

**FEEDBACK/RESPONSES**

**2021-2035 Chippewa County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan**  
**Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting #2 of 3: Focus on Soil, Water, Fish and Wildlife**

**1. Rotational management for flowages, with control structures and moist soil management as the objective, have gone through one cycle of the 5 year planning period. The schedule synchronized drawdowns to create a shifting moist soil mosaic, which maximizes habitat across the County Forest. Are there any modifications that could be made to the schedule of drawdowns to improve habitat management? Please explain how your suggestions would improve flowage habitat potential.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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The Chippewa Rod and Gun would like to make this recommendation. O Neil Creek 1. Change this wetland to a fishery and increase the number of stop logs by 5-6. This wetland does have fish in it. It also has a emergency spill way to the north of the control gate. This area also has great shore fishing potential.

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Monitor aquatic growth in the flowage closely and drawdown sooner than 5 years. have seen aquatic vegetation in some of the flowages change significantly in just a couple of years.

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(No comments)

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The current schedule and plan for flowage mgmt in the county forest is adequate, science based, and should not be changed.

**2. Hay Meadow #1 & #4, Vista and Willow Creek #1 are managed as fisheries. The goal of flowage management for fisheries is to maintain maximum pool elevation while mitigating flooding risks. Willow Creek #2 & #3 were identified as possible fisheries, though their bathymetry, or depth of the lake, is better suited to provide moist soil management. Is there interest in changing the objective to fisheries and or furbearers for either/both Willow Creek #2 & #3? Please explain why the management objective should be changed.**

**RESPONSES**

I have no interest in changing this, it appears to have worked well in the past as is and due to the lack of depth, I would question whether a fishery would be a good choice.

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Chippewa Valley Trailriders would support trapping in the flowages mentioned above as long as trapping regulations are observed and enforced. The WDNR 2019 trapping regulations state that “You may not set, place or check traps located within 100 YARDS of designated trails or designated areas of use such as picnic areas, campgrounds and beaches.....”

In recent years horseback riders have encountered traps on ON THE HORSE TRAILS at Hay Meadow 3 flowage. These traps pose a danger to horses and humans. If a horse stepped in one of these large vicious traps they would be crippled beyond use. If the 100 yards is in fact maintained that would mean no traps can be set near any of the horse camping/parking areas in the county forest and no traps placed along any trails.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun has been managing the Willow Creeks #2 & #3 as fisheries. I would be nice to modify the plan to reflect this. Locals have been commenting how great the fishing is in spring.

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If you can change the 2 flowages to fisheries without requiring the use of airators to prevent winter fish die-offs then I think it would be good to increase fishing opportunities in Chippewa County. Knowing what I do about the small lakes and flowages in the county foresy area I do not think you can get the 2 flowages mentioned deep enough to prevent winter fish die-offs at a reasonable cost.

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(No comments)

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Flood mitigation and moist soil management are important habitats that make up the larger habitat mosaic of the county forest. Willow creek 2 and 3 should not be changed to furbearers or fishery habitat in order to maintain diverse habitat types.

**3. The management objective of O'Neil Creek #2 is maintaining the established wild rice population. The current objective of Hay Meadow #2 is moist soil management, although it has bathymetry, substrate, and hydrologic conditions similar to O'Neil Creek #2, which indicates it may also be suitable for wild rice production. Should efforts be made to establish a wild rice population on Hay Meadow #2 and shift the management objective to wild rice if efforts are successful? Please explain why changing the management objective provides the highest habitat potential.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun has tried in 2018 to seed wild rice in this wetland. This year we plan to make another attempt. Last year the rice was not good quantity and it did ripen faster than expected. We should make Haymeadow #2 managed for wild rice.

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(No comments)

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I had been wondering about the possibility of wild rice in the Hay Meadow system. I do harvest wild rice and usually have to go "up north." I have harvested in O'Neil Creek north of Hwy 64, but it is a hard place to put in and I've found the rice there spotty.

I would like to see wild rice introduced to Hay Meadow #2. Besides a place to harvest for food, it would also provide increased habitat and food for waterfowl, fur bearers and others. I would think that it would add more value than as a moist soil management area.

