

Feds urged to buy area forest lands

DETROIT (AP) — A coalition of conservation groups is recommending the federal government acquire land in several national parks, including four of Michigan's national forests.

Kirtland's Warbler National Wildlife Refuge in Roscommon County is among the four Michigan areas on the coalition list, as is the Huron National Forest, which stretches across several area counties.

The Wilderness Society released a report Saturday urging Congress to spend \$634 million to acquire land plus another \$158.5 million in matching funds for states to spend on recreation projects.

Money for the project would come from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which gets more than 80 percent of its revenue from offshore oil drilling royalties. The fund was established in 1964 to take money from environmentally threatening activities and spend it on environmental preservation.

President Clinton in his recent federal budget proposed \$234 million in appropriations from the fund.

About \$900 million goes into the fund each year, but appropriations have averaged about \$253 million since 1981, The Wilderness Society said.

G. Jon Roush, president of the society, said Clinton's proposed spending is at odds with his campaign promises.

"Time is running out for America's last undeveloped lands," Roush said. "Every year there are more people, more development schemes, more dollars chasing

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these special places. If we put off these purchases, we're going to lose a lot of these areas."

The coalition has proposed the following in Michigan:

■ Spending \$200,000 to purchase 267 acres at Kirtland's Warbler National Wildlife Refuge.

■ Acquiring 9,000 acres in the Ottawa, Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee national forests and the Grand Island National Recreation Area for \$3 million.

■ Spending \$3.9 million to acquire 11,855 acres in the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore along Lake Superior.

The exact locations of the acreage in Kirtland Refuge and the Huron National Forest were not available Saturday.

"Subdivision and development is also a concern at a number of spots in Michigan's national forests," said Don Hellmann, vice president of conservation for The Wilderness Society.

"Congress should not miss this chance to acquire the acreage now available and thus stave off developers," he said.

Grant to help shape jackpine auto tour

By Bob Dobski
Editor

A wildlife viewing auto tour in southeastern Oscoda County has received a \$20,000 grant.

The money, from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will be given to the Michigan Nongame Wildlife Fund. The

ods," said Bob Hess, DNR Wildlife Division supervisor and co-leader of the project. "The tour's goal is to help people better understand and appreciate the value of the jackpine forest, its beauty and the opportunities it provides for human enjoyment.

"Management of the jackpine areas make a lot of the activities that draw people to the local economy possible."

Of course, one of the premier attractions and themes of the auto tour is the endangered Kirtland's warbler bird and the program to provide suitable habitat for the rare species.

Motorists on the tour will not likely see the bird. The best way to do that is to take a Forest Service guided tour into the forest. Tours are done in May and June.

The auto tour will give people an overview of the bird's habitat, its needs and reasons for the resource agencies' management methods. There are also plenty of other wildlife, flora and scenic viewing opportunities.

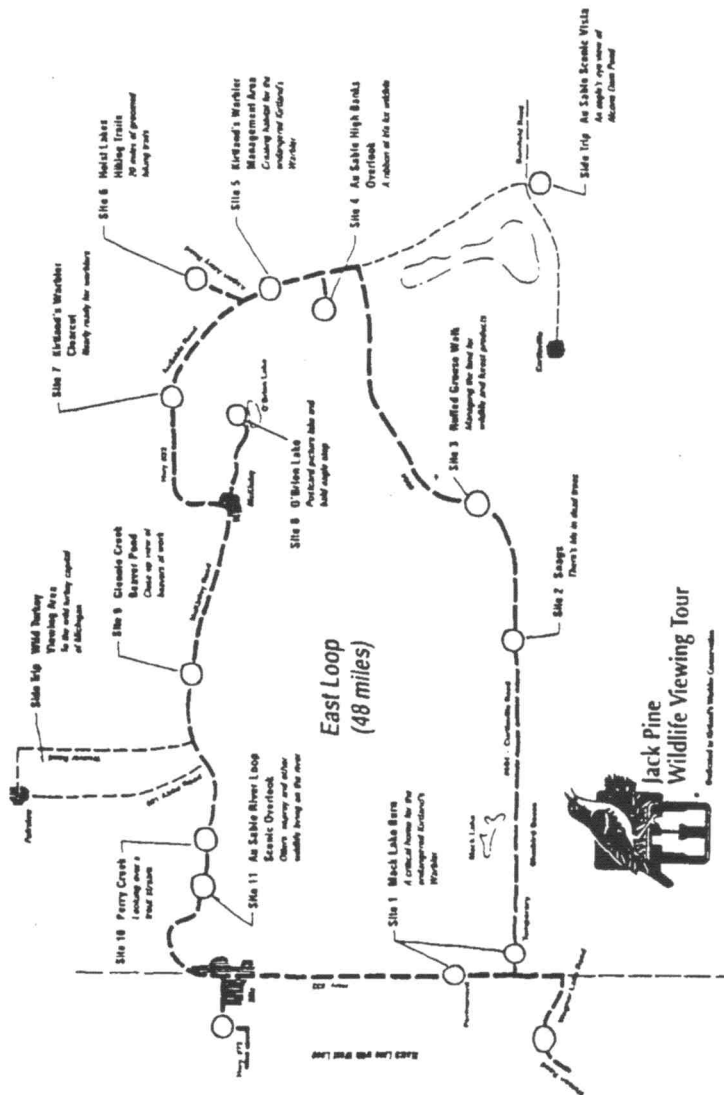
"We want to help make the Kirtland's warbler an asset to the area, rather than the liability many have seen it as," said Hess. "People can drive the tour and see and learn how the young forest needed by the bird is bene-

