

THE YEAR IN REVIEW



OTTAWA
NATIONAL FOREST

2003

FROM THE FOREST EMPLOYEES



Welcome to the 2003 Ottawa Year in Review!

Employees on the Ottawa National Forest have spent the last year looking forward: envisioning the management of the Ottawa for the next 10–15 years through our Forest Plan Revision effort. This report, however, will focus on the past: highlighting activities and projects that the Forest completed in 2003 to implement our current Forest Plan.

We are extremely proud of the many accomplishments made in 2003 and are excited to share some of the highlights with you. Throughout the year,

employees work on projects which are aimed at restoring and improving the health of the forest. From road maintenance and reconstruction to timber sales to wildlife habitat improvement projects to offering a high-quality recreation experience, our goal is to protect and restore the forest and to provide for the many people who use it.

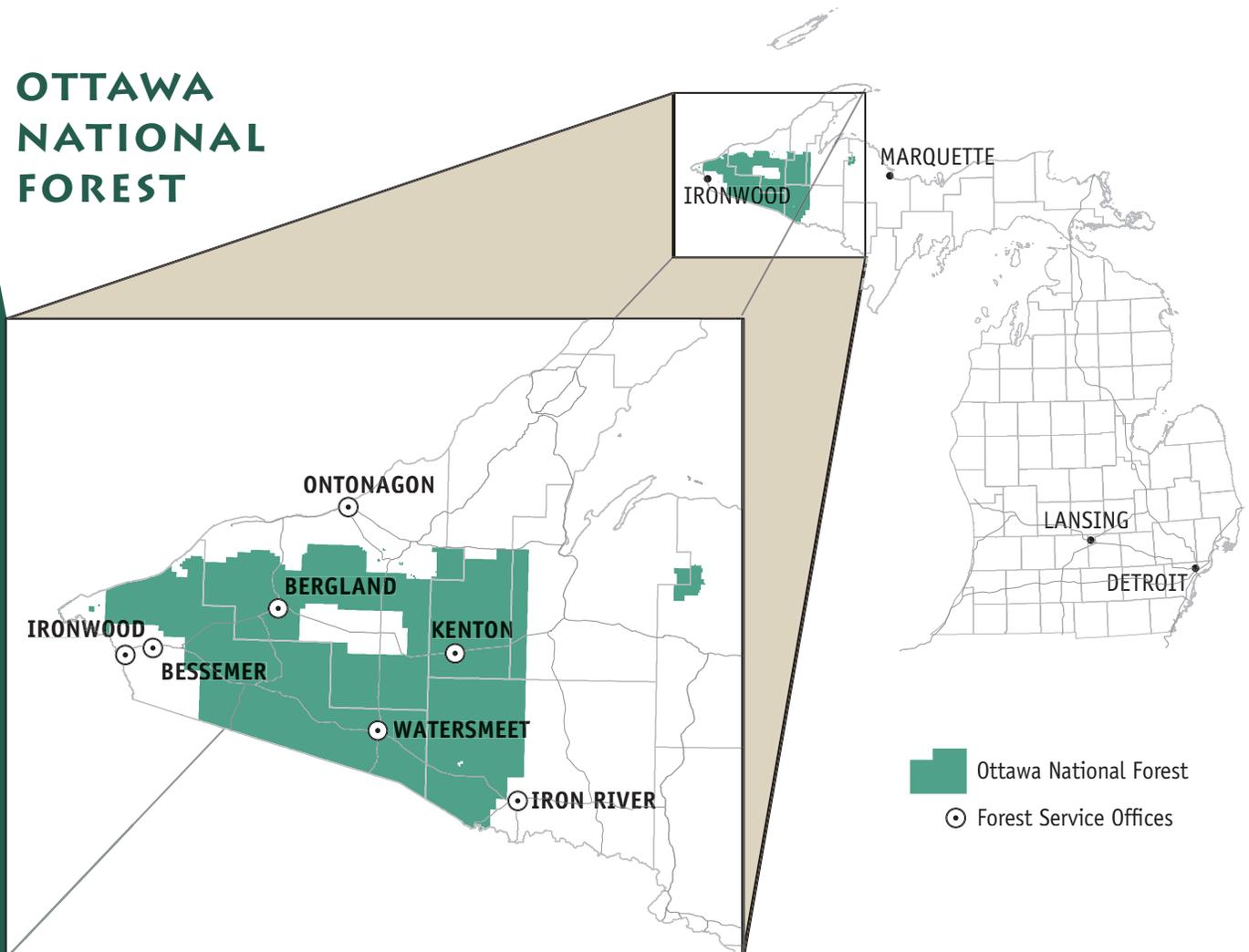
Our success in 2003 is due in no small part to the extraordinary efforts of our many partners. In-kind and shared cash contributions continue to grow year after year as we strengthen our relationships with current

