

## **Integrating Timber Management and Bird Habitat on the Raco Plains, Hiawatha National Forest**

SAF Field Trip, 11 May 2006

Field trip will provide examples of the approach used by the Hiawatha National Forest to manage a fire ecosystem, with jack pine budworm issues, and a variety of bird species. The Raco Plains management strategy features large permanent openings, augmented by large jack pine harvest, and regeneration units. Timber sales are designed to simulate wild-fire, restore barrens habitat, manage succession, and create the dynamic landscape used by several species of area-sensitive birds. Focal bird species managed on the Raco Plains include;

- Sharp-tailed Grouse (Management Indicator Species and R9 Sensitive Species)
- Kirtland's Warbler (Federal and State Endangered Species)
- Black-backed woodpecker (R9 Sensitive Species)
- Spruce Grouse
- Northern Goshawk (R9 Sensitive), Red-Tailed hawk and Northern Harrier
- Bluebird, Sparrows, Upland Sandpiper, Eastern Meadowlark, etc.

**Stop 1;** Prescribed burns to maintain permanent opening or barrens habitat. View pre and post burn areas since one area (130 ac) was burned by prescription in 2005 and adjacent area (80 ac) planned for 2006 prescribed burn. Discuss management scenario using permanent openings augmented by timber sale temporary openings.

**Stop 2;** Jack pine seed-tree harvest sold in 2005 (Star Timber Sale). Unit is marked and sold but not cut. Stand has a Kirtland Warbler (KW) regeneration objective of 1,089 trees per acre with  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre of opening per acre. Experimental unit since we have not tried seed tree for KW. Pre-sale surveys for goshawks and other rare species. Typical spruce grouse habitat. Fuels treatment (opening along rexford road) to north of unit.

**Stop 3;** Jack pine budworm unit (Star Timber Sale). Sold in 2005, cut in winter 2006. Stand has a Kirtland Warbler (KW) regeneration objective and will be planted to suitable KW stocking density. Natural regeneration would have also been an option but was not selected for this site. Snags were reserved and islands were retained to better simulate wildfire conditions. Good habitat for bluebirds (cavities), black-backed woodpecker (snags), raptors (forage-mice, small mammals, reptiles). Mitigation measures in Forest Plan to retain mature forest patches around known spruce grouse and black-backed woodpecker breeding areas.

**Stop 4;** Sharp-tailed grouse habitat and telemetry study. Habitat was prescribed burned in 2004 (150 ac). Meet with Doug Munson, sharp-tail research technician

to discuss ongoing telemetry study of lek (or dancing ground) visitation rates. Observe radio telemetry method of collecting data on sharptail movement.

**Stop 5;** Active timber sale (Monkey Fist) sold in 2005 currently being harvested. Stand has a Kirtland Warbler (KW) regeneration objective and will be naturally regenerated by chopping, chaining and possibly throwing seed down as insurance.

**Stop 6;** 2005 Prescribed burn of a red pine savanna for habitat and fuels reduction. Logging slash burned to create snags and reduce fuels between Raco and Brimley along Brimley Grade road. Also, adjacent area planned for 2006 prescribed burn with similar objectives.

**Stop 7;** Currently suitable KW habitat created by natural regeneration. Also suitable habitat for field and clay-colored sparrows. Regeneration was used for sharptail breeding (lek) until about 1-2 years ago when trees got to large and dense for sharptails. Recent clearcuts are used extensively by sharptails on a temporary basis. Strategy to augment permanent openings with temporary openings (sale units).

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Hughes Lake Fire (Oscoda Co. Michigan) showing horizontal roll vortices and post-burn green islands (May 2, 2006)

