

The Northwest Lower Peninsula Forest Legacy Area

The Northwest Lower Peninsula FLA includes all the land (including islands) in the following counties:

ANTRIM, BENZIE, CHARLEVOIX, CLARE, EMMET, GRAND TRAVERSE, KALKASKA, LAKE, LEELANAU, MANISTEE, MASON, MECOSTA, MISSAUKEE, MONTCALM, NEWAYGO, OCEANA, OSCEOLA, AND WEXFORD.

Somewhat larger, at 6.3 million acres, than the Northeast Lower Peninsula, this FLA is 63% forested and is less than 25% in public ownership (**Map 16**). It is less dependent on forests and wildlands than the previous two FLA's, though many counties do produce significant sawlogs or pulpwood. Significant groundwater recharge areas occur throughout the FLA, and there are many scenic forest areas. Of the forested land, less is in private ownership than in the UP or the northeast Lower Peninsula, but there is greater development pressure on the private forests.

Public Benefits

The public will benefit from the FLP through buffering of public lands from incompatible land uses. Areas around Grand Traverse and Little Traverse Bay are among the fastest-growing in the State, and property that borders public land is sought after for development. In addition, the hills and ground-water fed lakes that are among the most attractive features of this FLA will benefit from protection of forests in groundwater recharge areas.

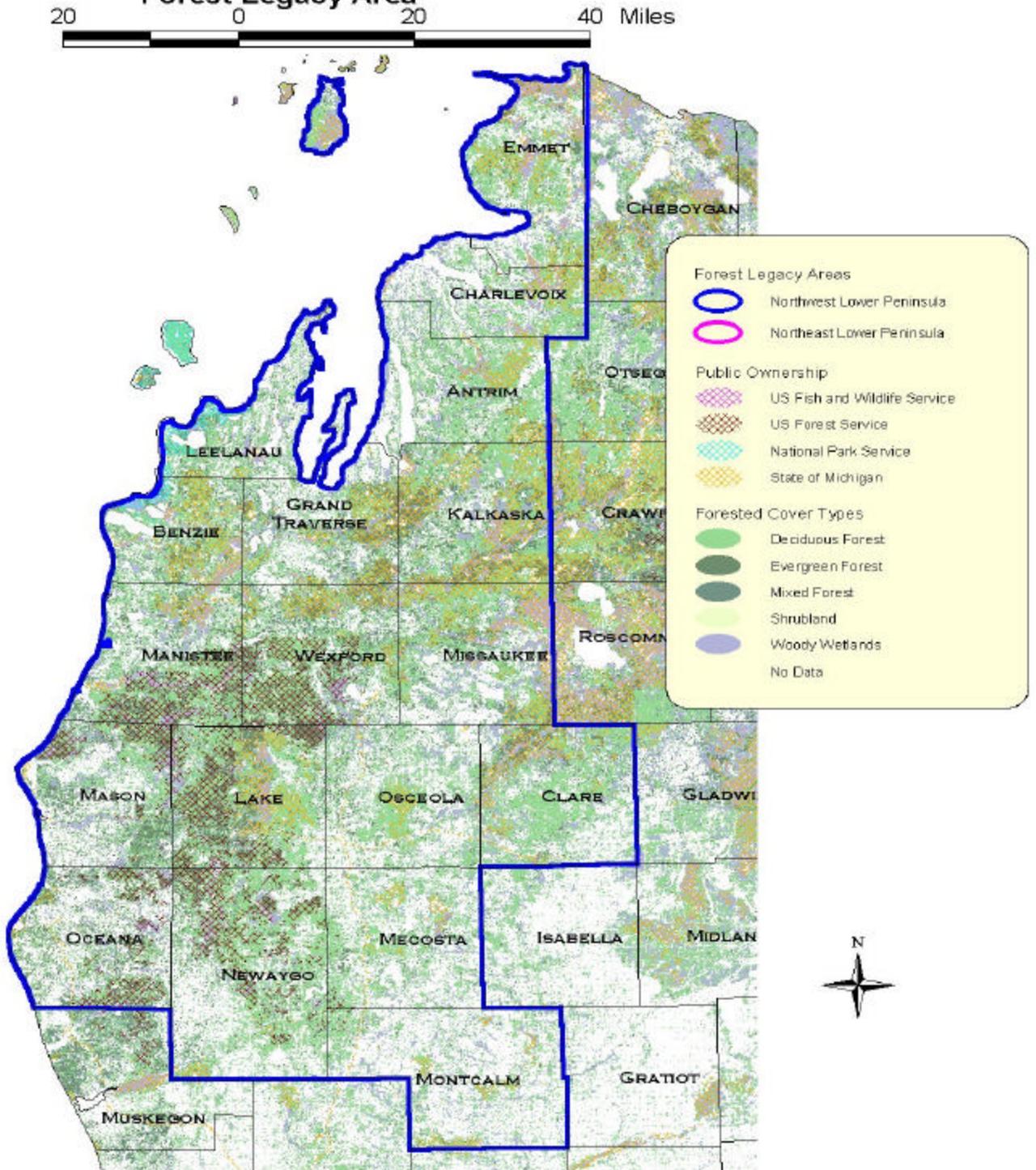
The features of Northwest Lower Peninsula forests that could benefit from the Forest Legacy Program include:

