelle said.

The federally-endangered species builds its nests on the ground under the limbs of young jack pine trees, which means tank maneuvers at the site jeopardize the nests, as well as disrupting the nesting birds.

Through the new arrangement, new stands of jack pine will not be allowed to develop in the tank range area.

"As sites go out of production because of maturity, further regeneration will be discouraged through burning or chopping," Boushelle explained.

Once trees reach an age of about 18-20 years, the warblers seek younger habitat.

"It will be a few more years yet that the birds will nest there," the biologist noted. "We will continue to protect the birds on the area now."

Another facet of the agreement is management of other military lands for Kirtland habitat.

"We will mitigate the effect by managing the jack pine around the area," Boushelle said.

THE AGREEMENT covers land in Grayling and Lovells townships north of Dyer Truck Trail and west of McMasters Bridge Road.

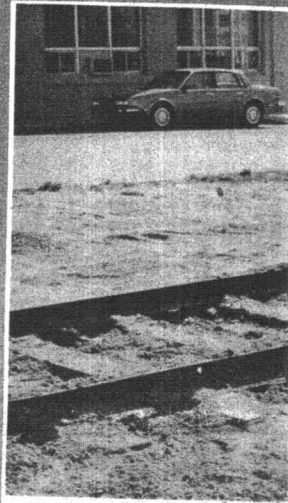
The ceremonial signing begins with a tour of the site leaving from the Holiday Inn in Grayling at 9 a.m.

The signing will be held at 1 p.m., following a noon luncheon.

Major General Vernon Andrews of Military Affairs and Gordon Guyer, acting director of the DNR will represent their departments.

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TRACKS



DON PRIESTLY of Grayling clears dirt from the train tracks to make way



PART OF the new museum complex former D&M caboose was to be moved day morning to the east side of the Cray County Historical Society Museum. The 20-ton caboose needed the service a military crane for the 30-yard lift from

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