



The Forest Legacy Areas

1. The Northern Forest Legacy Area. Although this area includes much of the northern part of the state, measured against Wisconsin's criteria, the forestland here meets the definitions of environmentally important and threatened. As shown in Map 2, it includes tribal lands, industrial forest blocks, federal (Nicolet), state and county forest blocks. Appendix B contains a list of all the counties and townships contained within this area. This region offers the full array of northern forest species and communities north of the tension zone. The lake shore supports unique communities and species; the rich interior supports mixed northern hardwoods, while the sandier western portions are prime habitat for pine and oak. Within this area the following forest communities can be found: Northern wet forest, northern mesic forest, boreal forest, northern dry mesic forest, northern dry forest, and pine barrens.

This area meets all the federal and state criteria plus the additional criteria developed by the FLP Sub-committee. Purchases in this area could tie together significant portions of public and private land. It also meets the criteria of being under threat of conversion, contains regionally and globally important habitat, a diversity of communities, and supports a vast array of species including interior forest birds.

The large acreages of Managed Forest Law (MFL) land contained in this area, both industrial and non-industrial, are under tremendous development pressure for homes and recreation in this portion of the state. But this is only a 25 – 50 year agreement. Once the land is subdivided and developed it is no longer eligible for this program.

Map 3 is based on recent USDA Forest Service data and shows the predominance of second homes in this region. The forest and predominance of lakes and streams recreates an attractive vacation home setting. Many large landowners are feeling pressured to sell parts of their larger blocks as they get taxed at increasingly higher rates.

As mentioned in the section on Wisconsin's forests, pine barrens are globally rare. The northwest portion of this FLA contains the greatest concentration of this ecosystem anywhere as well as some unique indicator species including 15 herpetile species considered to be at the northern, northeastern, or northwestern fringe of their habitat. Other pine barren restoration opportunities occur with the FLA as well in Oneida, Lincoln, Florence, Marinette, Oconto, and Menominee counties (See Map 4). Research shows that landscape scale management and maintenance of connections is critical to maintaining and restoring this community (Borgerding, et al. 1995).

This area is also part of the largest bird-breeding center in the U.S. The large forests of this region have been listed as important habitat for breeding song-bird populations while the numerous lakes provide important habitat for bald eagles, ospreys, and common loons (Albert, 1994). The State and National Forest lands within the boundaries are managed for both large mammals and migratory songbirds.

Public support for the FLP in this region came from the Northern Rivers Initiative, local planning and zoning officials and individual landowners responding. It is consistent with areas identified as important by the public in two other forest assessment processes, the Forest Land Legacy study and the state Forest Assessment.

Since this is a large area, the Forest Legacy Program will identify and activate smaller areas within this large FLA based on targeting efforts by the State, opportunities (large industrial holdings being put up for sale) and local interest. Activation will only occur in areas where public and local DNR support is strong. Government entities which may have management responsibilities include the county forests and the State Natural Areas. Non-government agencies such as The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, The Northern Rivers Initiative, the Northern Initiatives, the Northern Governor's Council on Natural Resources, local Society of American Foresters chapters, Trout Unlimited, and forest industry, may share in the monitoring activities depending on the tract.

Values of central interest for protection within this area include rare habitats or communities, productive timber lands, non-developed recreational opportunities, cultural resources, and establishing corridors or connections of forest where fragmentation is beginning to occur.