

The Upper Peninsula Forest Legacy Area

The Upper Peninsula (UP) FLA includes all of the land in all counties of the UP, and includes all the islands that are part of those counties:

ALGER, BARAGA, CHIPPEWA, DELTA, DICKINSON, GOGEBIC, HOUGHTON, IRON, KEWEENAW, LUCE, MACKINAC, MARQUETTE, MENOMINEE, ONTONOGAN, SCHOOLCRAFT.

This is the largest FLA, and the one that has the most forest and the most public land (**Map 14**). All of the counties, with the exception of Keweenaw, produce significant pulpwood, and most produce large volumes of saw logs. The economies of all counties, except for Baraga and Houghton, are at least ten percent dependent on forests and wild land resources as well. While it is true that the pressures we commonly think of as threatening to forest values (i.e., urban sprawl and second home development) are not as prevalent in most of the UP as many other parts of the State, UP forests have some unique features and qualities that make them well suited to the Forest Legacy Program.

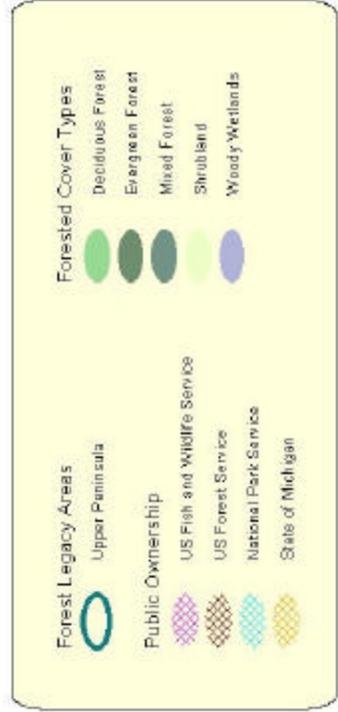
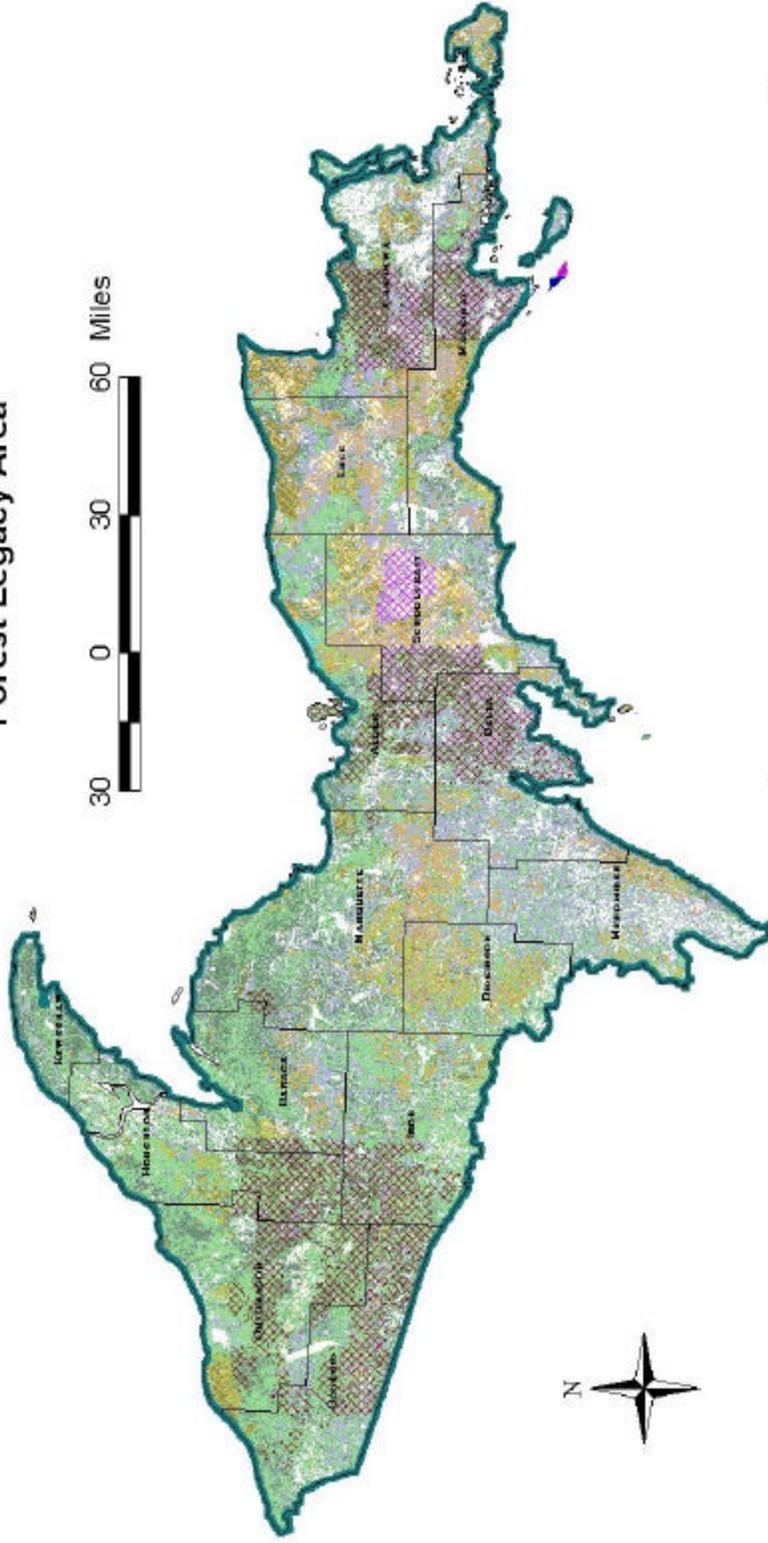
First, the UP is the only place in the State that supports wide ranging species such as the gray wolf and the moose, and it supports larger populations of black bears and neotropical migratory songbirds. These features are in large part a direct result of the large, contiguous character of the forests in the UP. Fragmentation of the UP forests could result in losses of values or features that the other parts of the State cannot support at all.

