

Forest Health Management in Movil Maze Recreation Area & Three Island Park

Forest management in these areas is governed by the April 11, 2011 amendment to the Recreational Facilities Plan. In general, forest management is to be proposed and conducted recognizing that recreational uses on these lands are the main priority. Healthy and diverse forests, managed with an awareness of their natural ecosystem functions, have the greatest potential to provide long term and sustainable conditions for current recreational users and those of generations yet to come.

Forest site review is a constantly ongoing process. When the Forester and/or Recreational Resource Manager for these lands identify an area where a carefully managed treatment has the potential to better support recreation, forest health and diversity objectives, then proposals for those treatments will be posted on this web site. Proposals will generally include the following: an initial proposal describing the site conditions and the proposed treatments, an informational presentation submitted to the County Board, a survey of groups and persons known to be interested in these types of projects, and a comment period. A site tour may be scheduled depending on interest or project complexity. Following review of comments and expressed concerns the proposal might be modified, dropped for further review or implemented as planned.

April 11, 2011 Amendment to the Recreational Facilities Plan

Forest Management within Beltrami County Parks and Recreation Areas

With the adoption of this document, recreation will become the main priority to be addressed in managing these recreational land units, at times using timber harvesting as a tool. Harvesting stands of over-mature trees and replanting a more diverse array of trees is a very pressing need on these land units. Without forest management, serious disturbances such as blow down events, requiring major volunteer effort to clear trails are imminent. With harvesting, forest management can be a planned event and revenue will be generated to continue improving the recreational opportunities in these areas. Inevitably cutover areas will be seen as unsightly to some but this is a stage of regenerating a forest to achieve more desirable longer term aesthetics. Significant efforts will be made to maintain the scenic nature along trails as the transition from over-mature single species to younger, more diverse forests are achieved over several years.

The Situation

Timber harvesting activities in Three Island Park and Beltrami County recreation areas have been contentious with the perception held by many that park and recreation units have been treated similarly to most other county forest lands in terms of forest management practices and respect for trails which are heavily used by recreationists. In addition to significant expenditure by the county to describe the ecological communities and to plan for their management, there are many hours invested in these areas by volunteers who maintain the trails by brushing and grooming.

A plan for forest management in Three Island Park and other County recreational units was adopted by the County Board on January 8, 2008 as a part of the Beltrami County Recreational Facilities Plan. In it are clearly stated priorities that are quite similar to those proposed in this document and these have been in practice for the past several years. However, the public's perception has often been unfavorable. The vision and mission are a source of tension as some individuals think that the resource management practices employed in the park and recreation units are inappropriate to achieve the goals put forth in the forest management plan. On the other hand, county NRM staff is acting in accord with the vision and practices as they understand them. They differ from the interpretations of some people and groups outside NRM as to how to achieve them. For the past few years, operators harvesting in the parks have, in fact, been following instructions that are intended to intentionally achieve ecological community outcomes and will continue to do so.

Specifically, there are significant issues that involve the following areas: road and trail buffers, management priorities, diversity of tree species and age structure, stand treatment methods, funding forest diversity, public involvement and cooperative efforts, and public education efforts.

These issues are addressed individually below. The overarching solution will involve a change of paradigm by which the county parks and recreation units are managed. These changes involve re-thinking the fundamental approach to management in these areas. This shift may solve many problems while continuing to generate revenue for parks by employing local timber harvesters. Such harvesting may initially be more intensive than later after more goals have been achieved.

Solutions

These are recreation areas with forests as the dominant vegetation, rather than timber areas in which there are recreational trails. With that prioritization in mind, the following addresses the specific points listed above with solutions that have been discussed with the concerned parties.

- 1) **Road and Trail Buffers:** To preserve or create visual and vegetative buffers along recreational trails, buffers will be proposed in every forest management prescription. Visual quality may be the most important aspect guiding forest management activities and will be treated as “most sensitive” in the visual sensitivity category. The default proposal is that within a minimum 50’ corridor along either side of the roads and trails, most understory vegetation, wind firm longer lived trees and younger trees will remain. In areas within the corridor where trees are predominantly mature, they will be thinned back to no less than 30 ft²/acre of basal area or approximately 1/3 of the original standing volume. Guidelines set forth in the manual “Sustaining Minnesota Forest Resources, Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines” will be followed. Trails will be treated similar to riparian features using many of the riparian recommendations as trees are harvested.
- 2) **Management Priorities:** Similarity of stand prescriptions between park lands and other county lands will be removed by changing from the priority of economic revenue to ecological community management. The fundamental consideration is one in which habitat management or development for recreation is the emphasis and timber harvest is the tool to accomplish that objective.
- 3) **Diversity of Tree Species and Age Structure:** Management prescriptions will be written specifically for ecological community-based forest management. These prescriptions will result in retaining longer lived species where ecologically appropriate and may also require more of the short lived species (such as Aspen, Balsam fir, and Birch) to be selectively left standing.

