

Appendix D – Special Interest Areas

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	D-1
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS	D-1
<i>Secondary Trap Hills Areas Dropped from Consideration.....</i>	<i>D-5</i>

List of Tables

TABLE D-1. OTTAWA NATIONAL FOREST CANDIDATE SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS.....	D-2
---	-----

Appendix D – Special Interest Areas

Introduction

Special Interest Areas (SIAs) are addressed in Forest Service Manuals 2360 and 2372. SIAs may be designated for scenic, geologic, botanic, zoologic, paleontological, archaeological/historic, or recreational values, or combinations of these values. The SIA designation allows Forests to meet internal and public interest in recognizing special values of certain areas and to tailor land uses to interpret, maintain and enhance those special features. Land uses in a SIA will vary with the type of feature recognized, for example, a recreation special interest area could have extensive developments to increase visitor access.

SIA designation is different from research natural area (RNA) designation, because a SIA is not designed to be a plant community reference area for research as a RNA usually is. Land uses in RNAs are restricted in order to preserve the vegetation community type, unlike SIAs. SIA designation is also different from wilderness designation, which is designed to provide areas untrammelled by human actions for a wilderness experience, primitive recreation, solitude, study, and conservation of species. SIAs may provide some of these same features such as opportunities for solitude, study, or primitive recreation, but they may also provide other opportunities that wilderness areas do not.

The Forest Service Manual states SIA selection should be based on inventory information, and suggests using the National Forest Recreation Survey as a source for candidate sites. Recreation program information did not yield any SIA candidates for the Ottawa National Forest (the Ottawa), nor were there any areas suggested for special interest area status by the Ottawa timber stand database. However, the Ottawa Ecological Classification System (ECS) did suggest candidate SIAs: several areas with geological features or unique ecological landtype phases (ELTPs) are known from the ECS and have been previously considered by the soils program to contain special features.

Description of the Process

The ECS provides a comprehensive look at features of the Ottawa from a soil/water/geology/vegetation/landform perspective. Many ELTPs occur commonly across the Ottawa, but a few ELTPs are limited in extent or distribution. To find candidate SIAs, areas were considered for those ELTPs which are rarely encountered on the Ottawa. Mapping of ELTPs occurred prior to Forest Plan revision, while the review of ELTPs for possible SIAs occurred as part of Forest Plan revision.

The ECS in some cases suggested multiple examples of a feature. For example, three volcanic vent plugs were considered before one was selected for the SIA management area as the best example of the three. Where a choice was made as to which site to include, we reviewed factors such as road and trail access; extent of feature on private ownership vs. public; inclusion of more

than one type of value (geologic plus zoologic, for example); how closely the site represented the target feature (e.g. was it a classic volcanic vent plug or anomalous?); other land uses of the area that might conflict with SIA designation (e.g., a need for gravel mining from an esker); past investments in the area for a particular land use; and other factors. The Ottawa recognizes that there are additional areas with special features on the Forest; the intent of MA 8.3 is to showcase a representative set of such sites.

Using ECS to select those ELTPs which occur uncommonly or rarely on the Ottawa yielded 12 candidates for consideration as special interest areas as follows:

