

Huron-Manistee National Forests
421 S. Mitchell Street, Cadillac, MI 49601

1920 Land and Resource Planning

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Location of Fuel Breaks (Mack Lake Fire Area)

Al Simard, Project Leader, Fire Management Planning

This letter is to confirm my February 17 discussions with you.

I am sure you would agree that if nothing is done to manipulate vegetation, a jack pine monotype would again be regenerated in the Mack Lake Fire Area. A team has been appointed by the Forest Supervisor to develop a rehabilitation plan of vegetative diversity that will reduce the hazard of future fires and enhance the multiple use values of the area.

The location and development of fuel breaks will be an integral part of this plan. We are in the initial phases of determining the location for fuel breaks. We have preliminary information on soils and natural regeneration that has developed through the first growing season. We feel we have reached the point where we need your advice and assistance in determining the strategic location of fuel breaks based on fire occurrence and behavior. This would be based on fire only. We would then blend this information with soil types and natural regeneration to determine an acceptable location for fuel breaks based on all considerations, including economics. This was our planned procedure for accomplishing this particular task.

Your suggested need for information, such as soil types, in order to determine the best location for fuel breaks is valid, but I believe leads us immediately to the final location. We would first want to evaluate several alternatives, one of which would be fuel break locations that would be the best from the standpoint of fire control only. Other considerations such as Critical Habitat for the Kirtland's Warbler, soil types, natural regeneration, economics, etc., could then lead us to a modified location that would be acceptable.

Going back to our original line of thinking we would need recommendations on specific location, widths, orientation, spacing, etc., that would effectively slow down crown fires to a point whereby control would be possible.

We are actively engaged in negotiating salvage sales in the area. We are hopeful of initiating some large activities by next summer. We feel the success of natural jack pine regeneration is somewhat dependent upon the overhead shade provided by the fire killed jack pine stands. In fuel breaks, we don't want jack pine regeneration. We would want total removal of the fire killed trees as soon as possible from planned fuel break locations. In summary, we would like to have the locations selected in the next month or so. I realize this may not be feasible.

Another part of our discussion dealt with the need to develop effective fuel breaks in other major pine areas where the potential for a large devastating fire exists. This need is brought out in Item C 2 of the Action Plan developed in response to the recommendations contained in the Mack Lake Fire Analysis Report.

We need your assistance. We may also need a personal meeting to confirm or modify our approach to determine the best location for fuel breaks.

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