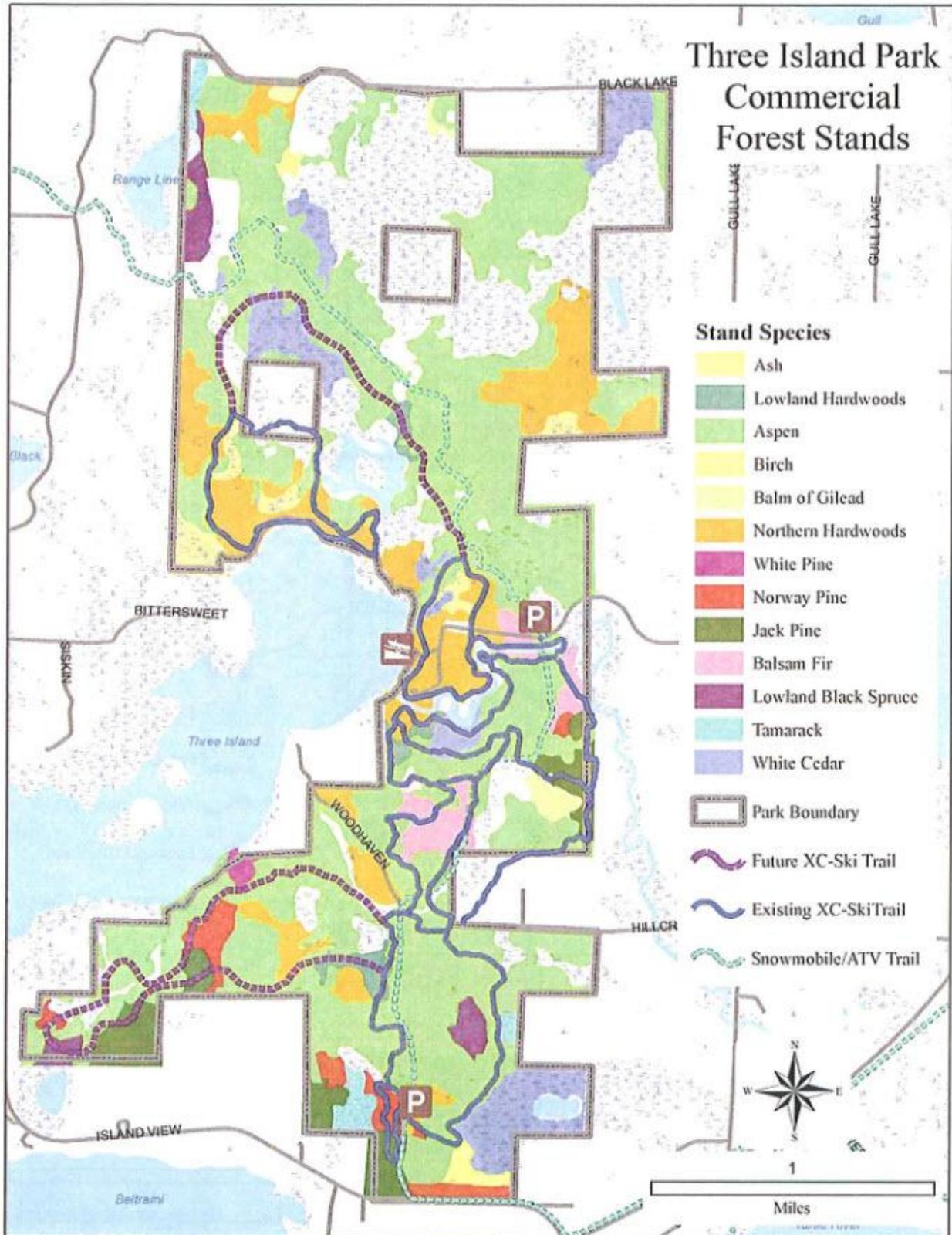
Stand Treatment Methods: Mechanisms under which forest management contracts are let within the park lands will be modified so that services are requested on the basis of landscape management outcomes. Harvest unit location, size, and shape, along with pre-determined landing locations will be key components in achieving visual quality goals. Operators who wish to do this work will be required to post a performance bond to assure that their work meets expected standards. Maps produced by NRM will show recommended locations of landings, haul roads, buffers, and skid trails where they directly impact a recreational trail. If necessary, these locations will be marked on the ground as well. Timber harvesting will be designed with smaller harvest areas than those that are typical of other county lands and the shapes of the harvest areas will be designed to decrease their visibility. Contracts with loggers will be used to achieve ecological community-based recreation goals.