In rice beds, I have seen Rails, Coots, Mallards, Wood Ducks, Teal, Blackbirds, Muskrats, turtles, snails and the swirl of bass. Also numerous hawks, Bald Eagles and Osprey in the area.

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Efforts should be made to establish a wild rice population on haymeadow #2. Establishing a wild rice population would effectively be reestablishing a wild rice population because that is most likely what was historically present. LCFM should consult with The Great Lake Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission and WDNR on wild rice habitat development. They are the current leaders in wild rice management and reestablishment in Wisconsin.

**4. Birch Creek #2 has been approved for a grant allowing the perched culvert to be replaced with a control structure. Reconstructing the impoundment will improve access for log trucks hauling forest products and increase wildlife habitat through increased moist soil management. Are there other flowages which should be redesigned or improved? Please explain why current structure(s) are inadequate and how small design changes or entire rebuilds would maximize habitat potential.**

**RESPONSES**

My opinion would be that if there are other flowages that offer similar opportunities for better access and/or increased wildlife habitat and the funds are available, that they be considered as future projects.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun can not think of any other areas we manage that could use an improvement such as this.

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Any impoundment that does not have a control structure should be considered for restructuring. By installing a control structure you will be able to establish water levels based on the type of wildlife you would like to bring in and the type of surrounding habitat you currently have.

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(No comments)

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All flowage structures are adequate, but every structure should include beaver dam control structure additions to control clogging and damage from beaver populations in the area.

**5. Are there any other issues which should be taken into account as the County considers the management of these impoundments/flowages?**

**RESPONSES**

Always consider the ultimate objective of timber production and/or wildlife management.

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Some people comment that Mallard flowage should not be drained down. They are under the impression that drawing it down is done on a yearly basis. This is not true. We need to stick to this plan as it provides a means of controlling the vegetation on that site.

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(No comments)

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I did see a beaver dam and two lodges on Hay Meadow #1.

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N/A

**6. Beaver populations pose perennial challenges to maintaining infrastructure in the County Forest. Staff and volunteer time is regularly spent cleaning out plugged drainage structures and installing beaver mitigation devices. Are there other ways to encourage trapping by the general public or reduce the cost of contracting control efforts? LCFM is currently working with a private contractor to reduce populations where repeated damage to infrastructure is occurring. It has been suggested that LCFM create a permit system to allow trappers increased access to problem areas. How should that program be structured and what limits should there be for an approved trapper?**

**RESPONSES**

I would think that a permit system with minimal costs to the purchaser would be a good start. Also, I do not see any need for limits as long as DNR trapping rules are followed. These animals are totally out of control and the lack of a viable fur market has kept trapping interest low. Trappers should have access to whatever areas the county needs to control.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun believes that there should be no restrictions on when beavers should be trapped. We also believe that having a bounty on them is a great way to encourage trappers to go after the problem when pelt prices are low.

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Generate a list potential trappers, first come, first served. As problem areas develop, assign the first trapper on the list the first area. Decide how much of the beaver population should be removed. The trapper works the assigned area until the harvest number is reached. The next problem area goes to the next next trapper on the list. Work through the list and repeat.

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The county should continue encouraging public trapping, and when that is inadequate, contracting control efforts. The natural predator of beavers has been largely removed or is the subject of extensive hunting, so there is little else to do to regulate the critter.

To the extent that such methods are proven successful, structures being rebuilt can include alternative methods to regulate the water level, such as intake structures located out in the pond.

Where beaver ponds do not impede infrastructure, they should be allowed to exist as they provide the richest and most diverse habitat in the forest as well as a refuge in times of drought and a water storage facility during major rain events, which in turn recharges groundwater.

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Approved trappers should need to follow all trapping laws and regulations. Special access (gate keys) should not be given to a trapper unless they are under contract with the LCFM. Trapper dont want to trap in off seasons because pelts have lower market value. A pelt bounty with a max pelt cap should be offered to contracted trappers.

7. The Forest Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program under [State Statute 23.09\(17M\)](#) authorizes County Forests to receive 5 cents/acre annually to manage and improve wildlife habitat. In the past, these funds were used to improve habitat through: 1) tree drops, fish cribs and stocking of fisheries 2) cattail management to improve waterfowl habitat and 3) site preparation/scarification to improve oak regeneration. Within the guidelines governing these funds outlined in the above referenced statute, how should the funds be applied in the future? Please explain how expenditures would maximize habitat potential.

