

The Northeast Lower Peninsula Forest Legacy Area

The Northeast Lower Peninsula FLA includes all lands (islands too) in the following counties:

ALCONA, ALPENA, ARENAC, CHEBOYGAN, CRAWFORD, IOSCO, MONTMORENCY, OGEMAW, OSCODA, OTSEGO, PRESQUE ISLE, AND ROSCOMMON.

Of the roughly 4.5 million acres in this proposed FLA, over 75% percent is forested (**Map 15**). Like the Upper Peninsula, nearly 40% of the land is in public ownership, yet large forested areas exist in private ownership. Many of the features are also similar to those of the UP, with the exception of the wide-ranging species. The counties of this area also produce large volumes of sawlogs or timber and are, in many cases, economically dependent on forests and wildlands. Also, this FLA contains a large and important groundwater recharge zone in the Grayling Outwash Plain regional landscape ecosystem. There is greater pressure from development in this FLA than in the UP.

Public Benefits

Public benefits that would derive from implementation of the FLP in this FLA include buffering of public lands and protection of groundwater recharge areas that feed the many streams and lakes in the area. Continued or even increased public access to private forests could result in improved opportunities for recreationists as well.

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

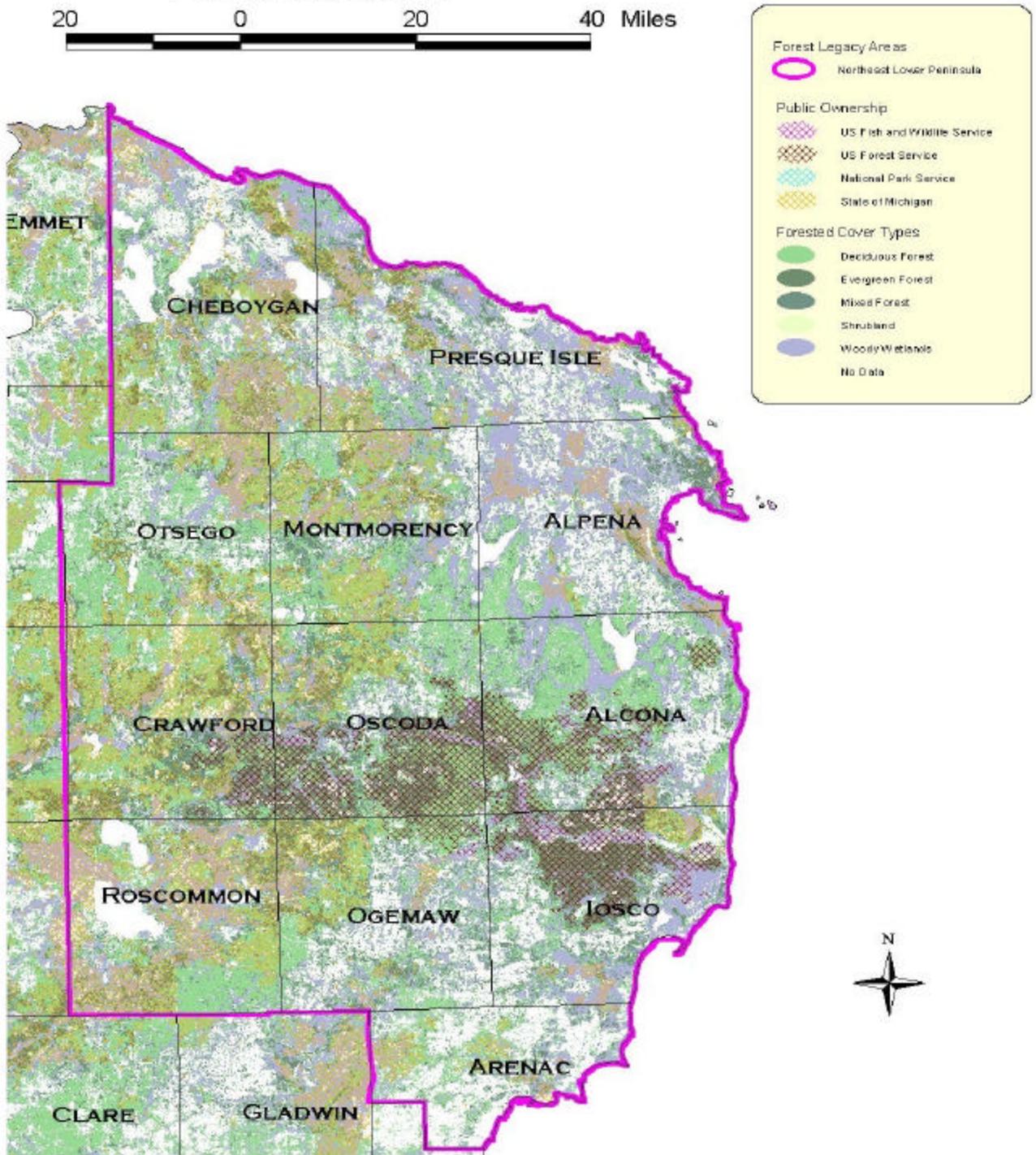
- Rare natural communities and rare and declining species
- Other important wildlife habitat (elk herd and neotropical migratory birds)
- Forest and wildland-dependent economies
- Significantly productive forests
- Groundwater recharge areas
- Scenic forests

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.

Northeast Lower Peninsula Proposed Forest Legacy Area

20 0 20 40 Miles



Map 15. Public ownership and forest in the Northeast Lower Peninsula proposed Forest Legacy Area

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

1. 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.
2. 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 forestland owners, making sale of said lands more likely due to inability to pay future taxes.
3. The Michigan Department of Transportation has and is considering expanding the primary coastal highway, M-23, from two to four lanes. Should this occur, this will increase tourism, second home and commercial development.
4. 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.
5. Important public values provided by the Northeast Lower Peninsula Legacy Area include:
 - a) **Scenic resources and public recreation opportunities** - In addition to over one hundred miles of Lake Huron shoreline, the NELP FLA contains many miles of roads designated as part of Michigan's major fall color tour network.
 - b) **Habitat for known rare, threatened and endangered species** - It is within this FLA that the primary breeding habitat for the endangered Kirtland's warbler exists. The Kirtland's warbler was the first specie to have a recovery plan developed for it under the auspices of the federal Endangered Species Act. The piping plover is another bird federally listed as endangered that uses this FLA as nesting habitat. Threatened and endangered plants include Houghton's goldenrod, Michigan monkey flower and the dwarf lake iris.
 - c) **Fish and wildlife habitat** - In an area known the Pigeon River Country State Forest (located in southeast Cheboygan and northeast Otsego counties), approximately 1000 elk make their home. These are the only elk in Michigan and were originally brought in from the Rocky Mountains in 1917 as elk native to Michigan were extirpated in the 19th century. In addition, this FLA contains over 300 miles of Blue Ribbon Trout Streams as designated the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
 - d) **Traditional Forest Uses** – The harvesting of timber and the forest products industry contribute significantly to the economy in this FLA. Within this FLA two international forest product corporations operate large plants for the production oriented-strand board and particleboard

and rely heavily on wood products harvested from privately owned forest lands within this FLA. 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 (LP) FLA's. Only one person attended this meeting. This person expressed no concerns regarding the Northeast LP FLA. No local units of governments provided any comments regarding Michigan's AON.