

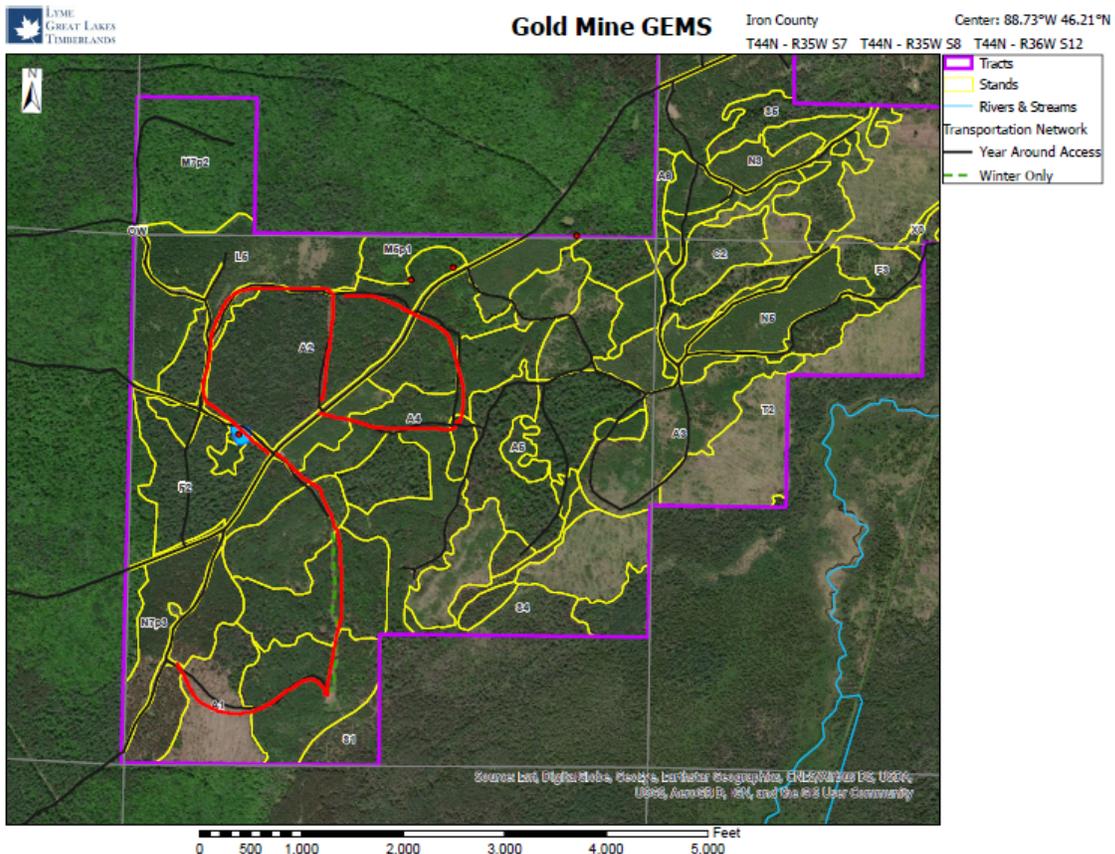
Habitat Success from Michigan's Forests 2021

Jon Steigerwaldt – Forest Conservation Director: Great Lakes/Upper Midwest

Despite being relatively new to the Michigan grouse habitat scene in the Forest Conservation Director role, I've actually been working towards positive habitat outcomes in the state for a while. And eager to do more...

Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative Grant

On April 8, 2021 RGS/AWS was awarded a Deer Habitat Improvement Partnership Initiative Grant by the state of MI. This grant \$12,580 is managed in partnership between RGS/AWS and Lyme Great Lakes Timberlands, an industrial forestland owner whose lands are open to the public. The grant project seeks to brush back and clear existing looped game trails and forest openings on Lyme properties in phase I and fertilize and seed in sites with fall rye, buckwheat, and medium red clover in phase II. Once completed, approx. 5 miles of trail and 2 acres of game openings would be treated between the Gold Mine GEMS and Bates-Amasa Complex outside of Iron River, further enhancing ruffed grouse habitat in the region. This project is due to be completed in the fall of 2021.