**RESPONSES**

Use the funds in the best way as determined by county forestry staff

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Chippewa Rod and Gun believes that there should not be any changes to the current funding plans.

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Develop a list of critical areas for habitat improvement that include the improvement components listed. Within each area identify the most significant component that needs to be improved and spend the money on it. Work through the list and update the list yearly.

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Funds should not be spent on measures that improve deer habitat, if the county is serious about wanting to regenerate oak. They are mutually contradictory objectives.

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Funds have been applied appropriately. Funds should continue to be fully applied.

**8. The lakes and flowages in the County Forest have various potentials to improve the fisheries by reducing winter kill. Aeration has been shown to be an effective method for reducing winter fish kill. Otter Lake, which is managed by the County Parks staff has a substantial investment, in infrastructure and staff time, maintaining an aeration system to improve fish survival over the winter. Aeration systems based on less intensive infrastructure are available. Are there lakes or flowages in the County Forest which could generate a fishery improvement substantial enough to justify the investment? Which system is preferred, what are the best attributes and drawbacks of the suggested system? Please explain how funding would be secured to install and maintain the system.**

**RESPONSES**

I don't feel the county should be involved in any further aeration projects. Otter Lake is uniquely located and sized for this type of operation. There are plenty of lakes in Chippewa County that provide adequate fishing and thus I feel that expending any more county funds on aeration is not in the best interest of the public. Funds are more necessary on other areas of the county forest.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun believes that there are a few lakes that could benefit from aeration. Townline, horseshoe, Plummer, Bass Lake 1&2 would be suggested lakes to install them.

Funding for this improvement and maintenance would be a challenge. Maybe local groups might be willing to help fund these projects. Maybe pick a pilot lake to try one of these out and after a few years, after proof of concept and maintenance needs have been identified explore more lakes.

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Horseshoe Lake is one of the lakes that could use aeration. Each lake or flowage will have its own special needs and the aeration system used should be selected to fit those needs and costs. State and federal grants if available, sportsmens clubs, county budget.

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Otter Lake aeration costs are borne in full or to a large extent by fund-raising efforts conducted by the lake residents. I don't see a similar opportunity elsewhere as most forest lakes are by definition undeveloped. Further, aeration would be an artificial temporary alteration to a natural condition. Lakes that do not contain fish are not "dead". In fact, the absence of fish offers opportunities for a different host of life forms such as frogs, salamanders, and dragonflies that all benefit the forest ecosystem, and by extension, us.

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N/A

**9. The 2005 Biotic Inventory of Native Plant Communities and Threatened/Endangered Resources (link on webpage) identified 14 High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) within and surrounding the County Forest. Of those 14 HCVFs identified within the County Forest, 5 have become State Natural Areas (SNAs): Chippewa Moraine Lakes, Deer Fly Swamp, Dorothy Lakes, Tealey Creek Cedars, and Townline Lake and Woods. Additionally, there are two SNAs located adjacent to County Forest Special Management Units: Harold Walters/Jean Brunet Woods and Round Lake/Ohmart Wetlands. Are there areas that have not been considered that should be prioritized for SNA status? Should there be any additional management considerations for HCVFs that have not made into SNAs? Please explain how the proposed alteration of status would benefit resource management.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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The description of the Firth Lake study area says that: "The site represents one of the largest tracts of good quality intact natural landscape remaining in the Chippewa County Forest." Therefore, it surprises me that this area is unrepresented in the group of SNA's.

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All NCVFs should be converted into SNAs if the opportunity becomes available. Doing so would permanently protect the areas and give them higher conservation status.

**10. Chippewa County recently acquired an 80 acre parcel adjacent to Tealey Creek SNA. The County intends to enroll the 80 acres in the County Forest Program. A few acres of the County parcel adjacent to Tealey Creek SNA has Cedar timber type, which is the feature that justifies Tealey Creek being an SNA. Should the County request that the State alter the boundary of Tealey Creek to include this Cedar acreage? Are there other SNAs which should have their boundaries reviewed? How would the suggested boundary changes affect management and/or create the greatest conservation potential?**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun believes that this is a good plan for this newly acquired parcel of land.

