

## The Southwest Lower Peninsula Forest Legacy Area

The Southwest Lower Peninsula FLA includes all the lands in the municipalities listed below.

**Table 5.** Local units of government included in the Southwest Lower Peninsula FLA.

### MUSKEGON COUNTY

BLUE LAKE TOWNSHIP  
CEDAR CREEK TOWNSHIP  
DALTON TOWNSHIP  
EGELSTON TOWNSHIP  
FRUITLAND TOWNSHIP  
FRUITPORT TOWNSHIP  
HOLTON TOWNSHIP  
LAKETON TOWNSHIP  
MONTAGUE CITY  
MONTAGUE TOWNSHIP  
MUSKEGON CITY  
MUSKEGON HEIGHTS CITY  
MUSKEGON TOWNSHIP  
NORTH MUSKEGON CITY  
NORTON SHORES CITY  
ROOSEVELT PARK CITY  
SULLIVAN TOWNSHIP  
WHITEHALL CITY  
WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP  
WHITE RIVER TOWNSHIP

### OTTAWA COUNTY

CROCKERY TOWNSHIP  
FERRYSBURG CITY  
GRAND HAVEN TOWNSHIP  
GRAND HAVEN CITY  
HOLLAND CITY  
HOLLAND TOWNSHIP  
OLIVE TOWNSHIP  
PARK TOWNSHIP  
PORT SHELDON  
TOWNSHIP  
ROBINSON TOWNSHIP  
SPRING LAKE TOWNSHIP

### ALLEGAN COUNTY

ALLEGAN CITY  
ALLEGAN TOWNSHIP  
CASCO TOWNSHIP  
CHESHIRE TOWNSHIP  
CLYDE TOWNSHIP  
FENNVILLE CITY  
FILLMORE TOWNSHIP  
GANGES TOWNSHIP  
GUNPLAIN TOWNSHIP  
HEATH TOWNSHIP  
HOLLAND CITY

LAKETOWN TOWNSHIP  
LEE TOWNSHIP  
LEIGHTON TOWNSHIP  
MANLIUS TOWNSHIP  
MARTIN TOWNSHIP  
MONTEREY TOWNSHIP  
OTSEGO CITY  
OTSEGO TOWNSHIP  
OVERISEL TOWNSHIP  
PLAINWELL CITY  
SAUGATUCK TOWNSHIP  
SAUGATUCK CITY  
TROWBRIDGE TOWNSHIP  
VALLEY TOWNSHIP  
WAYLAND TOWNSHIP

### BARRY COUNTY

ASSYRIA TOWNSHIP  
BALTIMORE TOWNSHIP  
BARRY TOWNSHIP  
HASTINGS CITY  
HASTINGS TOWNSHIP  
HOPE TOWNSHIP  
IRVING TOWNSHIP  
JOHNSTOWN TOWNSHIP  
ORANGEVILLE TOWNSHIP  
PRAIREVILLE TOWNSHIP  
RUTLAND TOWNSHIP  
THORNAPPLE TOWNSHIP  
YANKEE SPRINGS  
TOWNSHIP

### EATON COUNTY

BELLEVUE TOWNSHIP

### CALHOUN COUNTY

CONVIS TOWNSHIP  
PENNFIELD TOWNSHIP

### KALAMAZOO COUNTY

ALAMO TOWNSHIP  
COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP  
COOPER TOWNSHIP  
KALAMAZOO CITY  
KALAMAZOO TOWNSHIP  
OSHTEMO TOWNSHIP  
PARCHMENT CITY

PORTAGE CITY  
PRAIRIE RONDE  
TOWNSHIP  
RICHLAND TOWNSHIP  
SCHOOLCRAFT  
TOWNSHIP  
TEXAS TOWNSHIP

### VAN BUREN COUNTY

ALMENA TOWNSHIP  
ANTWERP TOWNSHIP  
ARLINGTON TOWNSHIP  
BANGOR CITY  
BANGOR TOWNSHIP  
BLOOMINGDALE  
TOWNSHIP  
COLUMBIA TOWNSHIP  
COVERT TOWNSHIP  
GENEVA TOWNSHIP  
GOBLES CITY  
HARTFORD CITY  
HARTFORD TOWNSHIP  
LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP  
PAW PAW TOWNSHIP  
PINE GROVE TOWNSHIP  
PORTER TOWNSHIP  
SOUTH HAVEN TOWNSHIP  
WAVERLY TOWNSHIP

