

DNR invites public input on western U.P. forest plans for 2014

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources will host an open house on Wednesday, June 20, to provide information and receive public comment on proposed forest management treatments for 2014 in the Baraga management unit, which includes Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon counties. The open house will run from 3 to 7 p.m. at the Baraga DNR office, 427 U.S. 41N in Baraga, Mich.

Each year, DNR personnel inventory and evaluate one-tenth of the state forest. The inventory provides key information about the health, quality and quantity of all vegetation; wildlife and fisheries habitat and needs; archaeological sites; minerals; recreational use; wildfire potential and social factors, including proximity to roads and neighborhoods; and use on adjacent public and private lands.

Proposed treatments, which may include timber harvesting, replanting, and other management activities, are designed to ensure the sustainability of the resources and ecosystems.

Bill O'Neill, acting chief of the DNR's Forest Resources Division, said these open houses are a good way for interested residents and stakeholders to learn about the DNR's proposed treatment plans – well in advance – and to share input toward final decisions on those treatments.

“When it comes to the health and sustainability of our state forests, we’re always thinking several years ahead,” said O'Neill, who also serves as acting state forester. “We like to do the open houses around the state because the public gets an opportunity to talk with foresters and biologists about issues that matter most to them. It turns out to be a valuable exchange of information and ideas.”

Maps and information regarding the proposed treatments will be available at the open houses, but can also be found at www.michigan.gov/forestplan under the Forests, Land & Water section.

To more easily and efficiently oversee the forest resources, the DNR divides each management unit into smaller units – or “compartments.” This year, the compartments under review are in Baraga, Covington and Spurr townships in Baraga County; Chassell, Elm River, Laird and Torch Lake townships in Houghton County; and N. Bohemia Township in Ontonagon County.

On Wednesday, July 18, the DNR will complete its formal compartment review to decide on final treatment plans for these areas. That review will start at 9:30 a.m. at the Best Western Baraga Lakeside Inn, 900 S. U.S. 41, in Baraga.

Persons with disabilities who need accommodations for the June 20 open house in Baraga should contact Don Mankee at 906-353-6651 a minimum of five (5) business days before the meeting.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.