Ottawa National Forest Great Lakes Restoration Fund

In early 2020, talks began with Forest Service wildlife staff on the Ottawa National Forest about way RGS/AWS and other partner organizations could partner on habitat projects. Out of those talks emerged a 5-year, \$500,000 Great Lakes Restoration Grant (GLRI). Funded at \$150,000 above the requested amount, this grant is to be split between RGS/AWS, the American Bird Conservancy (ABC), and Forest Service, with RGS/AWS receiving \$225,000 worth of funds for project planning, implementation and administration, outreach, education support, and oversight of timber and non-commercial contracts. The target species for this grant include: ruffed grouse, American woodcock, golden-winged warbler, spruce grouse, moose, snowshoe hare, deer, black-billed cuckoo, white-throated sparrow, rose-breasted grosbeak, sedge wren, eastern whip-poor-will and numerous raptor species. Opening maintenance will benefit pollinators, such as yellow-banded bumblebees and various butterflies. The acreage target for this project is 1,000 acres from condition-based stands currently identified as potential project areas within approximately 15,000 acres of aspen, 3,000 acres of spruce/fir, 600 acres of jack pine, 2,600 acres of red pine, 1,500 acres of alder/willow shrub, and 1,200 acres of possible habitat openings. Work is scheduled to begin the summer of 2021 with ABC conducting an assessment of all habitat sites before implementation work begins.

Ottawa National Forest Stewardship Agreement

Building on the momentum of the Ottawa GLRI Grant, RGS/AWS and Forest Service staff are finalizing an approximately \$120,000 stewardship agreement with the Ottawa National Forest. A process that began in early 2020. This agreement will seek to reinvest timber revenue from a 250 acre timber sale on the Ottawa, back into the National Forest by creating forest wildlife habitat, pollinator habitat, maintaining hunter walking trails, and revitalizing Forest Service infrastructure to harvest additional timber. This 3-year Stewardship Agreement is planned to be signed before the end of 2021 and start with boots on the ground around the time ABC finishes its 2021 assessment for our joint GLRI Grant project. These two projects combined will bring the opportunity to support staff working on these projects in the UP of Michigan.

Looking to the Future

Expanding Stewardship and Landscape Grant Opportunities

Using the model we've developed on the Ottawa National Forest, discussions have begun and meetings have been held to pursue similar opportunities on the Hiawatha and Huron-Manistee National Forests. Seeking large GLRI grants can bring more immediate habitat dollars/partnership to the National Forests while long-term strategies through Stewardship Agreements are developed and put in place. These plans include finding ways to work with the Hiawatha on their "Straits Project" and the Huron-Manistee on their proposed "Zone Aspen Project."

Hiawatha “Straits Project” Story Map:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/55bc8ab3237c42019829a18b9381e789>

Huron-Manistee National Forests Zone Aspen Project Story Map:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0b7607e6430f4b58b3168547bd3a4d51>

RGS/AWS’s comments on Huron-Manistee proposed “Zone Aspen Project.”: **Link Brent’s PDF in MI Folder**

MI State Habitat Grant - Southern Woodcock Project

On June 5th, 2021, RGS/AWS staff submitted a state Wildlife Habitat Grant Application to the Michigan DNR. Help from several members was critical to identify potential sites and engage Wildlife Division staff in planning efforts. These members included John Paige, Travis Powers, Bill Bopra, and likely others as well.

The Grant application is a great opportunity to benefit woodcock populations and enhance hunting, training, and viewing opportunities on lands easily accessible to the majority of Michigan's population. If successful, the grant would provide nearly \$50,000 - with an additional \$7,000 of generous donations from our chapters, partners, and additional match from RGS. In total, about 80 acres would be treated across 16 units of about 220 acres on 4 different Game Areas in Southern Michigan. These include the: Deford, Lapeer, Port Huron, and Portland State Game Areas. Primary treatments would include brush management create and enhance early successional woodcock habitat on each site.

Grant decisions will be announced in August, and planning and calls for bids could begin shortly afterwards. All grants are approved for 2 years, though it's possible all work could be completed by the fall of 2022. Special thanks goes to additional partners who lent their support: Robert Lytle Chapter, Roger Moore Chapter, Saginaw Valley Chapter, Southwest Michigan (Kalamazoo) Chapter, Michigan Upland Experience, Uplander Lifestyle, and Michigan United Conservation Clubs.