### BERRIEN COUNTY

BENTON HARBOR CITY  
BENTON TOWNSHIP  
BRIDGMAN CITY  
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP  
COLOMA CITY  
COLOMA TOWNSHIP  
HAGAR TOWNSHIP  
LAKE TOWNSHIP  
LINCOLN TOWNSHIP  
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP  
ST. JOSEPH TOWNSHIP  
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP  
WATERVLIT TOWNSHIP  
WATERVLIT CITY

**CASS COUNTY**

DOWAGIAC CITY

LA GRANGE TOWNSHIP

MARCELLUS TOWNSHIP

NEWBERG TOWNSHIP

PENN TOWNSHIP

POKAGON TOWNSHIP

PORTER TOWNSHIP

SILVER CREEK TOWNSHIP

VOLINIA TOWNSHIP

WAYNE TOWNSHIP

**ST. JOSEPH COUNTY**

FABIUS TOWNSHIP

FLOWERFIELD TOWNSHIP

MOTTVILLE TOWNSHIP

PARK TOWNSHIP

WHITE PIGEON TOWNSHIP

This FLA is nearly two million acres and is roughly 38% forested (**Map17**). Much of the forested area is in the two largest public areas, Allegan State Game Area and Barry State Game Area. There are private forests around both of these State-owned areas, as well as forests clustered along the shore. Many of the near-shore forests are on old dunes and are not only visually pleasing, but are important natural communities as well. Allegan and Barry Counties produce large volumes of sawlogs, though none of the counties are economically dependent on forests and wildlands. Portions of the FLA are important for rare communities and species, and some is within a groundwater recharge zone. Development pressure is relatively high.

## **Public Benefits**

Public lands could benefit from additional buffering through the FLP in this Forest Legacy Area. In addition, scenic forests along the coast of Lake Michigan could be protected from development pressure and migratory stopover sites along the corridors of the Galien and Paw Paw Rivers could be shielded from fragmentation. The few large (over 1,000 acres) private forests that remain could be protected from fragmentation and remain accessible for traditional forest uses.

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

- Rare natural communities and rare and declining species
- Significantly productive forests
- Groundwater recharge areas
- Scenic forests

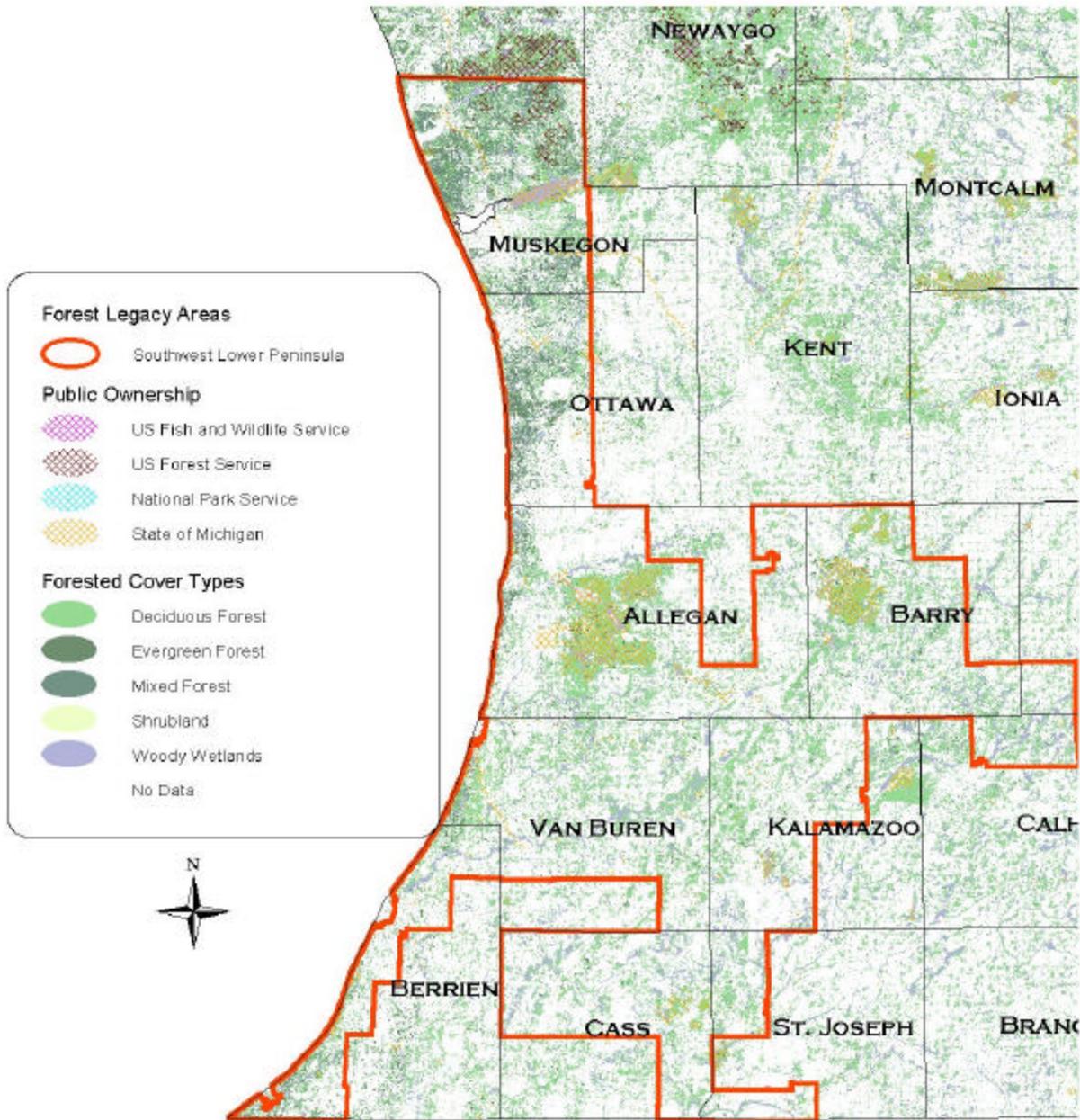
## **Analysis: Meeting Eligibility Criteria**