partners and create new ties and connections with potential partners.

As you take the time to read over our 2003 accomplishments, we hope you will get a feel for the Forest and the employees and partners who care for it. Of course, the best way to experience the Ottawa National Forest is to visit us! We look forward to seeing and hearing from you.

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OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST



PROTECT THE NATURAL RESOURCES ENTRUSTED TO US.

THE OTTAWA NATIONAL

Forest is a special place. Taking care of this unique and special place is a job Ottawa employees regard as paramount. Projects undertaken in 2003 provided for a variety of uses, opportunities, and services to the public, all while ensuring the protection of our soil, water, native plants and animals, and cultural resources. With each project we undertake, our goal is to improve the current and future quality of the environment.

Ottawa employees help preserve critical habitat for a great diversity of plant and animal species on a daily basis. Timber wolves, bald eagles, loons, bobcat, fisher, various species of trout, lake sturgeon and other aquatic species make their home on the Ottawa. Different ferns and flowering plants, ranging from common to relatively rare, are also found on the Forest.

Taking care of the land just makes good sense. By protecting our forests from threats such as non-native invasive species, catastrophic fires and fragmentation, we help ensure a sustainable supply of goods and services to the public. Working in partnership with other public and private land managers is another way we protect our forest.



FOREST PLAN REVISION

Managing today's Forest means planning for the future. The Ottawa's original Forest Plan was approved in 1986. Last year we initiated our Forest Plan Revision effort by publishing our Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. The NOI serves as the cornerstone of our Revision effort, and identifies areas where we believe we need to concentrate our work to ensure the healthy and productive forest that we know today remains healthy and productive for future generations. Forest Plan Revision is a public effort. As we work to complete our Revised Plan, we look forward to continued public input and interaction.

NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES

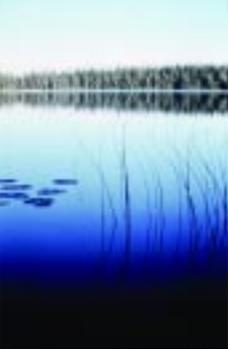
A non-native invasive species (NNIS) is a plant or animal that did not occur in a particular region or place and has been relocated (either by accident or on purpose) to a new area. Examples of NNIS on the Ottawa include purple loosestrife, Eurasian water milfoil, glossy buckthorn and Japanese barberry. There are currently 200 known sites of invasive plants on the Ottawa National Forest. In 2003, the Ottawa National Forest began work on an integrated program for the control of NNIS infestations on the Forest. The goal of this program is to provide managers with a "tool box" of control methods which could be used to treat NNIS infestations across the Forest.



Above: Glossy buckthorn invades wetlands and spreads rapidly.



