2470 Silvicultural Systems
2670 Threatened and Endangered Species (KWEH)

November 22, 1985

Kirtland's Warbler Habitat/River Road Fire Area

now unit acreage now 1,630

Cal Norton, District Ranger

I revlewed Jerome's 2470/2670 memo to you. I generally agree with his assessment that oak and aspen reproduction is substantial in the area surveyed and will have to be dealt with in regenerating KW habitat. However, I do not agree that only 250 to 300 acres of the original 1294 can still be managed for Kirtland's Warbler. Also, even if his projections of 2,000+ stems/acre of oak and aspen (some areas) are correct, this does not mean anywhere near that many will survive. I agree that some of the area designated as KWEH should not be so managed in the future. However, I do not concur with all of his recommended deletions. I hereby propose a revised "Block" alignment for the Oscoda Unit (see attachment).

I feel through a combination of high density planting and hardwood control, we can regenerate warbler habitat in the area.

Considering his stocking survey results which indicate a paucity of natural jack pine regeneration to this date and an inadequate stocking of potential seed trees, I recommend we pursue the following schedule of treatments:

1. Conduct salvage sale including all of new Blocks I (~225 ac.) and V (~115 ac.) removing all stems except selected snags which should be retained for warbler singing perches and cavity nesting species, eg. bluebird, tree swallow (Winter 1985-86).

2. Machine plant (with V-plow) jack pine at density of 1,500/acre in same area (Spring 1986).

3. Treat (handcut with MYC labor) oak and aspen seedlings and sprouts in same area (Summer 1986).

4. Assess effectiveness of oak/aspen treatment (Summer 1987).

5. Chemically treat same area if needed (Summer 1988).

6. Harvest and regenerate Block II (~230 ac.) (1991-95, maximum age ~ 50).including appropriate oak/aspen control.

7. Block III (~230 ac.) - same as above (1996-2000, maximum age ~ 55).

8. Block IV (~230 ac.) - same as above (2000-5, maximum age ~ 62).

see plat for

Bill Jarvis

WILLIAM L. JARVIS
Wildlife Biologist, Huron Zone

Tawas

2470 Silvicultural Systems
2670 Threatened and Endangered Species (KWCH)

December 10, 1985

Kirtland's Warbler/River Road Fire Area

Forest Supervisor

Attached is a memo from Bill Jarvis regarding future management activities for the River Road fire area. As you are aware, some 1300 acres of the area burned over were in a Kirtland's Warbler management unit. The fire of April 28, 1984, has required several planning changes and adjustments to the management unit.

Most of the jack pine stands burned over were approximately 35 years old, and it was questionable whether adequate regeneration would occur due to the immature stand. A stocking survey was initiated the fall of 1984 to assess the early regeneration prospects on the area as well as obtain volume information for salvage sale operations. Portions of the burned over area were deleted with the intent of using the overstory for partial shade for improved natural regeneration. Salvage operations have been completed on those areas that were obviously not going to regenerate adequately to jack pine or were logical to delete from future habitat management.

A second stocking survey was taken in the fall of 1985 to assess improvement in increased natural regeneration. The survey indicates about 40% more jack pine was present over the previous year's survey. Based upon the fact that approximately 400 jack pine stems per acre are now present, it is obvious that adequate jack pine stocking levels for suitable KW habitat will not be reached with natural regeneration and additional reforestation effort will be necessary to achieve suitable stocking levels for KW habitat.

It was felt by the District that the presence of the dead standing pine, oak, and other species presents a significant impact to any future reforestation efforts due to the high density of small to medium sized timber that would eventually be jack strawn over the units. Due to the urgency to "clean" the area up and the strong demand for fuelwood chips by Dow Corning in Midland, a decision has been made to complete the salvage operation on the remaining 440 acres of the River Road fire area.

Bill Jarvis has been involved with the early planning of this management unit and has prepared his recommendations (attached) for block realignment and treatment. His proposal basically involves the inclusion of areas previously not considered suitable for KWEH in the southern portions of Blocks II, III, and IV. Water table height seems to produce a distinctly different ground vegetation than is found on the drier Grayling sand sites. However, for the time being, we at the District level concur with the proposed additions and deletions to the management unit.

The remainder of this memo will deal especially with Bill's Points 2, 3, 4, and 5 as they relate to establishment of the unit. We are basically in agreement that reforestation should be achieved in Blocks I and V as soon as possible following the salvage clean up. Indications are that Dow Corning and the LeCureux chip operation could have the area cleaned up by the spring of 1986.

It seems the densities of jack pine per acre for suitable KW habitat creeps up every year, and we are at a point of requiring 1500 per acre. Estimated cost for planting of approximately 440 acres will approach $90,210 to set this management unit up for the future as far as jack pine density and age class goes.

In October, I forwarded a memo concerning KW habitat management techniques in which I proposed giving direct seeding with Bracke scalp site preparation as opposed to the conventional planting of seedlings. I propose the reforestation of this area be done using the Bracke and direct seeding beginning in April 1986 if for no other reason than it holds strong promise that acceptable warbler habitat can be achieved at a significantly lower cost per acre in establishment costs. Current estimates for scalping and direct seeding indicate these same acres can be adequately reforested for a cost of approximately $16,500.

Due to the strong presence of oak and aspen within the blocks to be treated, Bill is recommending an initial hand cut treatment for oak and aspen in the summer of 1986. Two questions arise with this recommendation, one being that summer 1986 may be too premature since occupancy of the area is not expected for perhaps six to ten years later and treatment this early may result in not taking advantage of natural mortality of some oak and aspen that may occur prior to the time of occupancy. Secondly, I believe we should program work of this magnitude with regular T&E wildlife funds rather than rely on manpower programs to accomplish.

Bill's Number 5 recommendation that retreatment of the area be done using chemical or herbicide application bears further consideration. Apparently the underground reservoir now serving the Oscoda Schools, as well as two municipal water systems wells, likely underlays a majority of the Oscoda KW Management Unit. The Oscoda area is no newcomer to the serious potentials of water pollution. Wurtsmith Air Force Base has been pinpointed as a major source of contamination for many private wells on the north side of the AuSable River. This is the primary reason municipal wells have been located on the south side of the AuSable valley within the underground watershed of National Forest lands. I believe from a political standpoint, if no other were available, I would vigorously oppose application of any chemicals in this management unit.

In summary, we concur with Bill's proposed revision of the block alignment for the Oscoda unit. We strongly propose utilizing direct seeding with Bracke scalper site preparation to achieve

the appropriate densities as opposed to planting. We also believe the timing of when handcut treatment of oak and aspen competition needs further consideration as well as sincere opposition to any chemical treatment proposals in this area.

Unless there are other compelling reasons of which we are not aware, we will initiate project planning for the direct seeding on the unit for spring 1987 since extra funding for this project is not available unless some other Forest has excesses it wishes to transfer to the Huron.

CALVIN NORTON
District Ranger

Enclosure