

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES SPECIAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LANSING---The Department of Natural Resources has announced that, as a result of negotiations with the Department of Military Affairs, the original closure order affecting the National Guard Tank Range and the Kirtland's warbler restricted area near Grayling has been somewhat modified.

Earlier this year, the DNR had closed 3,840 acres of land in the camp because Kirtland's warblers, a nationally recognized endangered species, were nesting there.

The period of the closure was also extended this year because state and federal ornithologists found that the bird often nests twice, once early in the summer and again in late July. These steps created a conflict with planned military training maneuvers.

Under the agreement worked out in cooperation with the Department of Military Affairs, the property which is closed to National Guard maneuvers has been reduced by approximately 1,000 acres to 2,880. Spring nesting surveys allowed the DNR to reduce the size of the closed area.

In addition, tanks will be permitted to use nine miles of boundary roads and another eight miles of roads and trails within the area.

If further military access is needed in the closed area, the Department of Natural Resources will assist in the location and siting of roads to avoid disturbance to nesting warblers.

"I am convinced this compromise represents the best course in protecting the nesting birds while, at the same time, allowing the fullest possible military use of the area," says Dr. Howard A. Tanner, Director of the DNR.

"We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the Department of Military Affairs in working out this solution," Tanner added. "It allows Michigan to demonstrate its responsibility at the state level toward the preservation of a nationally recognized endangered species."

According to the National Guard, these restrictions will sharply curtail tank training in the area, but the modified order will be complied with because of the critical state of the warbler population.

In the future, DNR foresters and National Guard training specialists will work together on land management plans to provide adequate tank training facilities within the Grayling Military Reservation.