Table D-1. Ottawa National Forest Candidate Special Interest Areas

ELTP	Name/Description	Proposed SIA Type
152B, F (all of these ELTPs known to exist on the Ottawa are in this area)	Posse Podzol Terrace: Unique set of terrace wall and terraces, which formed at the interface between an outwash deposit to the south and a lake-influenced heavy till to the north.	Geologic
369 D, E, F; 370 C, D, E, F	Silver Mountain, Haystack Mountain, Mount Kallio: Ancient volcanic vent plugs (these are the only three on the Forest). Silver Mountain includes three Regional Forester's Sensitive Plants (at least historically) and a sealed mine adit.	Geologic, historic, scenic, recreational, botanic
176B, C; 105C (all of these ELTPs and the only domes of this type known on Forest)	Alston and Onion Creek Bedrock Domes: Domes of soft Jacobsville sandstone, entirely below surface, 4 to 10 feet down.	Geologic
154; 155; 157 (main area of these ELTPs known on Forest)	Divide Sand Wetland: Very flat wetland complex with thin organic layer over sand; watershed divide and unusual soil setting for the Ottawa. Includes a Regional Forester's Sensitive Plant	Geologic, botanic
46 D, E, F; 324 D, E, F; 56 D, E, F	Eskers: Steep, narrow sinuous shapes of material deposited by channels in a glacier. A representative percentage of the eskers on Ottawa were proposed for SIA, not all the eskers.	Geologic
216B; 217A	Late seral forest on LTA 19, which is mostly in early seral stages; provides reference example of conifer forest on clay lake plain land type.	Botanic
99, 100, 101	Sturgeon Headwaters Wetland Complex: Complex of wetlands in the headwaters of a major river. Unique in that it lies within a basin formed in the 6 Mile End Moraine (LTA 6).	Geologic
Various bedrock, talus, colluvial ELTPs (mainly LTA 5 and 9)	Trap Hills Escarpment: Part of the Trap Hills range, with cliffs, vistas and scenery as well as rare plants and a segment of the national North Country National Scenic Trail.	Geologic, scenic, recreational, botanic

ELTP	Name/Description	Proposed SIA Type
Various bedrock, talus, colluvial ELTPs	Norwich Outcrop: Part of the Trap Hills, with cliffs and scenery; mining history; rare plants; a segment of the North Country Trail; and the remains of a fire lookout tower	Geologic, scenic, recreational, botanic, historic

This initial list was reviewed by the Ottawa Management team and five candidate sites were dropped, as follows:

- Haystack Mountain and Mt. Kallio were dropped because Silver Mountain provides the best representation of this feature, is larger, and already has an access trail. Haystack Mountain is about 11 acres, but the majority of this is in private ownership. Mt. Kallio is only five acres. Mt. Kallio and Haystack Mountain can be visited by the public, and are unlikely to be subject to intensive land management.
- The two bedrock domes were dropped because they cannot be observed by the public where they occur and therefore are difficult to interpret. Since they are underground, no impacts are expected from management activities. The sandstone is exposed in the bottoms of some incised drainage valleys near the bases of the landform and LTA 20, where visitors could observe this rock.
- The late seral conifer forest was dropped because it is not a geologic feature like the others, but a reference example of a forest type. The Ottawa commonly includes reference examples of various forest types, for example, in designated old-growth stands, wilderness, wild and scenic river corridors, and in other locations. The late seral conifer forest site can be used for reference and training purposes without SIA designation.

Initially, all eskers on the Ottawa were reviewed and divided into three categories based on distance to a road useable by passenger vehicles; distance from any road; and presence of an existing gravel pit. From that analysis, a subset of eskers were advanced for SIA consideration, including some that were close to passenger vehicle roads and some that were more remote. This subset included $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the eskers on the Ottawa. After Ottawa Management Team review, the esker category was further narrowed down to one set of eskers/esker clusters, which the Ottawa deemed sufficient to demonstrate the type. The Bell-Bracken-Englesby Esker Complex was selected due to its accessibility, classic morphology, unmined condition (for gravel), and central position relative to all eskers on the Ottawa.

The other SIA candidates were moved forward, and were considered to represent good examples of unusual features, available for public interpretation, and suitable for inclusion in the special interest area management area (MA 8.3).

The next step was to determine boundaries for the proposed SIAs. For some, boundaries were fairly obvious, based on ELTP mapping. However, each SIA must have a legal boundary description (per requirement in the Forest Service Manual), and writing a legal description to match ELTP lines is difficult. For most of the proposed SIAs, land aliquots (quarter sections, quarters of quarters, and so on) were used to approximate the ELTP target features. Some existing roads or streams were also used as boundaries. Proposed boundaries for each SIA are shown in the figures at the end of this appendix. Legal descriptions are available upon request.