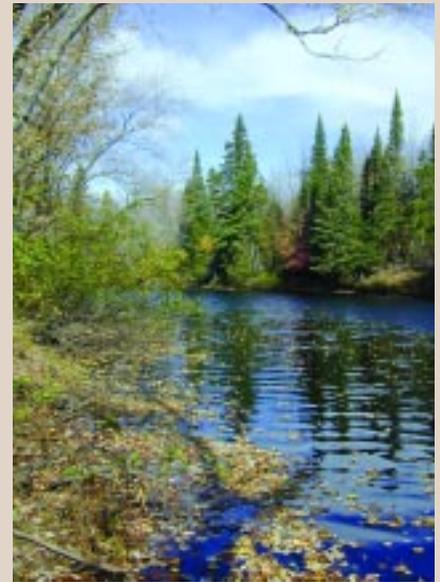
Left and above: Japanese barberry is a dense, thorny shrub with small oblong berries. Volunteers work with the Ottawa to help pull and remove this non-native invasive.



SECURING OPEN SPACE

In 2003, the Ottawa, in cooperation with the Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Upper Peninsula Resource Conservation and Development Council acquired 258 acres of wetlands, river frontage and uplands in the Presque Isle River watershed that were held in trust by the Nature Conservancy as part of the U.P. Coastal Wetland Project.

The goal of the U.P. Coastal Wetland Project is to secure key parcels of land aimed at promoting wetland protection. Sixteen partners across the Upper Peninsula have contributed nearly 3 million dollars in land acquisitions and in-kind contributions. Lands purchased across the U.P. through this project will be dedicated to wildlife purposes and protection and will remain open to the public.



Presque Isle River.

FISHERIES PROJECTS ON THE OTTAWA

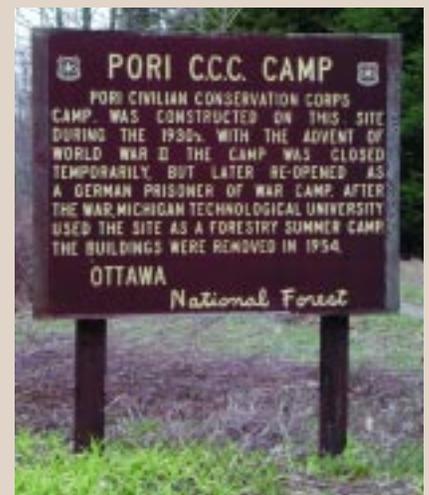
The Ottawa is home to literally hundreds of lakes, rivers and streams, each providing vital habitat to a variety of species of fish. Last year employees completed 17 miles of stream improvements and 370 acres of inland lake habitat work as we joined forces with volunteers, partners and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. We also received a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to monitor the success of planted Coaster Brook Trout. The Coaster Brook Trout has been extirpated from over 90% of its original range and we are continuing work to secure additional grant money to improve habitat for this species in the future.



Improving habitat for populations of Coaster Brook Trout like this, is a priority for the Ottawa.

CAMP PORI: A WORLD WAR II STORY

Last year, the Ottawa National Forest, the Park Service, and others participated in the creation of a documentary detailing the historical World War II Prisoners of War Camps in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Camp Pori, located in northern Houghton County and originally constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1934, was re-opened in 1944–1946 as a Prisoner of War Camp. Prisoners kept in these camps were paid by the Government to cut pulp wood, which was desperately needed for the war effort. Although the buildings and facilities of Camp Pori no longer remain, interpretive signing has been designed to document this brief period in history.



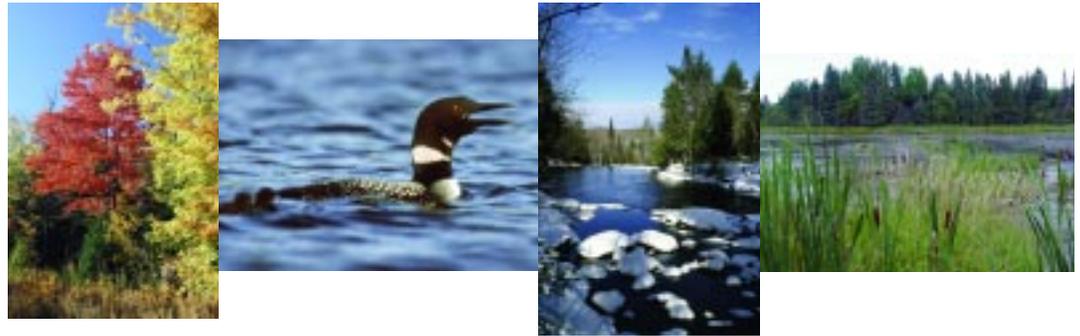
Signs mark the location of the historic Camp Pori CCC Camp.

