



# Interim Forest Management Plan

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## Property Identifiers

Property Name and Designation: Underwood Wildlife Area

County: Iron

Property Acreage: 1,549

Forestry Property Code: 2635

Master Plan Date: None (Management Plan dated 1989 on file at Mercer)

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## Part 1: Property Assessment (1-2 pages maximum)

### General Property Description

- Landscape and regional context: Located in northeast Iron County adjacent to the state of Michigan, the property is totally wooded with a mix of northern hardwoods, aspen and cedar/hemlock. It lies in the North Central Forest Ecological Landscape and includes the Winegar Moraine (Continental significant opportunity area). Soils on uplands are well drained loamy glacial till. Rocks are common and close to the surface. The poorly drained areas have organic matter to depth of more than 20 inches.
- History of land use and past management: Originally purchased 1,601.84 acres in the 1949 from the Underwood Veneer Company for \$20,300 as deer yarding habitat. The property had been heavily logged and slash and saplings dominated the uplands. Through natural vegetative succession, logging and the cutting of cedar for deer food (1950s & 1960s) the area became dominated by hardwoods, decreasing its value as a deer yard. Starting in the 1990s UWA was used as an experimental area to increase forest diversity for wildlife using underplanting, scarifying and tree shelters. Red oak and white cedar have been planted. The 1989 plan calls for UWA to "be the show-and-tell" demonstration area for forest management in Iron County.

### Site Specifics

- Current forest types, size classes and successional stages: Currently there is 279 acres of aspen, 158 acres of white cedar, 35 acres of hemlock, 667 acres of northern hardwoods, 99 acres of black spruce/swamp conifer and 240 acres of swamp hardwoods. Four percent of UWA is non-forest types including grass, muskeg bog, emergent vegetation and lowland brush. Beaver activity occurs in several low areas and minor drainages.
- State Natural Area designations: None
- High Value Conservation Forests (HCVF) or other resources/natural community types limited in the landscape: The cedar/hemlock component has moderate aged and size trees that management is guiding towards old growth characteristics.
- Biotic Inventory status: No report available.
- Deferral/consultation area designations: None.
- Rare species: One incident of presence of an American marten (state Endangered) around 1995, however, intensive surveys since have not found additional marten. In Michigan, marten are present in locations not too far from UWA. Species of greatest conservation needs known to use UWA: American woodcock, eastern red bat, gray wolf, moose, northern flying squirrel, northern goshawk, and wood thrush.



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- Invasive species: In a privately owned inholding a wetland has extensive population of purple loosestrife. Loosestrife beetles have been released at that site with mixed results. The town road has spotted knapweed present and a town gravel pit within a mile of UWA has extensive stand of knapweed.
- Soils

## Cultural and Recreational Considerations

- Cultural and archeological sites (including tribal sites): None
- Recreational Uses: Hunting is the primary use of UWA. Trails are bermed to provide hunter walking opportunities. There is some beaver trapping and likely some upland trapping. The town road bisecting UWA is a snowmobile route and this trail crosses ¼ mile of UWA in an area that is too wet for ATV use in non-frozen ground periods. ATV use is not allowed on UWA including the snowmobile trail. The Iron County Forestry Department is responsible for the snowmobile trail and 2 gates.

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## Part 2: IFMP Components

**Management Objectives:** From 1989 Management Plan: “Manage a state-owned wildlife area for the benefit of wildlife-based recreation, protection of endangered species, provisions for education and compatible recreational opportunities, and enhancement of sound silvicultural values.” Objectives are to have a mix of forest types and ages beneficial to wildlife and provide hunting, trapping and wildlife viewing opportunities. Where appropriate earlier successional stands of aspen and birch will be maintained for grouse, woodcock, hare, deer and songbird habitat. On other sites where conifers dominate, management will be towards larger trees and winter cover to improve deer yarding habitat and American marten habitat. Larger, older trees will also benefit songbirds and tree bats. This mix of younger and older stands will also benefit northern goshawk by providing prey and nesting habitat. Cavity and den trees will be protected in all stands. Logging trails will be bermed to prevent vehicle travel but allow hunters and walkers access throughout UWA.

**Property Prescriptions:** Aspen stands will be maintained through regeneration harvests.

Northern hardwood stands will be managed using an uneven-aged harvest to improve tree vitality and go towards stands dominated by larger diameter trees. Valuable wildlife trees such as cherry, oak and ironwood will be left uncut.

Cedar, hemlock and yellow birch will only be harvested when trying to maintain their type and scattered trees left uncut. In general, this type will be allowed to grow old, providing old growth habitat. White pine are scattered and will be encouraged and managed using big tree management due to benefits as deer yarding habitat. Swamp conifers will also be passively managed to maintain yarding habitat.

All cavity and den trees will be left standing. Uncut buffers will be established around wetlands.

As part of county-wide invasives efforts, purple loosestrife and spotted knapweed control will be carried out on UWA when money and manpower are available. Beaver control will be carried out when necessary to maintain a logging road on the east side of UWA.



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Approvals:

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Regional Ecologist Date

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Forester Date

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Property Manager Date

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Area/Team Supervisor Date