

MAY 14 1985

Acting
Regional Director, FWS, Twin Cities, MN (AW/RE)

Increase Habitat Acreage for Kirtland's Warbler

RE - Michigan
Kirtland's Warbler

Director, FWS, Washington, D.C. (RE)

On August 26, 1980, we received approval to acquire 4,500 acres of habitat necessary to ensure survival of the endangered Kirtland's Warbler. The 4,500 acreage goal will soon be met, however, additional habitat protection needs have been identified. Because of this, we are requesting permission to raise our goal to 7,700 acres as identified in the Management Plan for Kirtland's Warbler.

The population of the Kirtland's Warbler is now estimated to be about 214 nesting pairs. This is a drop from 1,000 birds in 1961. The Recovery Plan has set a goal of 1,000 pairs of nesting birds to maintain a self-sustaining population. To accomplish this, 135,000 acres of land must be managed. The Recovery Plan identifies lands in north central Michigan suitable for management. The U.S. Forest Service and the State of Michigan have designated about 126,300 acres for management in the area. Initially the Fish and Wildlife Service was to acquire 4,500 acres for the State to manage as a part of the plan. We have now determined this acreage figure should be increased. We understand the U.S. Forest Service would attempt to acquire the balance.

The Kirtland's Warbler has a highly specific nesting requirement. Nearly all nests are found in jack pine stands 5 - 20 feet in height (8 - 21 years old). The management plan calls for rotational cutting and burning of 135,000 acres of jack pine habitat to ensure that there are between 36,000 and 40,000 acres of nesting habitat available at any one time.

Management capability on state forests is hampered by the presence of private inholdings. These are being developed for recreational purposes and obviously conflict with burning and timbering. Acquisition of these tracts consolidates public ownership and improves management capability.

The approved Management Plan for the Kirtland's Warbler established a goal to acquire approximately 7,700 acres to achieve the objectives of the Recovery Plan. Studies have since confirmed that in the past the Kirtland's Warbler has required larger territories in plantation than in habitat created by wildfires. As a result, it is necessary to acquire additional acreage within the previously approved project area to meet the objective of recovery for the species, therefore, it is important to raise the goal acreage by 3,200 acres (4,500 - 7,700). The attached letters from the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources support this effort.

Handwritten notes:
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7/10/85
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Ritani 5/10/85
Young 5/10/85
Brown 5/10/85
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Based on our past acquisition success, we believe that this acreage increase is achievable. We believe that it can be accomplished with an additional \$1.8 million which we are requesting to attain the new acreage goal.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The Kirtland's Warbler Project was submitted in our budget request for 1987 and it was prioritized using the current Land Acquisition Priority System. The amount of funds requested for F.Y. 1987 was \$1,100,000 for 2,000 acres on the premise that approval would be received to acquire additional acreage. We have not planned for funding of this project in F.Y. 1986 but we could spend up to \$700,000 and acquire about 1,200 acres. Funding in F.Y. 1986 would be appreciated in order to maintain the acquisition initiative we now have.

The Land Protection Plan (LPP) will also need to be amended to address any authorized increase in project size. The necessary changes will be: (1) to change Fish and Wildlife Service acquisition goal from 4,500 acres to 7,700 acres; (2) to include a new priority tract list; and (3) modify the maps as necessary. After these changes are made, we will distribute the LPP to landowners and interested private citizens or organizations.

Dear Harvey:
We consider this endangered species project to be of high priority and agree with recommendations from the Recovery Team and the State of Michigan. We are, therefore, requesting approval to increase the project acreage to 7,700 acres and the necessary funding to acquire it. Your favorable consideration of this request will be appreciated.

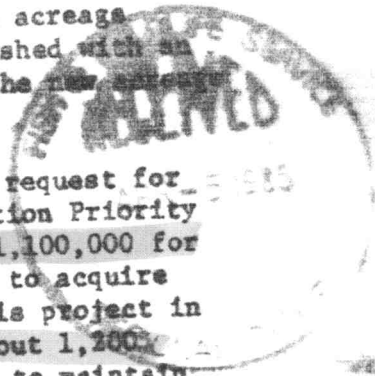
Relative to the possibility of expanding the acreage goal, serious discussion was held with Wildlife Division personnel and members of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team.

(sgd.) James C. Gritman

Their response indicates that during the last eight years, it has become apparent that natural regeneration of jack pine after logging, followed by prescribed burning, rarely produces ideal regeneration of Kirtland's Warbler habitat. Therefore, it has been decided that to produce the best possible stocking of jack pine trees should be machine planted soon after logging. This method produces the most ideal habitat.

Our studies indicate that in the last Kirtland's Warblers have required... RE:JJGunderson:TFFollrath:hmb:5/9/85
RE Reading
FU

Based on our past acquisition success, we believe you will agree with this new... will bring us closer to the day that a land exchange... ownership of these lands...



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