

2nd draft

November 2, 1994

Dear

Records at the Oscoda County Courthouse in Mio, Michigan, indicate that you own land south of Farrington Road and between the East and Middle Branches of Big Creek in northwest Oscoda County. Most of the State-owned land in this same area is part of the Big Creek Kirtland's Warbler Management Area and you probably are aware of past efforts to create nesting habitat for this endangered bird in this area. You probably also know that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has purchased several parcels of land in this area during the last few years.

We are writing to you now to let you know of a major project we will be undertaking in cooperation with the USFWS on the public lands in this area in the very near future.

As background for this large-scale project, some information on the Kirtland's warbler: We have found that Kirtland's warblers nest in higher densities and over a longer period of years in larger areas of habitat (1000 + acres) as compared to smaller areas. (They use areas where the jack pines are 6 to 20 years old.) This is probably because their preferred habitat (that which they have relied on for thousands of years) is wildfire-produced stands of young jack pine. The publicly-owned lands in this area offer an excellent opportunity to establish a large contiguous area of nesting habitat for the Kirtland's warbler (with positive effects on many other species of wildlife, over time), because most of the mature timber has been harvested from the state-owned lands in the last 10 years, and most of the timber on the USFWS parcels is either overmature or already dead. Once this area is regenerated to jack pine, the trees will be allowed to grow to maturity, i.e., ^{about} 50 years.

Specifically, we propose to do the following:

- 1) Harvest merchantable timber from state-owned lands in sections 5, 6 and 7 (T27N, R1E) by April 1, 1995. (see Map 1)
- 2) Harvest merchantable timber from USFWS lands in these same sections by April 1, 1995. (see Map 2)
- 3) Roller chop portions as necessary to allow for machine planting.
- 4) Spare occasional large oak, red pine and all dead standing trees.

- 5) Replant mechanically entire area (approximately 1400 acres) in spring - early summer 1995. (see Map 3) (This will require nearly 2 million seedlings to be planted.) Plant with opposing wave pattern - this provides for permanent wildlife openings and varied densities of jack pine. (diagram attached)
- 6) Assure density of at least 1250 trees per acre by interplanting or seeding in fall of 1995.

If timber sales are not completed by at least May 15, or if for any other unforeseen reasons any portion of this area cannot be replanted in 1995, it will be replanted in fall 1995 or spring 1996.

This is indeed the largest effort we have ever made ^{in one area} to provide nesting habitat for the endangered Kirtland's warbler. The size of the breeding population of this bird is apparently directly related to the amount of nesting habitat, and this one area near your property could well hold over 100 pairs of this endangered species in about 10-12 years.

We realize that you most likely did not purchase your property because of its proximity to a Kirtland's warbler nesting area, so please let us address other concerns you may have.

DEER

Once the timber is removed from this area, and for about 4 years after it is replanted, deer will probably use adjacent uncut areas more than this wide open area, at least during late fall and winter. As the planted area grows up and becomes denser, deer use will increase however. By 10 years after planting, this area will provide excellent escape and bedding cover, and deer use will be much increased especially during the hunting seasons.

SNOWSHOE HARES

Similar to deer, hares will avoid this area for some time after it is cleared and replanted. By the time the planted trees are about 10 years old, and for at least the next 15 years thereafter, this planted area will be excellent habitat for snowshoe hares.

OTHER WILDLIFE

Besides deer and hares, many other kinds of wildlife will use this area at different ^{backgrounds} times. For the first few years after planting, grassland species such as upland sandpipers, vesper sparrows, northern harriers (marsh hawks) and possibly even sharptailed grouse will be present. By leaving the dead standing trees, cavity nesting birds like bluebirds and kestrels will use the area. Turkeys will use at least the edges of the open area. As the trees ~~get~~ ^{grow} older, different birds and mammals will be present. The enclosed poster shows many of the animals likely to use the area as it matures.

OAK TREES

Some scattered larger oaks will be left on the area to add diversity, and to provide acorns for animals like deer and turkeys. Some oaks will also be cut. Most of these trees are already mature to overmature, and this kind of oak (mostly northern pin oak) will regenerate from stump sprouts. Most of the oaks present now are the result of wildfires some 50 years ago. These oaks will begin producing acorns again when the new trees are about 20 years old.

THREATENED PLANTS

There are at least two threatened plant species on this area (rough fescue and Hill's thistle). Both of these plants require minimal shade for their existence. Portions of this area which contain the highest numbers of these plants will be left open and not replanted to jack pine.

FIRE

Although it would be preferable to prepare this area by burning before planting, we will not be burning this area. Instead, it will be prepared for planting by whole tree harvesting and roller chopping. Actually, the timber harvests, roller chopping and replanting will serve to reduce the danger of wildfire in this area for some time to come.

ROAD

All new roads constructed for harvesting ~~the~~ timber will be blocked during the planting operation. Some dead end and unnecessary trails will also be blocked. Trails on the county road system and trails used for access to the private parcels will be kept open.

will probably

NESTING SEASON CLOSURE

Once the replanted area is used by Kirtland's warblers for nesting (6 to 8 years from now), it ~~may~~ be closed to public entry from May 1 to September 10, in order to protect the ground-nesting warbler from disturbance. This will not preclude use of the existing roads however. The area will still be open for all other compatible uses from September 11 ~~until~~ April 30 (all hunting seasons except part of the spring turkey hunting season). *through*

This has become a rather lengthy letter but we wanted to try to explain why we are doing this major project, and what the effects are likely to be on other wildlife and plants in this area. We've tried to cover many aspects and related concerns, but may have missed some. Please call either of us if we can give more information, or if you have ~~any~~ *other* concerns we can address.

Sincerely,

Sincerely

Jerry Weinrich
Wildlife Habitat/Research Biologist
(517)422-5192

Bob Hess
District Wildlife Biologist
(517)826-3211

JW/BH/ckh
Attachments

send copies to
Boushelle
Weiser
Burgoyne
Caveney
Mitty
A.C. Miller
Margola
Ennis
Tawny-Wetley
Robinson
Soultz
Innon
Williat
Lusbar
Paulovitch
Shellenbarger
Huber

attach maps + diagram

4338 Baywood Dr., S. E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
December 22, 1994

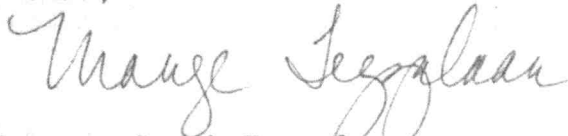
Mr. Phil Huber
U.S. Forest Service
District Ranger
Huron National Forest
Mio, MI 48627

Dear Mr. Huber:

I spotted an announcement in the *Free Press* about the five-year census for the Kirtland's Warbler. I'd like to participate in some way. Although I live in Grand Rapids, I frequently travel through Mio on my way to the Oscoda/Harrisville area. I'm familiar with the Kirtland's project area east of Mio along F-32 by the Au Sable River. I'm also a birdwatcher, so I have experience in sighting birds.

Since I'm a writer, I might also write about the project. Just for fun, I have enclosed a piece I wrote about birdwatching and trying to spot the Kirtland's at Point Pelee. Can you send me some information on what kind of help you need and the commitment required?

Thanks,



Margery Guest Teggelaar

Enc.

