

DNR Q&A on Camp Grayling proposal

DNR staff has provided answers to a variety of questions asked at the public information meeting in Grayling on June 22, 2022, and received by call or email since that meeting. Here is a summary, grouped by the topics of process, lease information, infrastructure, mapping, environment and community.

Process

Where does the DNR get authority to lease state lands? What are the statutory requirements for granting leases?

[MCL 324.503\(2\)](#) provides the department with broad authority. “The department has the power and jurisdiction over the management, control, and disposition of all land under the public domain. On behalf of the people of this state, the department may accept gifts and grants of land and other property and may buy, sell, exchange, or condemn land and other property, for any of the purposes of this part.”

Additionally, MCL 324.503(15) provides that “The department may lease lands owned or controlled by the department or may grant concessions on lands owned or controlled by the department to any person for any purpose that the department determines to be necessary to implement this part.”

A concession is limited to seven years unless there is a high capital investment; in that case, a concession can be for up to 15 years. There is no time limitation like this for leases. The requirements for leases are that the lease is for limited purposes that are spelled out in the lease and that the purpose(s) of the lease is/are determined by the Department to be necessary to implement Part 5 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.

What is the anticipated timeline?

The anticipated completion for the expansion proposal, if approved to proceed and if it passes environmental and parcel reviews, could be more than a year away. However, that estimate could be modified depending on findings during the review process.

If the land use will be low density and sporadic, why not a special use permit? Or a lease shorter than 20 years?

This was discussed prior to the creation of the short-term lease. The reason for issuing a lease is based on the amount of time it would take to review the permits annually versus one review for the entire lease period. Use permits generally are only a year in duration, a time period that would not allow the military to plan for future trainings. A shorter lease term is a possibility for consideration, should the process get that far.

What DNR resources, including monetary, personnel, infrastructure, technology, etc. would be used to execute a review of this proposal plan? Would those resources be additional to what already exists or pulled from other projects?

Should the review proceed, it would be incorporated into the plan of work for staff in each office and division that has proposed expansion lands within their respective boundaries.

What, who and when were the communications about this project begun between the Guard and DNR?

Major General Paul Rogers requested a meeting with Director Eichinger on Jan. 11, 2022, to discuss an expansion of land use agreement. Director Eichinger asked Deputy Director Shannon Lott, Forest Resources Division Chief Jeff Stampfly and Grayling Unit Manager Tom Barnes to join the meeting. Assistant FRD Chief Jason Stephens and Camp Grayling personnel also joined the meeting. This was followed by meetings with local officials. Communications staff were tasked with developing public information and to collect public comment once a formal proposal was made.

Lease information

Who is involved in annual lease reviews? Are lease reviews open to the public for comment? Will proposed leases be available for public view? Does the DNR perform annual inspections of current leased property?

Annual review meetings on lease lands are held between Camp Grayling staff and DNR staff. All DNR divisions that have short-term lease lands within their jurisdiction may participate. The annual meeting must be held in the first quarter of the calendar year and requires that known public concerns be discussed. If leases are created to accommodate the proposed expansion, they will be available for public review and a public meeting will be held to discuss them.

The DNR does not perform an annual inspection of short-term lease lands; DNR inspections would occur during the regular forest inventory process. Camp Grayling environmental staff and soldiers are required to check the training areas after the units have left the camp to make sure they have complied with the terms of the lease regarding cleanup, etc.

How much will Camp Grayling pay per acre for the lease of the property?

No money would be exchanged with the proposed lease, as it would be an agreement between two State of Michigan departments.

What is an example of “breach of agreement” by Camp Grayling that could end the agreement? Will any actions by the DNR to enforce it, declare violations and/or terminate it be made public?

A “breach of agreement” example would be any action that significantly violates the short-term lease agreement. Examples include discovery of building a permanent structure erected on short-term lease lands or developing a new impact area where live fire is directed. If there is an issue regarding short-term lease conditions, the military is responsible for fixing any issues to the satisfaction of the DNR. The DNR typically does not make announcements about leases or other agreements that the department discontinues, but it would be up to the director on a proposal of this size.

Does anyone from the DNR have financial interests in the proposal?

No.

If the proposal is approved, how much state land not under military lease will be left in the area?

The DNR will not know this number until the DNR conducts a parcel review and the military conducts a National Environmental Policy Act. Any leased lands would continue to be open for all users.

Infrastructure

Will this affect oil fields in any way?

No, the proposed expansion would not affect oil fields. If new development were sought by oil/gas companies, the military, the DNR and the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy would be involved in the process.