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 Southwest 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 Southwest Lower Peninsula FLA is relatively close to the metropolitan Chicago area. Like the Northwest Lower Peninsula FLA, it too has an abundance of hill, morainal topography, many scenic vistas along its coastline, quaint villages, its residents have relative ease of access to cultural and urban amenities and ease of access via the county and state highway system.

## Southwest Lower Peninsula Proposed Forest Legacy Area



Map 17. Public ownership and forest cover in the Southwest Lower Peninsula proposed Forest Legacy Area.

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, public access as well as negatively impacting habitat for threatened and endangered species.
5. Important public values provided by the Southwest Peninsula Legacy Area include:
  - a) **Scenic resources and public recreation opportunities** – Like the Northwest Lower Peninsula Legacy Area, the shoreline of Lake Michigan attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and has over 100 hundred miles of sand dunes lining its coast. The majority of this FLA and its dunes are within 2-3 hours drive from the 8 million residents of the Chicago metropolitan area.
  - b) **Habitat for known rare, threatened and endangered species** - Within this FLA is the primary habitat for two species of butterfly federally listed as endangered. These species are the Karner Blue and the Mitchell's satyr butterfly. Key to maintenance Karner Blue habitat are conservation of areas typically referred to as oak savannas and oak barrens within this FLA.
  - c) **Traditional Forest Uses** – The combination of good soils and relatively mild climate provide for an optimal environmental for the growth of veneer quality hardwood from prized hardwood species such as black walnut, black cherry, red oak and tulip poplar. Much of the area within or adjacent to this FLA is considered to have the highest amount board feet of veneer quality hardwoods (with the exception of sugar maple) in Michigan. Like the previous FLAs, conservation and protection of private forest lands will help ensure forest-based recreation including hunting, fishing, hiking and power watercraft based recreation. Portions of privately held forested area within this FLA are under strong development pressures and loss of these forests and public access would diminish tourism, various recreational activities and the production of high quality forest products.
  - d) **Other ecological values** – This FLA has over 25,000 acres of high quality coastal dune area as well as having portions designated as having a ecologically significant density of globally imperiled plants and animals

## Public Involvement and Concerns

One meeting was held Kalamazoo, Michigan. Only one person attended this meeting. This person expressed two concerns: 1) this program should strive to have language permitting public access in the majority of conservation easements given that local businesses rely on direct and indirect revenue accrued from persons hunting on privately owned forestlands with the Southwest Lower Peninsula FLA, and 2) escalating property taxes on forestland are a particular threat to conserving environmentally sensitive forests in the Southern Lower Peninsula. Local governments within this FLA were contacted. However, no local units of government provided any comments regarding Michigan's AON.