RESTORE THE LAND TO CONSERVE OUR NATURAL HERITAGE.

IN THE EARLY 1900s, the natural resources of the western Upper Peninsula seemed endless. Loggers were attracted to the vast pine forests and trees were cut for fuel, paper and fences and for building cities like Detroit and Chicago. By the late 1920s, barren and desolate landscapes replaced what were once vibrant and healthy forests. Spurred by the need to regenerate and re-forest these cut-over lands, the Forest Service acquired “the lands nobody wanted.” This was the birth of the Ottawa National Forest.

Over 70 years later, we are proud to be continuing this regeneration success story. In 2003, employees of the Ottawa National Forest helped to restore watersheds and riparian areas, improve habitat for wildlife and fish, and reforest thousands of acres of National Forest System land.

Restoration of the forest occurs through the interplay of natural processes and management practices of forest managers. The Ottawa’s timber management program is the primary tool for restoring and providing a diverse range of sustainable habitats for many species, supporting forest restoration and health, and providing for traditional and cultural uses and wood fiber. By carefully planning for every project we initiate, we ensure that our actions today don’t compromise the Forest tomorrow.



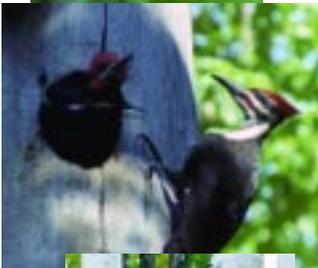
RETURNING HOME: THE TRUMPETER SWAN

In 2003, the Ottawa National Forest had its first documented fledging of wild trumpeter swans in over 100 years! Trumpeter swans historically nested in the large shallow wetlands and lakes of the upper Midwest, but have disappeared as a species from the Upper Peninsula. Re-establishment of trumpeter swans into the western Upper Peninsula began in 1998, in connection with efforts to re-establish trumpeter swans in other areas of the upper Midwest. In July, a pair of swans, made up of one released male swan from Wisconsin and an un-collared female of unknown origins, fledged 4 young swans, called cygnets. Hopefully, this is the first of many years of successful cygnet production on the Ottawa.



THREATENED, ENDANGERED AND SENSITIVE SPECIES: WHAT WE’RE DOING TO HELP

FEDERAL SPECIES	OTTAWA NF ACTIVITIES
GRAY WOLF	Managing wolf habitat and protecting den sites from disturbance. Promoting awareness through educational presentations and displays
BALD EAGLE	Conducting surveys annually, improving habitat quality and protecting active nest sites.
REGIONAL FORESTER’S SENSITIVE SPECIES	OTTAWA NF ACTIVITIES
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	Inventorying, protecting nest sites, and using silvicultural techniques to improve habitat
TRUMPETER SWAN	Re-introducing the swan to historic nesting areas
REDSIDE DACE	Improving habitat using brush bundles in streams
LARVAL LAKE STURGEON	Monitoring for wild-produced young sturgeon
BOTRYCHIUM ONEIDENSE, BLUNT-LOBED GRAPEFERN	Continuing inventory, protecting known sites, conducting enzyme electrophoresis to explore taxonomic relationships and develop better diagnostic characters
OROBANCHE UNIFLORA, ONE-FLOWERED BROOM-RAPE	Continuing inventory, protecting known sites, removing non-native invasive burdock which threatens one population
NORTHERN BLUE BUTTERFLY	Continuing inventory and habitat protection, tried re-locating known occurrence site of butterfly and its RFSS host dwarf bilberry, contributed to conservation assessment
FOUR-TOED SALAMANDER	Inventory to determine Forest-wide distribution, continuing habitat protection.