FAQ states that the DNR will continue to manage the land and trails going forward. What resources will be allocated to improving this system, and does the DNR hold anyone or company responsible now?

The military provides resources to maintain roads currently used under existing leases and would be expected to do the same under any expansion. The DNR holds all contract or lease-holders accountable for road damage or maintenance that occurs while using state forest roads.

Mapping

Why does the National Guard need access to the Au Sable River? It’s a small strip on the map that juts out from the main property.

The military will honor the proposed 1,500-foot buffer area between the training area and rivers and lakes. This mapping error will be corrected.

Why is the only public access road to Shupac Lake being included in this proposal? Can this area be excluded if proposed area B is approved? This beach and public access boat launch are critical to Lovells Township residents and tourism.

If the proposal advances to the review stages, there will be a full review of each parcel. Areas such as state forest campgrounds and boat launches will be removed from the expansion area map during this process.

Public access

If approved, will the new area be off limits to the public?

There will be no restrictions on public use. These lands will remain open to all users.

What happens to current trails (ORV, horse and snowmobile)? Will this limit more civilian trail expansion?

Under the proposal, all current trails will remain open to all users. This will not limit the potential for expansion of the DNR trail system. Any proposals for trail expansion will be reviewed through the normal DNR processes.

I use a side-by-side in many areas of west Crawford County/east Kalkaska County. Will I be able to do this during the summer?

The ORV status of these roads will not change if the expansion is approved. Roads currently open to ORVs will remain open and roads currently closed to ORVs will remain closed. If any forest roads are closed for a brief period of time to accommodate specific exercises, area residents and others will be notified by the military through social media and posting at access points.

Why only prohibit training during deer season? What about other activities (snowmobiles, side by sides, horseback riding, berry picking, mushrooming, fishing, grouse, small-game and bear hunting seasons?

Firearm season is very short in duration and many deer camps use the short-term lease lands for the entire length of firearm season. That is why it was singled out in the lease agreement. The DNR understands that all game seasons are important to hunters and anglers.

Environment

Will there be an environmental review? What type of review will it be? An assessment or a full impact statement?

Yes, there will be an environmental review. If the expansion proposal is approved to move forward, there will be a parcel review to address any restrictions placed on any parcels by the funding authority (such as the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund) used to purchase them.

The DNR will use the conservation viewer tool to see areas of potential conflict with unique plants, insects and animals. Also, our co-managers will be asked to provide input related to the areas of expansion. Similarly, the military will be required to conduct environmental assessments on the lands they intend to lease.

Does the 1,500 feet from rivers buffer zone apply to proximity to lakes, streams and wetlands? How was the number decided? How can the DNR protect the Au Sable watershed?

The 1,500-foot buffer pertains to all bodies of water but does not include wetlands. A few numbers were suggested during discussions with stakeholders and local river groups, and 1,500 feet was selected as a reasonable distance. This number could increase during the review process. The AuSable and Manistee rivers both have Natural River Plans, and the DNR limits proximity on any intrusive activity.

Would this proposal affect bald eagles, Kirtland's warblers or other wildlife? What plants and animals are protected/preserved by the DNR?

Wildlife concerns such as protections for sensitive species will be identified and addressed during the environmental review process. Please use the following link to view threatened and endangered species: [Resources - Michigan Natural Features Inventory \(msu.edu\)](https://www.msu.edu/resources/michigan-natural-features-inventory).

What is the impact to cattails in the area? Are cattails considered sensitive, protected or endangered? How often are the species evaluated and recategorized?

Cattails are not protected or endangered. *Typha latifolia* is our native cattail; *Typha angustifolia* and *Typha x glauca* are non-native species and are considered invasive.

Would this proposal allow more clearcutting, cutting oak, spraying and only growing pine trees?

Forest management would not change as a result of the proposed expansion. All short-term lease lands are managed within the guidelines of the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC). This dual certification assures that the state forest management meets current best practices for sustainability.

Community

What recourse will neighboring communities have if/when land use violations (e.g., excessive noise) occur? Will the expansion agreement include restrictions on frequency and level of noise? What impact will the expansion proposal have on the tourist trade?

If the expansion is approved, noise levels are expected to remain the same. The Joint Land Use Study developed by the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments addresses some of the

noise and economic impacts on the current training areas. Here is a link to the JLUS document:
[Joint Land Use Study - Northeast Michigan JLUS \(nemimilitarycommunity.org\)](http://nemimilitarycommunity.org)

Has any analysis been done regarding the economic impact of the expansion on nearby towns and homes?

The [Joint Land Use Study](http://nemimilitarycommunity.org) contains some information on the overall impact to the economy and notes property values as a concern.