For the two proposed SIAs in the Trap Hills, determinations were made on which features to include and where to draw the boundaries. The “Trap Hills” is noted on the topographical map as being mainly north of Bergland; however, the mountain range extends northeasterly from there toward Victoria. Based on elevation mapping, there are several higher elevation areas that could be considered for the SIA. Factors considered in delineating the area included elevation, landtype association (which fairly closely parallels elevation), ownership, roads, railroad, forest type, North Country National Scenic Trail, rare plants, historic sites, roads, and others. An interdisciplinary (ID) team met to delineate proposed boundaries. There are two parts to the Trap Hills area that this team proposed for designation as SIAs.

The ID team reached consensus that the main values associated with the “Trap Hills” include rock walls, outcrops, cliffs, and talus; vistas and outstanding scenic values; historic sites associated with mining and a fire tower; rare and listed plant species; hiking opportunities (North Country National Scenic Trail). These values mean the area could be designated under any or all of these SIA categories in the FSM: geologic, scenic, historic, botanic, or recreational.

The ID team agreed that the core area for these values lies north of Bergland, between Highway 64 and the railroad tracks, and demarcated by elevation. A second core area occurs at Norwich Outcrop. Secondary areas including fewer or less abundant amounts of the values were also defined. These secondary areas include the Gleason Creek area, the Bush Creek East area, and outside MA 6.1, the Forest Road 430 area.

Discussion of what to include in the recommended SIA centered on capturing quality examples of the SIA values while considering trade-offs to land uses and management. The group delineated the Trap Hills core potential SIA as bounded by Cascade Creek on the south, the railroad tracks to the southeast, east, and northeast, MA 6.1 boundary to the north, and Old Highway 64 to the west. This area includes the highest elevations, steeper slopes, vistas, North Country National Scenic Trail, and the majority of the known rare plant sites. It is mostly LTA 5 (high, bedrock controlled moraines and outcrops) with a small area of LTA 9 (ground moraine). It includes all of the target ELTPs. It is mostly northern hardwoods forest types, with small areas of black ash drainages. This core area is almost all under federal ownership. This is the area many people think of when they hear “Trap Hills”.

The area between Highway 64 and Old Highway 64 (west of the core area) was excluded because of lower elevations, fewer cliffs, fewer of the target ELTPs, more private ownership, a utility corridor, few rare plant sites, and land management patterns which included an active communication tower and, old proposed Bergland Ski Hill site where several ski runs were strip-clearcut.

The second core area recommended for designation as an SIA is the Norwich area. This area is bounded by Norwich Road to the west, Victoria Road to the north, Whiskey Hollow Creek to the east, and the MA 6.1 line (where it adjoins the West Branch Ontonagon Wild and Scenic river corridor) to the south. The Norwich area includes high elevations, cliffs, views (from on top and from below looking up), several rare plant sites, and a section of the North Country National Scenic Trail as well as a heritage interpretive trail (in progress). It is mostly LTA 5 with a small area of LTA 13 (dissected ground moraine). It includes all of the target ELTPs except enriched

colluvial soils. It is mostly northern hardwoods forest types, with some oak. Remains of a fire tower and mining works occur in this area as well. The area is almost all under federal ownership. Little timber management would occur in this area regardless of land use designation due to steep slopes.

Secondary Trap Hills Areas Dropped from Consideration

Gleason Creek

While there are higher elevations, cliffs, some target ELTPS, the North Country National Scenic Trail, and possibly some rare plants, nearly all of this area is under private ownership. Since the SIA values would be captured elsewhere, the ID team believed overlaying an SIA designation on mainly private lands was not appropriate.

Bush Creek East

This is the other main area with somewhat higher elevations east of the core Trap Hills and west of Norwich. Elevations are not as high, there are fewer target ELTPs and cliffs, some rare plant sites, the North Country National Scenic Trail. There is also hunting pressure in this area with aspen stands nearby to the east and south. The ID team believed there were insufficient examples of the Trap Hills SIA values to include this area.

FR 430 Area

This area is outside MA 6.1 but part of the Trap Hills range and possesses some higher elevations. It does not have the same level of cliffs, outcrops and vistas, and has fewer rare plant sites. The Pioneer Multi-Use (motorized recreation) Trail accesses part of this area. The ID team decided this area was not appropriate for SIA status, and thought upcoming vegetation management projects in this area may improve some of the roads, enhancing motorized access to the higher elevations for those who prefer motorized access.