



KIRTLANDS WARBLER...

LAND PROTECTION
PLAN

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KIRTLAND'S WARBLER WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

I. PROBLEM/NEED

Decline in the population of Kirtland's Warblers from approximately 1,000 birds in 1961 to about 400 birds at the present resulted in the species being placed on the Federal endangered species list. The population has not decreased across its entire nesting range, but collapsed into the center of its range where nesting continues at normal density. This fact coupled with habitat studies done in these areas indicate that suitable nesting habitat is the key to the survival of the Kirtland's Warblers. If creation of suitable nesting habitat does not continue in the future, the population will decline to extinction.

Kirtland's Warbler habitat management can be divided into short-term (next seven years) or emergency objectives and into long-term (beyond seven years) objectives. The short-term objectives are to maintain, improve and expand areas that are now providing or have the potential to provide suitable nesting habitat during the critical period between now and 1986. Hopefully, this emergency effort will help to arrest the downward slide of the population and even provide for some immediate improvement. The long-term objective is to generate new Kirtland's Warbler nesting habitat that will eventually provide for a minimum of 1,000 pairs on a sustained basis.

Authority for this action is the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 884).

II. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this project is to protect lands inhabited by or suitable for Kirtland's Warblers. These tracts are inholdings which limit or restrict habitat management on larger tracts already in public ownership.

Kirtland's Warblers require highly specific breeding habitats. Nearly all nests are found on jack pine stands 5 to 20 feet in height (8-21 years old) which have resulted from forest fire. Habitat consists of jack pine thickets interspersed with small openings. Tracts should be 80 acres or preferably larger to attract the warblers.

The habitats are generally limited to a specific soil type, Grayling sand. Grayling sand is low in fertility and supports sparse ground cover beneath the jack pine stands.

The Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan states that between 36,000 and 40,000 acres of habitat are necessary to maintain a self-sustaining population of 1,000 pairs. To maintain this designated habitat acreage, the recovery plan recommends that 135,000 acres be managed on a rotational basis. The U.S. Forest Service has designated 54,640 acres and the State of Michigan 71,665 acres to be managed for the Kirtland's Warbler. Another 4,500 acres have been identified for protection by federal acquisition of privately owned inholdings in the State Forest.

Management consists of providing on a rotational basis the distinctive breeding habitat through cutting and burning tracts of jack pine on public land. Private inholdings limit these intensive management techniques. Prescribed burning and cutting is necessary to insure sufficient nesting habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler.

The protection and management of these lands are identified and described in the "Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan," the "Management Plan for Kirtland's Warbler Habitat in Michigan," and the "Regional Resource Plan." Copies of these documents are on file and available for inspection in the Region 3 Office of Endangered Species.



