

Remote Wildlife Habitat Management Area

Major Emphasis: The major emphasis of the Remote Wildlife Habitat MA is to provide a mix of different-aged forest habitats, from early succession to old forests, for the primary benefit of reclusive wildlife species. This MA will employ a full range of timber and vegetation management as the primary tools for habitat manipulation, including commercial timber sales, service contracts, volunteer activities, and partnerships. This MA de-emphasizes recreation uses to minimize continuing disturbance to wildlife. Existing Forest Service system roads and trails will be retained but new roads and trails will not be built and temporary roads or skid trails will be closed at the completion of projects.

Desired Future Condition: The Remote Wildlife Habitat MA will create a mix of deciduous and coniferous forest stands of various types. Stands will vary in size, shape, age, height, and tree species composition. Both even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture practices will be used to meet wildlife habitat objectives. As a result, two different conditions will occur among the stands: some stands will consist of trees of similar age and size; the remaining stands will consist of a mix of tree sizes and ages ranging from seedlings to very large, old trees. Forest communities that would naturally be present, such as aspen and oak, will be retained and enhanced where feasible.

The emphasis of this MA will be on maintaining or creating suitable habitat for a variety of wildlife and plant species. Habitat at the landscape level will include a sustainable mix ranging from early-succession to old forests. Permanent and temporary openings will occur across the landscape in shapes and sizes that are consistent with wildlife habitat objectives. These openings and regenerating forest habitats are critically important to many species of wildlife that are dependant on them, but they also are very important to “reclusive” species. For example, black bears and bobcats generally avoid humans, as do northern goshawks during the nesting season, but these species forage and hunt extensively in early-successional habitats. These reclusive species will receive the greatest benefit from this MA. Deer wintering habitat will be emphasized in mostly conifer stands including and adjacent to wintering areas designated by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Human impacts from roads, trails, and other recreational uses, and the resulting recreation-related disturbance to wildlife, will be minimized in this MA. Forest Service system trails will be retained for access on foot and by other non-motorized means of transport, such as skis and snowshoes. Such uses will tend to be concentrated around trail corridors. No new foot or ski trails will be established. This MA designation will avoid inclusion of Forest Service system roads and town roads. Existing Forest Service system snowmobile trails will be retained, but no new motorized trails will be constructed. Summer motorized recreation is not compatible with this MA. Recreation facilities, such as user-built fire rings, may be present but will be primitive and must complement remote recreation opportunities. Away from trails, evidence of, and interaction with, other users will be low.

The Remote Wildlife Habitat MA will provide refuge for forest wildlife species that are sensitive to human disturbance while creating diverse habitats, including clearings and brushy openings. It will complement wildlife habitat management in other MAs. Goals, objectives, standards, and guidelines for management of deer wintering areas and other wildlife components, such as snags, den trees, reserve trees, nesting areas, and sensitive species, apply forest-wide in all non-wilderness MAs.

Compatible Uses:

- Timber harvesting
- Low-impact, non-motorized, non-trail recreation
- Snowmobiles on existing corridor trails
- Control of non-native invasive species (plants, animals, insects, and disease)
- Aquatic habitat restoration
- Research
- Fire use
- Motorized equipment for administrative use
- Utility corridors
- Temporary skid roads/trails for extraction of logs, closed at end of project

Incompatible Uses:

- Winter recreation generally would not be compatible with deer wintering areas
- Motorized recreation beyond existing corridor snowmobile trails
- New roads and trails
- Developed recreation facilities
- Construction of non-recreational facilities

Advantages:

- Even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural systems could be used across the landscape, to be determined at the project level, with wildlife habitat as the primary emphasis
- Demonstrate clear emphasis on wildlife habitat as a major goal for the GMNF
- Does not detract from or preclude wildlife management issues on other MAs
- Apply Forest Plan age class & type composition objectives (wildlife) across the landscape
- Clearly define Desired Future Condition combining active habitat management with remote recreation opportunities that might be difficult to attain under other MAs

Disadvantages:

- Could be achieved through Remote Motorized, or Diverse Forest Use MAs without creating a new MA
- Could be perceived as conflicting goal with other MAs – implies wildlife management in this MA but not in others