REFORESTATION

Reforestation of National Forest System lands on the Ottawa serves multiple purposes: (1) to restore native species in ecosystems where they were once dominant and (2) to adequately restock harvested lands as specified in our Forest Plan. On average, the Forest accomplishes over 7,250 acres of reforestation each year. Reforestation after a timber sale also helps ensure that soils are stabilized and watersheds are protected. Over the past several years, Ottawa managers have placed an increased emphasis on natural regeneration, which now accounts for the majority of our restoration work. Natural regeneration also helps us to reduce costs, improve species diversity and to provide for a more natural appearance on the landscape. Thanks to a healthy forest, natural regeneration is proving successful for the Ottawa.



Natural regeneration occurs in forest openings after a timber sale.

MANAGING OUR DATA TO HELP THE LAND

Information about forest soils, landforms, potential natural vegetation and water potentials combine to define ecological units. The Ottawa has hundreds of different ecological units across its one million acres. Information about these units helps forest managers better understand land capabilities and design better field projects. For example, managers learn how and where to build and maintain roads, predict the kinds of trees that will naturally grow in different areas as well as predict timber yields and habitat types. We can also learn how to minimize environmental impacts of projects, maintain soil productivity as well as lower operating costs.

The Ottawa is working with multiple land management agencies to produce an ecological inventory map of the Lake States, which will help improve interagency coordination on projects and reduce data and management costs.

WORKING WITH NATIVE PLANTS

The J.W. Toumey Nursery was established in the early 1930s in response to the reforestation efforts of Lakes States Forests after the heavy logging and milling era at the turn of the century. Today, the Nursery maintains an inventory of 9 million seedlings (conifer and hardwood) and containerized stock, which are produced to meet today's reforestation needs.

New to the Nursery is the production of native shrubs, forbs and grasses.

Greenhouse operations focus on the cultivation of "plugs" (forbs and grasses) that can be out-planted directly to designated sites or used to help establish local collection opportunities. A native grass seed cache that will serve as a resource to Lake States Forests is also in development.



Above: Flail vac collection system used to collect native seed.



Left: Drying and preparation of native seed plant.

PROVIDE FOR PEOPLE, NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE.

PEOPLE COME TO THE

Ottawa from all over. They are attracted to the natural beauty of the forest, secluded areas and the unique wild setting. The Forest has a remote solitude that is unexpected for the Upper Midwest and it's this distinctive setting that provides for a variety of goods and services for the people who live in and visit the Forest.

Outstanding recreation opportunities can be found each and every season on the Ottawa. From camping and hiking in the summer months to hunting and fall color tours each autumn to snowmobiling and cross-country skiing in the winter, there is literally something for everyone on the Ottawa.

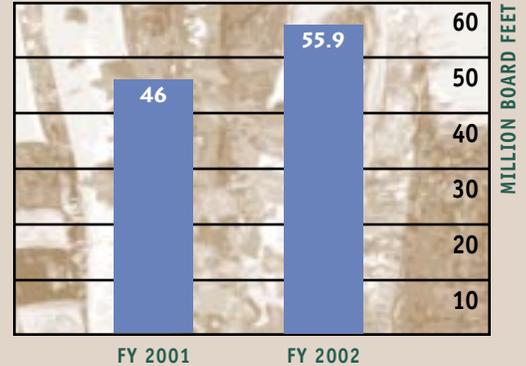
Throughout its history, the Ottawa National Forest has also provided local communities and regional markets with forest products. Wood used in homes, paper, and other products comes from carefully planned timber sales. By wisely managing our timber projects, we can also provide habitat for wildlife species and remove hazardous fuels to reduce the threat of catastrophic fires.

