

Master Plan Variance

Property Name: Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit

Date the Current Master Plan was Approved: September 1991

Proposed Change to the Master Plan (The specific master plan language changes and any change in land use classification, with revised maps as appropriate):

Section II. Proposed Management and Development Plans, B. Timber and Vegetation Management, Forestry, Management, 5. Timber Harvest, shall be reworded as follows:

Timber harvest decisions will consider the effect on outdoor recreation, wildlife habitat, and forest aesthetics. An average of approximately 360 acres of hardwood stands and conifer plantations may be harvested each year as part of the annual allowable cut (AAC) for the fifteen years following the date of this variance or until a new master plan is approved. That acreage may be less depending on the management objectives for stands that are in designated Consultation sites.

Special Concern, Threatened, or Endangered Species

Seventy-one rare species are known to occur at KMSF-SU. There are 4 endangered, 11 threatened, and 21 special concern plants. One plant is also listed as threatened by the federal government. There are 10 endangered, 9 threatened, and 16 special concern animals. One animal is listed as endangered by the federal government. Prior to establishment, harvest areas will be screened for rare species and harvest guidelines will be adjusted as needed.


Archaeological, Historical, Cultural Resource

Archaeological and cultural sites are scattered throughout the Southern Unit in Jefferson, Walworth, and Waukesha counties. Prior to establishment, harvest areas will be screened for archaeological and cultural features and harvest guidelines will be adjusted as needed.

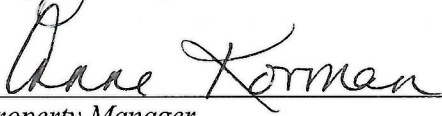
Variance Initiator or Author: Anne Korman

Job Title: Property Supervisor-Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit


Supporting Approvals



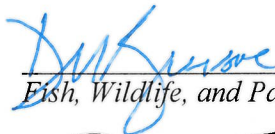
Program Ecologist Date: 6/10/16




Property Manager Date: 6/9/16



Park District Manager Date: 6/9/16



Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Planning Manager Date: 6/13/16



Program Bureau Director Date: 6/13/16



Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Division Administrator Date: 7/17/16

Supporting Information

Purpose and need for the plan change (include background and history as appropriate):

The annual allowable cut given in the original 1991 Master Plan of “approximately fifty acres of hardwood and one hundred acres of softwood” is not sufficient to meet property objectives for forest health, ecological restoration, and sustainable forest products. Insect and disease activity, such as Ips bark beetles and annosum root rot, can move up the harvest date of stand.

Overcrowded conifer stands can stress trees resulting in decreased growth and increased susceptibility to insects and disease. An increased AAC will support management objectives to transition from undesirable cover types, such as those dominated by black locust, box elder, and invasive shrubs, to more desirable types like central hardwoods and oak. The increase in acreage will better support management objectives as described in the master plan.

How the proposed plan change is supported by or is inconsistent with the property vision, goals and objectives or other plan provisions:

- 1) The adjusted AAC supports timber harvest as described in Section II. B. Forestry, 5. Timber Management

- 2) The adjusted AAC will help meet Section 1, Objectives 8. Prescribe resource management activities which enhance the setting for outdoor recreation, maintain aesthetics, and protect the natural communities and ecosystem functions and processes, and Objective 9. Implement integrated silvicultural and other vegetation management practices to promote a balance between recreational goals, aesthetic values, wildlife habitat, and educational activities, and the continued production of forest products.

Anticipated primary benefits of the proposed plan change (include only information not presented in the purpose and need section above):

The primary benefit is to implement forest management to maintain and promote desired cover types and trees, keep the desired visual aesthetics, and maintain outdoor recreational opportunities.

Additional anticipated benefits:

Provide for continued sustainable production of forest products.

Unavoidable adverse impacts (attach an Environmental Analysis if one was prepared):

There may be some short term land scarring and temporary impacts to recreational activities, such as limited trail closures, from harvest activities. Negative aesthetic and recreational impacts will be minimized and mitigated by closely following aesthetic and other management guidelines.

Summary of any alternatives considered:

Continue with harvest levels (50 acres of hardwoods and 100 acres of conifers) designated in the master plan. The increased levels of harvest will better meet vegetation and other management objectives for the property.

Compatibility with statutes, codes and department policies:

Forestry management is supported by the Bureau of Parks and other department policies. The proposed management will not set a new precedent, as similar forest management activities have occurred and are occurring on other state parks and southern forests, including KMSF-SU. The prescribed forest management practices are designed to meet the management objectives

established in the master plan and will not preclude other management options that may be considered for these areas in the upcoming Master Planning review process.

Federal aid limitations:

The proposed action is fully compatible.

Public review process used:

There will be public review, involving a letter to park neighbors, presentation to the property's volunteer groups, a notice in the local paper and a posting on the following websites:

Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/kms/>

Kettle Moraine Natural History Association: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Kettle-Moraine-Natural-History-Association/678828505490679?sk=timeline>

Description of the support and/or opposition to the proposal (include reasons for the various positions taken and any unresolved issues or concerns):

The draft variance was available for public review and comment from May 5 – May 24, 2016.

This draft was posted to the Kettle Moraine State Forest–Southern Unit webpage, and a press release was sent to local media outlets. Five written comments were received, two in support of the draft variance, one generally in support with reservations about slash management, and two opposed.