- Rare natural communities and rare and declining species
- Forest and wildland-dependent economies
- Significantly productive forests
- Groundwater recharge areas
- 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.

Northwest Lower Peninsula Proposed Forest Legacy Area



Map 16. Public ownership and forest cover in the Northwest Lower Peninsula proposed Forest Legacy Area.

The Northwest Lower Peninsula Forest Legacy Areas meets the Eligibility Criteria in the following ways:

1. 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.
2. The Northwest Lower Peninsula FLA is considered by many of Michigan's residents to be the most desirable area of the State, given its hilly topography, its many scenic vistas along its coastline, quaint villages, access to cultural and urban amenities and the relative ease of access via the county and state highway system.
3. Given Michigan's current tax laws to tax lands for their highest potential use, tax assessments per acre for forestlands adjacent to developed areas will increase, increasing the tax burden for forest landowners, making sale of said lands more likely due to inability to pay future taxes.
4. The above will result in increased fragmentation of forestlands and a decrease in the amount of land available for traditional forest uses as well as negatively impacting habitat for threatened and endangered species.
5. Important public values provided by the Northwest Lower Peninsula Legacy Area include:
 - a) **Scenic resources and public recreation opportunities** – The Lake Michigan shoreline in this FLA attracts millions of visitors each year. In addition to the beautiful sunsets, tourists are drawn to the over two hundred of miles of sand dunes lining the coast. The Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore, located on the shores of Benzie and Leelanau County draws thousands of visitors per year as it has some of the highest quality freshwater dune systems in the world.
 - b) **Habitat for known rare, threatened and endangered species** - The piping plover is federally listed as endangered that uses this FLA as nesting habitat. The Hungerford's water beetle, federally listed as endangered requires undisturbed forested stream habitat to survive. Threatened and endangered plants that are found in the forests in this FLA include Houghton's goldenrod and Michigan monkey flower
 - c) **Fish and wildlife habitat** - This FLA contains over 300 miles of Blue Ribbon Trout Streams as designated the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Its forests provide habitat for a wide variety of mammals including white-tailed deer, bear, coyote and bobcat.
 - d) **Traditional forest uses** – The role of the forests industry is not as significant to this FLA as it is to the NELP and UP FLAs. Forest based tourism is perhaps a larger contributor to the local economies of this FLA. Residents of the Chicago and Detroit metropolitan areas, representing over 13 million people, are frequent visitors to this area. Its mixture of northern hardwoods and northern pine forests located on its steep morainal topography attract numerous tourists seeking to hike

and camp throughout this FLA. Portions of privately held forested area within this FLA are under strong development pressures and loss of these forests would hurt the tourist based economy. This area is also popular with Michigan's residents for its cold water stream and lakes which provide for a wide variety of fishing and boating experiences.

Public Involvement and Concerns

With respect to this FLA, one meeting was held in Gaylord, Michigan. Gaylord is centrally located between the Northeast and Northwest Lower Peninsula FLA's. Only one person attended this meeting, and expressed no specific concerns regarding the Northwest LP FLA. Local governments within this FLA were contacted. However, no local units of government provided any comments regarding Michigan's AON.