



IN REPLY REFER TO:

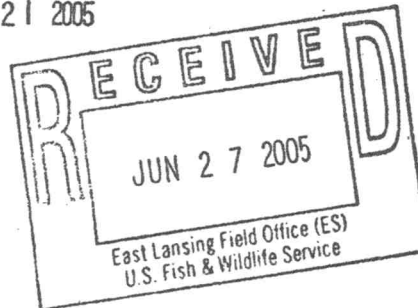
FWS/AES-TE

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building
1 Federal Drive
Fort Snelling, MN 55111-4056

JUN 21 2005

Mr. Kenneth R. Ennis, Leader
Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team
c/o Huron-Manistee National Forests
1755 S. Mitchell Street
Cadillac, Michigan 49601



☒ Czarniecki
☐ Best
☐ Brewer
☐ Dandridge
☐ DeCapita
☐ Deloria
☐ Dingledine
☐ Eitniece
☐ Fisher
☒ Gourley
☐ Hosler
☐ Kavetsky
☐ Kubilis
☒ Manning
☐ Pava
☐ Taylor
☐ Williams

Dear Mr. Ennis:

Thank you for your January 12, 2002, letter regarding the recovery of the Kirtland's warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*). We appreciate the continued leadership that you and the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team (Recovery Team) bring to Kirtland's warbler conservation. Please accept my apologies for the delayed response to your letter.

Your summary of recovery progress and the issues that require attention prior to reclassification to threatened status or removal from the Federal list of *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife* (50 CFR 17.11) under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, was helpful and informative. Your letter identified five recommendations for clarifying the goals and objectives in the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Plan (Plan). We agree with the recommendations including the overall need to revise the Plan. However, our resources are not sufficient for us to lead the effort to revise the Plan at this time. Specific responses to each of the Recovery Team's recommendations follow.

- 1) Primary recovery objective: We concur with your recommendation to update the Plan's primary recovery objective to reflect the need to manage jack pine habitat in perpetuity for Kirtland's warbler recovery. Management techniques that are required on an annual and ongoing basis are timber harvest and brown-headed cowbird control.
- 2) Reclassification to threatened status: You recommend reclassification of the Kirtland's warbler to threatened status when population estimates are sustained at or above 1,000 pairs for five years. We concur that this population criterion is acceptable for reclassification. However, before considering reclassification, the Plan must be revised to include this population-based criterion, as well as related threats-based criteria.
- 3) Delisting conditions: You recommend establishing an Interagency Memorandum of Understanding or similar credible mechanism to ensure the continuation of necessary

management techniques before removing the Kirtland's warbler from the Federal list of *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife*. We agree with this recommendation and your list of nine recovery actions necessary for the conservation of the Kirtland's warbler: 1) adaptive management of breeding habitat, 2) cowbird control, 3) closure of breeding habitat, 4) consolidation of breeding habitat, 5) consideration of wintering habitat, 6) population monitoring, 7) research programs, 8) educational programs, and 9) international relations. We request the Recovery Team's assistance with the development of a Memorandum of Understanding or similar document that will support annual protection, management, and monitoring of Kirtland's warblers throughout the species' range. In coordination with the Recovery Team and other partners, we will investigate funding opportunities to support long-term management of Kirtland's warbler populations and the jack pine ecosystem.

4) Breeding habitat requirements: You recommend revising the Plan to require identification and management of an additional 40,000 acres of jack pine on a 50-year rotation, in addition to the currently designated Kirtland's Warbler Management Areas, as a means to maintain the 38,000 acres of breeding habitat required annually. The current Plan calls for management of 127,600 acres for the Kirtland's warbler. The cooperating agencies have informally increased this figure in practice to 150,000 acres in designated Lower Peninsula management areas. Above and beyond this 150,000 acres, we support revising the Plan to reflect that a minimum of 190,000 acres be managed for the Kirtland's warbler.

Your letter also asserts that a substantial portion of the additional 40,000 acres of habitat should be within the Upper Peninsula. We agree that Kirtland's warbler habitat management in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas is essential to species' recovery. We hope that cooperating government agencies and other Upper Peninsula landowners will consider their roles in management of the jack pine ecosystem. Such management will not only benefit the Kirtland's warbler, but will also enhance the long-term viability of all species associated with this ecosystem.

5) Winter habitat focus: Given the importance of wintering habitat to the recovery of the Kirtland's warbler, you recommend that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and other parties involved in Kirtland's warbler management make serious commitments to support conservation of the Kirtland's warbler in the Bahamas. We agree with your assertion of the importance of winter habitat and offer our support for a strong focus on winter habitat research, protection, and management. When the Plan is revised, winter habitat should play a significant role in Kirtland's warbler recovery.

In conclusion, we support revision of the Plan to incorporate the recommendations presented in your letter. We further support and encourage Recovery Team efforts to revise the Plan. Our East Lansing Field Office will participate in Plan revision to the extent possible, although our recovery priorities and available resources at this time would limit our involvement. In the interim, we will encourage all Kirtland's warbler conservation partners to implement the new Recovery Team recommendations, as they represent the current "best science" for this species.

Mr. Ennis

3

We appreciate the efforts of the Recovery Team and look forward to our continued cooperation in Kirtland's warbler conservation. If you have questions, please contact Mr. Craig Czarnecki of our East Lansing Field Office at 517-351-6470.

Sincerely,



Robyn Thorson
Regional Director

cc: Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team Members
U.S. Forest Service, Milwaukee, Attn: Randy Moore, Regional Forester
Huron-Manistee National Forest, Attn: Leanne Marten, Forest Supervisor
Hiawatha National Forest, Attn: Thomas Schmidt, Forest Supervisor
Ottawa National Forest, Attn: Robert Lueckel, Forest Supervisor
MDNR, Attn: William Moritz, Wildlife Division Chief
Detroit Audubon Society
ELFO, Attn: Craig Czarnecki, Field Supervisor