Second, the significant holdings of commercial forest industry are unique to the Upper Peninsula. These holdings, in several cases totaling several hundred thousand acres, present the scenario of large blocks of land being put on the market at once, possibly resulting in parcelization and forest fragmentation. This scenario has occurred in the northeast (e.g., in New York and Maine) and at a small scale in Michigan (the recent sale of 6,000 acres of International Paper lands), and is almost certain to occur in the future at a large scale in Michigan.

Public Benefits

The public will benefit from the Forest Legacy Program in a number of ways. First, the economy of the Upper Peninsula is closely tied to the forests. The forest products industry and tourism are both significant components of the economy and culture throughout the UP. Additionally, recreation associated with forests is important, and by maintaining public access through FLP easements, many traditional recreational activities including hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, hiking, and bird watching will remain possible. Finally, the ecological benefits of having large, contiguous forests that support wide ranging species and most of their potential biodiversity are a benefit to all.

Upper Peninsula Proposed Forest Legacy Area



Map 14. Public ownership and forest cover in the Upper Peninsula proposed Forest Legacy Area

In summary, the features of Upper Peninsula forests that could benefit from the Forest Legacy Program include:

- Rare natural communities and rare and declining species
- Wide-ranging species
- Other important wildlife habitat (e.g.,. areas of winter deer concentration)
- Forest and wildland-dependent economies
- Significantly productive forests
- Scenic forests
- Outstanding geologic features

Analysis: Meeting Eligibility Criteria

In order to qualify for inclusion in the Forest Legacy Program, an identified Forest Legacy Area must meet the Eligibility Criteria as established by the State in its Assessment of Need. In Michigan, the Eligibility Criteria are listed on pages 35 and 36 of this document.

The Upper Peninsula FLA meets the Eligibility Criteria in the following ways:

1. The forest products industry currently owns approximately 1.5 million acres of forestland. However, due to recent changes in the forest products industry, conversion of a portion of this forestland to nonforest uses is beginning due to sell-off of a portion of these lands to development interests for the purposes residential and secondary home development.
2. Consumer demand for forested areas near or on shorelines is rapidly increasing. This accrues a corresponding increase in property value, thereby making the sell-off of said lands more attractive to those private individuals now owning these lands.
3. The above may result in increased fragmentation of lands and a decrease in the amount of land available for traditional forest uses, as well as negatively impacting habitat for threatened and endangered species.
4. Important public values provided by the Upper Peninsula Forest Legacy Area:
 - a. **Scenic resources and public recreational opportunities** – The UP FLA has over 1700 miles of continuous as well as hundreds of miles of roads designated as part of Michigan’s fall color tour. Also, The UP FLA contains over 500 miles the North Country National Scenic Trail (see Map 4) which runs from the southeastern portion of the Upper Peninsula and runs along the Lake Superior Shoreline, and through bedrock formation of the western Upper Peninsula..
 - b. **Fish and Wildlife Habitat** - The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has designated over 200 miles of cold water streams in the Upper Peninsula as blue ribbon trout habitat. In addition, the Seney National Wildlife Refuge is located there as well. The large expanses of northern white-cedar provide food and thermal cover for the Upper Peninsula’s thriving deer population. As stated above, the UP is the only place in the State that

- supports wide ranging species such as the gray wolf and the moose, and it supports larger populations of black bears and neotropical migratory songbirds. These features are in large part a direct result of the large, contiguous character of the forests in the UP.
- c. **Habitat for Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species** – With respect to mammals, the Upper Peninsula is home to the gray wolf and Canada lynx, which are listed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened species under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act. Also, this FLA contains a variety of threatened and endangered plants including dwarf lake iris, Houghton's goldenrod and pitcher's thistle.
 - d. **Traditional forest uses** - The Upper Peninsula is home to a thriving forest products industry and over 1.5 million of its 8.4 million forested acres is owned and managed by the forest products industry for wood products. Also, this abundance of industrial/corporate owned forests allow public access throughout their properties as a condition for enrolling Michigan's Commercial Forest Program, which provides tax breaks to participating forest landowners.
 - e. **Other Ecological Values** – The UP FLA has over 20, acres of coast dune area and has variety of high quality natural communities based on the habitat provided by Niagara Escarpment on the southern coastline of the Upper Peninsula.

Public Involvement and Concerns

Five public meetings were held throughout Michigan to discuss and receive comments about the Assessment of Need. One meeting was held in Marquette, a town located in the central portion of Upper Peninsula; seven persons attended this meeting. Only one concern was expressed that specifically addressed how the Forest Legacy Program could affect forestlands in the Upper Peninsula Legacy Area. This concern was regarding lands owned by the Kamehameha Foundation. This Foundation was established to provide monies for the education of those Hawaiians of native descent. Monies come from a variety of investments, one of which includes the investments of monies in land. At the time this meeting was held, the Kamehameha Foundation owned approximately 250,000 acres of forestland in the Upper Peninsula. The lands were up for sale and some speculation arose that Forest Legacy Funds could be used to purchase a conservation easement for these lands to ensure that traditional uses of these lands would remain intact. Since this meeting, these lands have been sold to a timberlands investment firm located in the continental United States who will have these lands managed for the output of timber products and will allow public access. With respect to local government, no local government entity responded or commented on Michigan's AON.