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It seems that the additional acres of Cedar should be included in the SNA.

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The Tealey Creek SNA should be altered to include the cedars on the new 80 acre acquisition. Tealey Creek cedars are an ecological treasure to our area and should be expanded and protected to the highest extent possible.

**11. The legal authority for management of wildlife populations lies with the State, but providing the habitat that supports populations is the responsibility of each individual landowner, including the County. LCFM has had the Forest administrator and County Conservationist representing forestry and agriculture interests on the Chippewa County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) since it was formed. Outside of CDAC and the Forest Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program, what actions should be taken to maximize wildlife habitat across the County Forest? Please explain how the suggested action maximizes habitat and potential funding sources for those actions.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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Because the county has identified the difficulty in encouraging the reproduction of Northern Red Oak, and has gone to great lengths to experiment with approaches to regenerate it, it makes no sense to me to do anything which is focused on increasing deer habitat or numbers.

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N/A

**12. The County Forest provides habitat for non-game species as well as promoting habitat for game species. LCFM worked with the State and UW-Stout faculty to provide initial monitoring of a threatened bird species found in the County Forest. Long-term funding could not be secured and the habitat research was abandoned. Are there management actions or research that the County should take to create or improve habitat for any current or potential species or communities? Please explain how the species or community would benefit from the proposed action and how management should be funded.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question, however I am not in favor of spending tax dollars on trying to artificially preserve habitat for an “endangered species”. If it works into the general management plan for an area, fine, otherwise a strict cost versus benefits analysis should be undertaken before any plan is put in place.

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As climate change marches onward, it is important that non-game species be studied, if for no other reason than that not a lot of study has been done. Non-game species include the lowest part of the food chain, and are involved in creating the pre-conditions for success of all other more well-studied species, both animal and trees. The Chippewa forest is unique in the ability to provide large and varied habitats under single ownership with the ability to attract grants and study projects to document changes occurring.

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N/A

**13. Chippewa County has secured grants and used general revenue to fund Aspen Harvest Schedule (2017), Habitat Management of Wildlife Flowages (2015), Biotic Inventory of 5 Wildlife Flowages (2015), Terrestrial Invasive Plants (2014) and Biotic Inventory and Analysis of the Chippewa County Forest (2005). Are there areas of research that the County should contract outside agencies or contractors to conduct in the County Forest? Please explain how the research would benefit management of the County Forest and where funding should come from.**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question, however I would not be in favor of spending county funds on increases in this area without proven benefits being derived.

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N/A

**14. The incidents of invasive species has been limited mostly to Garlic Mustard along recreational trails and some Buckthorn along the Chippewa River. User groups have a high potential to be sources for the introduction and spread of invasives across the County Forest. It is the County's intent to work with user groups and Lower Chippewa Invasives Partnership, Inc. to build awareness and capacity to identify invasives. Control of know populations has been done by LCFM staff and private consultants. How should the county work with user groups and the general public to identify, monitor and control invasives? How should the County fund control efforts?**

**RESPONSES**

The county could hold workshops from time to time with user groups to educate them as to what invasive species are in the area and how to identify them. It would be helpful to have as many people as possible educated in this area and told to inform county forestry personnel when such species are found in the county forest or close to its boundaries. I am not sure how you would fund this but would not think it would be a large amount that would be needed. Possibly some picture handouts to help in identification could be handed out at informational meetings.

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Chippewa Rod and Gun believes that training seminars for user groups such as, ATV, Horse groups, Ice age trail, and wetland management should be trained to identify the invasive species. I believe since the volunteers are being trained the County should provide this training. How the county funds it is a good question. We do know that when the county sponsored the chain saw training class it was paid for by the County to volunteers.

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Continue to post information about invasive species concerns on the county web site. Create fliers, pamphlets, and other information resources to share with user groups and individuals. Develop presentations and go to user group meetings to explain invasive species problems, areas, actions to be taken etc. Present coop programs regarding invasive species problems, solutions,etc that user groups could help with and /or adopt as their own. Funding from county/state taxes, grants, user fees, donations from user groups.

