

Michigan D.N.R.
Wildlife Division

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over the past 14 years has acquired 6,534 acres of land on a total of 118 tracts throughout eight counties in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan, primarily for Kirtland's warbler management. The land, referred to as Kirtland's warbler Wildlife Management Area's (KWWMA) is located within or adjacent to Michigan Department of Natural Resources State Forest Kirtland's Warbler Management Units.

These scattered parcels create a logistical problem in managing for Kirtland's warblers. They require large blocks of jack pine regeneration to establish their nesting territories. The minimum size block is at least 80 acres, with preferred blocks being 320 acres or more.

In conjunction with this, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing a land exchange with the State of Michigan to consolidate the scattered parcels into five Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Areas within four counties in the northern lower peninsula of Michigan.

The following factors were incorporated into the decision process of the proposed land exchange.

- A) Four core counties were selected for the Warbler Management Areas, with one unit proposed for each county. (Crawford County has two proposed areas, but since they are less than 1 mile apart for all practical purposes they are considered as one).

- B) In choosing the 4 counties, the consolidated acreage remained close to the original acreage preventing large shifts in tax sharing revenues, and also eliminated the perception of creating a National Wildlife Refuge in the core of Michigan's most popular big and small game hunting area.

- C) The proposed Warbler Management Areas are on or near the edge of the established MDNR State Forest Kirtland's Warbler Management Units. This feature will allow the FWS to actively manage the lands for jack pine regeneration in conjunction with the MDNR Wildlife Division, while reducing the impact of having scattered tracts throughout the MDNR units.

- D) The areas selected represented a wide range of age classes and species. Considerable thought was incorporated into proposing a fair exchange, not taking the best plantations or most mature timber stands. The exchange will provide the FWS with the opportunity to manage larger acreage, possibly with alternative regeneration methods, with the main goal being increased warbler nesting habitat.

Table 1 shows an overall acreage breakdown on a county by county basis. Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the actual acres to be exchanged by the MDNR to the Fish and Wildlife Service. All existing FWS land outside the proposed Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Areas would become state lands. There would still be minor amounts of private land within the proposed areas, but in the future, may eventually be purchased by the FWS.

Also, enclosed with this proposal is a copy of the Environmental Assessment for Habitat Management on Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Areas, and various maps indicating locations of the proposed land exchanges.