Because demands for goods and services are expected to continue to increase in the future, it is important that our management practices today promote a healthy and sustainable forest.

TIMBER SALE PROGRAM

The Ottawa National Forest plays a significant role in providing wood products to local communities and a regional economy. Last year, we offered 37.5 million board feet (MMBF) of timber to purchasers through our vegetation management program. The timber program is one of many tools that the Ottawa uses to improve wildlife habitat, reduce hazardous fuels, provide for improved recreation opportunities, and improve young stands for future timber.

TIMBER HARVESTED (MMBF)



Photos of the newly replaced NCT Bridge on the west branch of the Big Iron River.



NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL BRIDGES

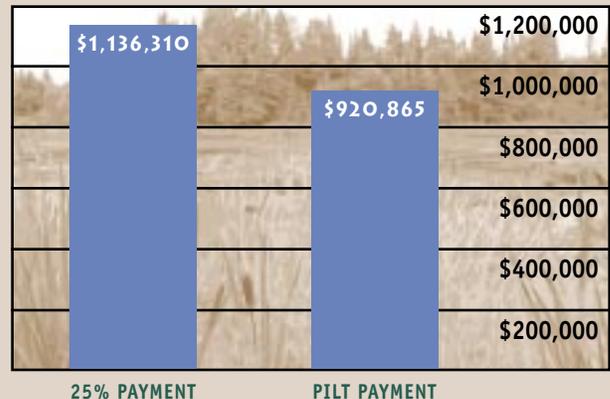
There are six major river crossings along the 108-mile Ottawa segment of the North Country Trail. In 2003, two outdated bridges were redesigned and replaced along this scenic trail route. This construction work led not only to safer and stronger bridges, but also provided for completion of critical stream restoration work. Stream restoration work included removal of failed culverts, reshaping of banks and placement of riprap in the stream bottoms.

PAYMENTS TO STATES

Each year the Federal government makes payments to the local units of government for schools and roads. The 25% Payment, made by the Forest Service, is equal to 25% of the revenue receipts of the Forest.

For the Ottawa, nearly 97 percent of our revenues come from timber sales. In addition to this payment, counties receive Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) compensation, which is a federal payment made to help offset losses in property taxes due to non-taxable federal lands within their boundaries.

FY 2003 PAYMENTS TO STATES



THE REC FEE DEMO PROGRAM AT WORK

The Recreation Fee Demo program is a vital tool that makes it possible for the Ottawa National Forest to continue providing quality recreation experiences for the public. The fees people pay are used where they are collected and provide funding to enhance visitor experiences. In FY 2003, the Ottawa collected \$210,000 in recreation fee demo revenues and accomplished a multitude of projects, such as dredging in the Black River Harbor after a severe flooding event, restoration of facilities at the Lake Nesbit Organizational Youth Camp, design of our future Sylvania Entrance Station, and general maintenance and enhancements to many of our developed campsites, including accessibility upgrades.



Above: Emergency dredging at the Black River Harbor after flooding. Far left: Newly updated facilities at the Camp Nesbit Organizational Youth Camp. Left: Additional work at Camp Nesbit to upgrade the water system.



OTTAWA INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION

Since 1993 the Ottawa National Forest has partnered with the Ottawa Interpretive Association (OIA) in promoting conservation and interpretation of our natural resources. The OIA is a non-profit corporation, governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. This group has been instrumental in helping the Ottawa National Forest deliver high-quality educational interpretive programming and products to a large audience over the past decade. Making their home at the Ottawa Visitor Center in Watersmeet, Michigan, the OIA is a vital partner that helps provide funding for conservation and interpretive projects across the forest through profits realized from the sale of interpretive items. In 2003, the OIA granted \$100,000 to the Forest for our Visitor Center Exhibit Redesign project. Watch our 2004 Review to see the exciting changes at our Visitor Center!



Thousands of students each year enjoy environmental education programs at the Visitor Center.



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