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The garlic mustard was introduced along a logging road that is also used as a trail. However, the garlic mustard is adjacent to the road, not where hikers would be present. Introduction by users is probably more likely by some user types than others. LCIP has proven to be an excellent resource for working with groups and teaching identification and removal methods. The cost of not identifying invasives early is incalculable, so the cost of early detection should be a regular part of the budget.

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LCFM should set up an education program for the public to identify invasive as they are using the forest. If an invasive is identified, it should be delt with swiftly and efficiently to protect the forest. Getting a jump on small pockets of invasives early on will protect the forest and protect from large management efforts later on.

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Just walking around Chippewa Falls, near Big Eddy Springs and along the trail that used to be the narrow gauge railroad and now a trail from the Flats to the NSP dam. There is a lot of Garlic Mustard. I have also seen Buckthorn in Allen Park and upstream from there along Duncan Creek.

I could see using youth groups (scouts, 4H, religious) to assist. Maybe a call out to the public for some organized events. I know that I would be interested.

I know that Beaver Creek Reserve is in Eau Claire county and Hunt Hill is in Washburn county, but they may be able to provide resources too.

**15. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has stated that in the past century most of the state has warmed two degrees Fahrenheit. More frequent and intense rainstorms, more extremely hot days with less ice and snow cover are likely in the future. These changes can affect the health of animal and plant populations as well as overwhelm or degrade infrastructure designed for less intense weather events. How should the County plan for and adapt management actions to limit the negative effects of a changing environment?**

**RESPONSES**

Climates have been warming and cooling for thousands of years. Granted, the past several have seen warmer temperatures and more violent rain events but will this continue in the foreseeable future with certainty? As the old saying goes-There is nothing as certain as change in the weather. I certainly do not think we should be spending money on things that may or may not happen in the climate years down the road.

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The best way to adapt to climate change is resiliency, which usually means having a biologically diverse land-scape which will allow the gradual transition of species. In the case of the forest, a diversity of tree types and understory life would be essential, rather than managing for certain key marketable species in large block areas. Serious attention should be paid to studies providing clues as to what species may not thrive in the changing environment and moving away from managing for those species.

Perhaps more importantly, we should be doing everything we can to slow the accumulation of carbon. Because one of the greatest carbon sinks on the planet is mature forests, ideally we would not be cutting trees at all, but rather letting them grow for their full lifespan, and then letting them decay naturally after they fall. Short of that, it is found that allowing trees to grow longer accumulates more carbon than cutting them when young as we currently do. There is more carbon accumulated in the same number of years in an old tree than in a regrowth after clear cutting.

Attention could also be paid to the target market for the forest products. If wood is used for energy generation in any way, it is contributing to the problem. Other choices have different consequences, depending on the longevity of the use of the wood and the ultimate disposal process. To the extent that awareness of these factors can be determined and targeted, they will help not hinder conversion to a reduced carbon world.

While some of these methods may stave off disaster for a limited time, they may buy some time while the rest of the economy moves away from carbon based energy. While Chippewa County's forest may seem insignificant on a global scale, if everyone took that approach there is no tomorrow. The Great Lakes Forest is one of the world's great carbon sinks, and the only one we have any control over. We cannot control the criminal destruction in Brazil, but we can control Chippewa County.

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The LCFM should manage the forest for climate change. This includes more intense weather events, heat, cold, wind, and flooding. It is important to consider that species from further S will be moving N, and species in our area will be moving N as warming occurs. Management of the county forest should reflect these challenges to maintain recreation, forestry, and the high quality environment.

**16. Are there any other specific issues, areas of concern or points of consideration that the County should take into account as the County considers policy and management issues relating to ecologically significant areas, soil, water, fish and wildlife management?**

**RESPONSES**

No opinion or adequate knowledge on this question.

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The Chippewa County Forest was acquired on the backs of Native Americans from whom it was originally stolen, and more recently on the backs of hardworking local residents who could not make a living on it during the last century. We should be mindful of how we manage this "gift" and make sure it is serving its highest and best purpose, not a transitory purpose of reducing tax costs for people who live and invest in Chippewa County. Because of its location adjacent to a major metropolitan area and as part one of the southernmost public forests in the state, the forest's best use is transitioning from revenue generation to serving the population as a recreational and educational resource, as well as being part of the survival of the planet.

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N/A