'The tour's goal is to help people better understand and appreciate the value of the jackpine forest.'

project is a combined effort of the Department of Natural Resources, United States Forest Service, United States Fish and Wildlife Service and local residents.

The grant will cover one-third of the \$60,000 expected cost to establish the 48-mile tour loop aimed to show people unique aspects of the jackpine forest and its inhabitants.

"The auto tour grew out of the concern people have expressed over forest clear-cutting and other forest management meth-



An interpretive auto tour will guide visitors to points of interest and beauty in southeastern Oscoda County's jackpine forest. The tour is expected to open in June.

The route on McKinley Road. The tour passes through several area communities and there are side trips to venture out on.

Hess said the tour is expected to be in place by early June. The \$20,000 from the NFWF will help pay for information and interpretive brochures and signs at the stop sites to explain to people what they are seeing.

The tour committee has to raise \$40,000 to match the grant amount. The Nongame Wildlife Fund has already given \$5,000, as has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Endangered Species Program. Work done by volunteers and the resource agencies' workers can be used to meet the grant's matching requirements.

"We're really excited," Hess said. "There is a lot of interest in the Kirtland's warbler, ecotourism and learning about the environment out there."

"We expect the tour could be a tremendous economic benefit to the area and at the same time accomplish our goal of improving forest management understanding."



TRAVEL WISE

First warbler fest to take wing in Mio

This year marks the debut of the Kirtland's Warbler Festival in Mio, the same northern Lower Peninsula town that gives you the annual Iris Festival.

The Kirtland's warbler, one of the rarest songbirds in America, nests in the jack pine plains of the area, where the females build nests on the ground beneath relatively young jack pines, those 5 to 20 years old. The birds remain through summer before wintering in the Bahamas. Nice schedule, eh?

Since about two-thirds of Oscoda County is state or federal forest land, it would seem that Kirtland's warblers should be flourishing in the region, but they are not. The problem is the lack of new trees.

The U.S. Forest Service, state Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are managing a section of the jack pine plains, cutting and replanting trees in an effort to provide a breeding habitat for what officials hope will someday be the summer home for 1,000 breeding pairs of Kirtland's warblers.

Free guided tours by the Forest Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service are conducted between May 15 and July 4 in Mio and Grayling.

The new festival will include the guided tours, as well as a clean-up of a stretch of Au Sable River bank, a kid's fishing derby, a free ice cream social, arts and crafts show, cycling and running events and nature walks.

The Kirtland's Warbler Festival runs June 10-19. For more information on either, write the Oscoda County Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 670, Mio, Mich. 48647, or call (800) 800-6133.

MICHIGAN PARADE: The fifth annual Michigan Parades into the 21st Century is Saturday in downtown Lansing. This year's parade has a special focus on the years 1940 to 1949. The parade starts at 11:30 a.m. at Michigan and Pennsylvania and travels west to the State Capitol. All 83 Michigan counties are represented in the parade. At 11 a.m., World War II and other vintage aircraft will fly overhead.

RIVER CLEAN-UP: The third annual Pine River clean-up is May 14-20 in Cadillac. The Pine River Canoe Livery Association is supplying canoes, equipment, litter bags, transportation and refuse disposal to individuals or groups picking up litter along the river or its corridor. Call (616) 862-3471, for details or to volunteer.

