



Interim Forest Management Plan

Property Identifiers

Property Name and Designation
Chief River Wildlife Area
County: **Sawyer**

Property Acreage: 1183 acres

Forestry Property Code(s): 5887

Master Plan Date: 1986

Part 1: Property Assessment

General Property Description

- Landscape and regional context

This property is located within the North Central Forest Ecological Landscape, and is associated with the Chequamegon Washed Till and Outwash (212Xa03) Land Type Association (LTA). The local landscape is predominately forested with large public ownerships nearby, such as the Chequamegon National Forest and Sawyer County Forest. Several large, developed lakes dominate the area, including Round, Spider, Teal and Lost Land. The Chief River and other tributaries all drain to the nearby Chippewa River system.

There are no Conservation Opportunity Areas associated with Chief River Wildlife Area. A Wisconsin Important Bird Area occurs just to the east of the property on Forest Service land and is designated because of its importance to forest-interior bird species.

- History of land use and past management
The Chief River Wildlife area was acquired during the late '40's and early 50's with the last purchase being made in 1952. A limited network of roads was constructed in 1954 and two easements were granted to improve access at no cost to the state. Originally, the property was intended to be managed as a deer yard, and much early work on browse management techniques in Wisconsin was done there. Initial attempts to produce quality browse were considered successful, but experiments that followed proved too costly to continue. Two deer exclosures were constructed on the property but have not been maintained since the early 80's. The boat landing and parking area were constructed in 1968 and 1969 which provides access to the Chief River as well as Mud and Callahan Lakes. A fisheries survey was conducted on the Chief River in 2003 just north of the property and produced a mixed bag of river minnows, lake minnows and game species including musky. Currently the property is managed for Hunting, hiking, trapping wildlife viewing, fishing, birding, berry picking, canoeing and snowmobiling on designated trails. Break-your-own-trail cross country skiing and snowshoeing are also popular activities on the property.

Site Specifics

- Current forest types, size classes and successional stages



Interim Forest Management Plan

*Aspen (45%) – 427 acres – 3% in the 6-10 year age class, 10% in the 11-15 year age class, 28% in the 16-20 year age class, 14% in the 21-25 year age class, 40% in the 31-35 year age class, 2% 86-90 in the year age class.

*White Birch (2%) – 23 acres – 48% in the 6-10 year age class, 52% in the 11-15 year age class.

*Hemlock (2%) – 20 acres – Unknown age class

*Northern Hardwoods (24%) – 231 acres uneven aged stands

*Black spruce (4%) - 50% in the 81-85 year age class, 50% in the 101-105 year age class.

*Swamp Conifer (14%) – 100% in the 126-130 year age class.

*Swamp Hardwoods (9%) – 86 acres – 84% in the 61-65 year age class, 16% in the 106-110 year age class.

- State Natural Area designations
No SNA designations are found on this property.
- High Value Conservation Forests (HCVF) or other resources/natural community types limited in the landscape

Hardwood and hemlock-hardwood stands in older age classes are currently under-represented in the area, generally.

- Biotic Inventory status
- Biotic Inventory has not taken place on the property
- Deferral/consultation area designations
- There are no Deferral or Consultation Sites present on the property
- Rare species

The NHI database lists two aquatic species as occurring within the Chief River from inside the boundaries of the property. There are records of nesting bald eagles from the property, although eagles are not known to be nesting there currently.

An NHI screening will be conducted prior to all future management activities.

- Invasive species - spotted knapweed
- Soils – From the LTA description:
Well drained loamy and sandy soils with a sandy loam surface over non-calcareous loamy sand till, along with very poorly drained nonacid organic soils.

Cultural and Recreational Considerations

- Cultural and archeological sites (including tribal sites)



Interim Forest Management Plan

Part 2: IFMP Components

Management Objectives:

Aspen

The primary objective is to regenerate this type using even-age management methods to the extent possible for the benefit of game and non-game wildlife. Age class diversity will be maintained, and green tree retention practices will be observed as appropriate. Efforts will be made to allow succession to northern hardwoods within a 150' riparian zone adjacent to the Chief River.

White Birch

The two young birch stands will be managed using even aged techniques. These stands may be considered a seed source to promote white birch regeneration. Aesthetic value will be taken into account at time of harvest, and green tree retention practices will be observed as appropriate.

Hemlock

Passive management will be practiced and aesthetic value will be considered to increase diversity.

Northern Hardwoods

Stands will be regenerated utilizing uneven or even aged management techniques to increase wildlife values, nesting and cavity trees, and species diversity. Special attention will be paid to mast producing trees.

Black Spruce

Provide bedding and nesting cover for wildlife. Manage through even aged processes.

Swamp Conifer

Provide bedding and nesting cover, as well as cavity trees for wildlife. Even and uneven aged techniques will be used.

Property Prescriptions

The DNR Silvicultural Handbook and this IFMP will be the primary guiding documents resource managers will utilize to determine objectives and prescriptions for individual stands within the property. A wide host of additional resources including, but not limited to, the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan, Wisconsin Best Management Practices for Water Quality, and the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory, Historical and Archeological Inventory will be utilized on a regular basis to plan for the management of individual stands, as well as the property as a whole. The prescriptions listed below are guidance for future management, but will not preclude utilization of other appropriate commonly accepted forestry management prescriptions that will enhance the goals and objectives for this property.

Aspen/White Birch

Aspen stands will primarily be harvested through even-aged coppice regeneration cuts. Larger stands will be divided to increase age class diversity and edge cover. Green tree retention will be practiced in this stands while also focusing on snag and den/cavity tree retention. Concentrate retention near and between ephemeral ponds. Retain all large pine and oak, and protect areas of advanced regeneration of these species. Routinely, all non-merchantable trees greater than 1" will be felled to encourage aspen regeneration. A 150' riparian management zone will be created along the Chief River to succeed to conifer or northern hardwoods to discourage beaver activity and protect the watershed. Aesthetic value of white birch and potential seed source will be considered for future white birch regeneration in adjacent stands at time of harvest.



Interim Forest Management Plan

Hemlock

Passive management and will be favored as retention trees in mixed stands. Aesthetic value will be considered with a focus on old growth individuals.

Northern Hardwoods

Northern hardwood stands will generally be managed by uneven-aged selection (single tree or group selection) harvests to encourage long term multi-aged diversity. Gaps will be created to encourage age class diversity and edge cover. Promote oak, yellow birch and hemlock where opportunities exist. Snags, cavity trees, and other trees that have special value to wildlife will be retained.

Swamp Hardwoods Management of swamp hardwood stands will be implemented according to a variety of methods as described in the DNR Silvicultural Handbook, with the primary goal being to enhance wildlife habitat. Focus will be given to retaining den/cavity trees and other individual trees of high value to wildlife. Harvest will take place under frozen ground conditions only.

Fir/Spruce/Tamarack/Black Spruce

Even-aged management techniques will be used to manage these stands under frozen ground conditions only. These stands are extremely valuable to the property due to increased diversity and cover for wildlife, and the wide range of understory shrubs and plants found here.

Approvals:

Regional Ecologist Date

Forester Date

Property Manager Date

Area/Team Supervisor Date