

MAY 29 1991



**Sierra Club
Mackinac Chapter**

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Lansing, Michigan 48933

GARY BOUSHELLE

May 28, 1991

The Honorable Tom Hickner
State House of Representatives
Lansing, MI 48913

Dear Representative Hickner:

Thank you for allowing us to have input into the proposed resolution regarding the Kirtland Warbler. I have reviewed the draft resolution language and discussed it briefly with several other environmental leaders. Quite simply there is significant concern about such a resolution and the effect it might have on critical protection efforts for a range of species in Michigan.

Certainly, there is understandable concern expressed by a number of residents of the areas affected by management for the Kirtland's Warbler. Management practices necessary for sustaining the Kirtland's Warbler and its entire ecosystem are often not aesthetically pleasing, and seem to go counter to the desire for an attractive forest. However, the practices used are an attempt to replicate the natural processes which occurred prior to the growth in human settlement in that area of our state. Naturally caused fires apparently kept the forests in a not too dissimilar state to the current managed condition.

While the focus of the management is to provide for the Kirtland's Warbler because of its endangered species status, as is usually the case this bird is merely one part of a complex ecosystem. Several other creatures, specifically birds and insects, in the ecosystem being sustained through management for the warbler are also threatened. These creatures would also suffer from a loss of current management. One of the side effects of endangered species management is the focus on the target species without a clear understanding that this species is merely an indicator for an endangered ecosystem.

The resolution discusses the occurrence of Kirtland's Warblers in other areas. The ornithologist I talked with indicated that the birds found elsewhere have so far been single males, and no breeding pairs have been found anywhere other than in Michigan. While the distribution in other states is obviously a good sign, there is historically no reason to believe the birds will actually breed elsewhere. Our state has the distinction of being the only place known to be a breeding ground for this bird, and until it is shown that other areas might sustain reproduction of the Kirtland's Warbler we cannot afford to

rely on other areas.

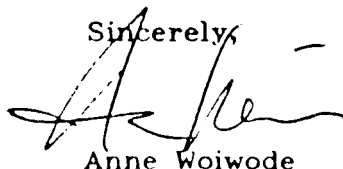
The issues above deal with the specifics relating to the Kirtland's Warbler, but there is a much bigger issue at stake here. Our nation during the last 20 years has begun to recognize that the protection of our native biodiversity is critical to protection of our environment everywhere. One of my favorite phrases capturing this concept is from Aldo Leopold. He said that "the first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts." The Endangered Species Act was the first critical step toward that end. Kirtland's Warbler management is based on the premise that we must "save all the parts" in order to have even the remotest chance of retaining or rebuilding natural systems critical to our own survival.

At the same time, the management plan for the Kirtland's Warbler is in fact revisited on a regular basis to see how it is working and what changes should be made. The opportunity exists for input by any interested people, and I hope that those who are concerned will become a part of that planning process. Even if changes should be made, however, I am particularly concerned about the recommendation that all management be halted. We know that the Kirtland's Warbler and the other species which make up their ecosystem are in fact increasing under current management. It would be unconscionable to halt such actions without a clear scientific basis.

This is not an easy issue to deal with because it goes against our perception of nature as always attractive and human intervention as generally ugly. But just as we are increasingly concerned about protecting the diversity and individuality of humans, we must recognize that natural systems may sometimes differ from our idea of a pleasing landscape. However, that system is no less valuable to our environment as a result.

Thanks again for the opportunity to comment. I hope these thoughts were useful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Woiwode', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anne Woiwode