

Attachment A

Resource Report

Mid-level area Tracks
Resource Wildlife – T & E

Report by Dan Ryan
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Desired Condition: *What is the Forest Plan goal or objective for the resource?*

See Forest Plan

-T. wolf – Recovery Plan (1992). Manage in zones. The project area is wholly in Zone 2, where populations of wolf/prey are expected to fluctuate naturally. Maintain large tracts of wild land with low human densities and minimal accessibility. Strive for road density (OML 3, 4, 5) at ≤ 1 mile/square mile. Protect den sites.

-C. lynx – The following standards and guidelines would apply to this project. The State harvest will be included as a way to discuss effects of the total project:

- Use Lynx Analysis Units (LAU) within which to apply standards and guidelines.
- Design vegetation management to be consistent with historical succession and disturbance patterns (objective).
- Allow no more than 30 percent of lynx habitat in an LAU to be converted to a currently unsuitable condition. Basically this refers to changing a forested stand to an early successional stage. Hardwood stands older than three years are generally believed to provide forage, travel cover, and/or denning structure (standard).
- Maintain denning habitat in patches generally larger than five acres, comprising at least 10 percent of each LAU (standard).
- Design management activities to regenerate hare habitat and to retain and enhance habitat for alternative prey, especially red squirrel (objective).
- Management activities should not change more than 15 percent of lynx habitat in an LAU to a currently unsuitable condition within a ten year period (standard).
- Allow no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow routes for snowmobiling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, dog sledding (standard).
- Seek ways to maintain road density below two miles per square mile (guideline).
- Design new roads for effective closure upon completion of management activities (guideline).

Existing condition: *What is the existing condition of the resource?*

-Wolf and lynx – Road density (from 2008 TMR EA)

| LAU | OML 3-5 (wolf) | mi/sq mi rd and tr (lynx) |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 12 | 0.6 | 0.9 |
| 15 | 0.6 | 1.6 |
| 17 | 0.3 | 1.3 |

-Wolf - Summer prey – deer/moose/beaver; winter prey- moose, few deer. Good populations of moose and deer occur. Beaver are common. No dens known.

-Lynx -Hare and squirrel habitat exist throughout the area; hare populations are probably in a decline in their cycle, squirrel unknown. Previous dens are known along Highway 2, south of Highway 11, and along the Stony River Grade.

| LAU | Gross Acres* | Acres of LAU in Project Area ** | % of LAU in Project area |
|-------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| SNF12 | 66,414 | 47,203 | 71% |
| SNF15 | 44,609 | 43,330 | 97% |
| SNF16 | 76,108 | 6,583 | 9%* |
| SNF17 | 44,668 | 40,670 | 91% |
| SNF22 | 80,842 | 4,765 | 6%* |

*SNF16 and SNF22 will not be analyzed further since the Tracks area only impacts less than 10% of the LAU.

Will need to make sure we do not exceed the 30% threshold of unsuitable habitat in a ten year period on all ownerships. This would be harvesting >8,000 acres in any of the 3 LAUs. Polymet will affect 1,454 acres in SNF12.

| Lynx Analysis Units | Total Lynx Habitat on all ownerships (acres) | Currently Unsuitable | |
|---|--|----------------------|-----|
| | | Acres | % |
| Indicator 11: Currently Unsuitable Lynx Habitat on all ownerships (G-WL-3 <30%) | | | |
| SNF 12 | 66,414 | 4,104 | 5.8 |
| SNF 15 | 44,609 | 1,652 | 3.7 |
| SNF 17 | 44,668 | 3,855 | 8.6 |

Data Source: ¹ Acreages based on April 2006 CDS data

Other Footnotes: Data for suitability was obtained for all Federal, State, and Lake County (8/05 timber sales) within the whole LAUs. TNC and Saint Louis County data was obtained within the Whyte project area. Photo interpretation was also done for all of the Saint Louis county land. Processes and results are documented in the project record. Therefore, all private land outside the Whyte project area, but within the affected LAUs was assumed to be in an unsuitable condition.

| LAUs | Existing Condition 2005 ² | | Alternative 1 (Whyte proposed action) | | | Alternative 2 (no action) | | |
|--------|--------------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| | | | Present Actions | Total Change | | Proposed Change | Total Change | |
| | | | | Acres ⁴ | Acres | | % ³ | Acres ⁴ |
| SNF 12 | Acres | % ³ | Acres ⁴ | Acres | % ³ | Acres ⁴ | Acres | % ³ |
| SNF 12 | 593 | 1.2 | 108 | 701 | 1.5 | 46 | 639 | 1.3 |
| SNF 15 | 211 | 0.8 | 183 | 394 | 1.6 | 69 | 280 | 1.1 |
| SNF 17 | 225 | 1.0 | 60 | 285 | 1.3 | 42 | 267 | 1.2 |

Data Source: ¹ Existing Condition based on April 2005 Frozen CDS data. Reflects past actions since FP Implementation began that have resulted in a change to unsuitable.

Other Footnotes: Percent of lynx habitat on NFS lands (SNF 12 = 47,645 ac, SNF 15 = 24,934 ac, SNF 17 = 21,441 ac)

⁴ Includes proposed actions and cumulative actions (Tomahawk EA, Dunka EA, and Wetlegs, Laird and Partridge sales) to date on federal lands within each LAU. This figure represents the worst case and assumes that all present and proposed actions will be in the 0-4 age class at the same time.

G-WL-3 "Allow no more than 30 percent of lynx habitat in an LAU to be converted to a currently unsuitable condition" on all

ownerships. All LAUs were under 9% in last data run. Little harvest has been done since that time. New analysis should be run for EA. Threshold values would be 19,292 acres of harvest in SNF12, 13,382 acres in SNF15 and 13,400 acres in SNF17. Current draft proposed action (includes thinning which technically does not affect lynx habitat) for the 3 LAUs are as follows:
SNF12 – 2,538 acres (5% of lynx habitat in LAU)
SNF15 – 1,223 acres (5% of lynx habitat)
SNF17 – 2,419 acres (9% of lynx habitat)

The only Standard or Guideline which could approach the threshold value would be S-WL-1 (15%) in SNF17. There is still opportunities to include another 1,000 acres of harvest before this Standard would be approached.

Need for change/Issues: *What is the gap between the desired condition and existing condition? State the need for resolving the difference. What part of the resource (situation) do you want to focus on?*

- Wolf – moose habitat most important; maintain forage.
- Lynx – although road/trail densities are not over the 2 mi/sq mi threshold, seek road/trail closure opportunities. Assure hare habitat occurs adjacent to cover. Rerun road density once travel_route is updated with road info.

Possible activities/recommendations: *What can you do to address the need for change?*

- Wolf – Assure a balance of aspen/birch (and associated shrub) age classes by harvesting for regeneration. Developing the larger patch areas would provide further forage.
- Lynx – Seek road closure esp. in LAU 15 and 17. Harvest activities should provide hare habitat. Squirrel habitat will be fostered in the large mature patches. Be aware of cumulative effects of Polymet in SNF12.