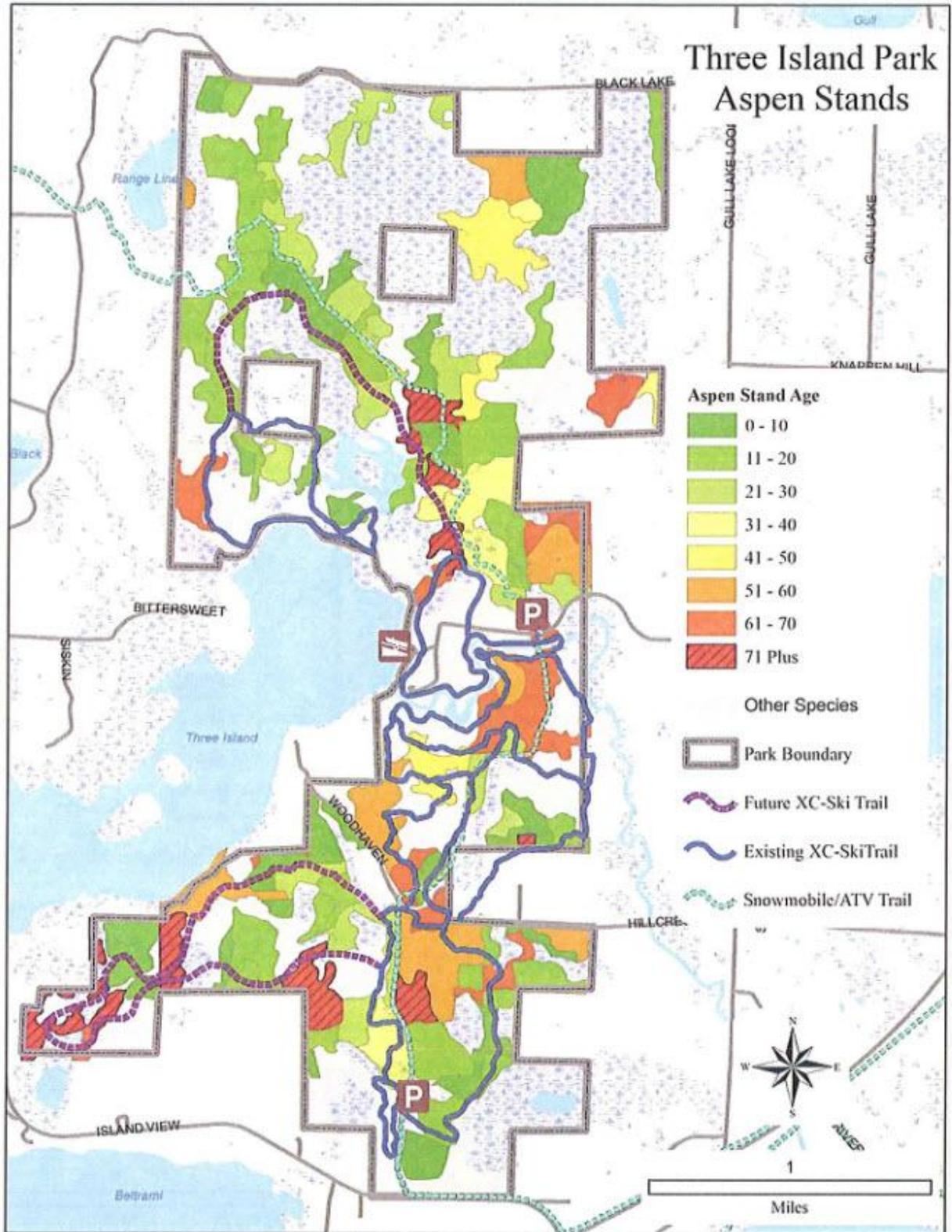
- 4) **Funding Forest Diversity:** The County will invest 15% of projected park timber sale revenues in reforestation efforts (site preparation, seedlings, planting, protection, release) toward the end of promoting tree species diversity in the park and recreation areas. Tree seedlings recommended in reforestation project plans will be native species that are compatible with site conditions. Over the life of a reforestation effort, significant dollars will be spent for each mile of trail. It is acknowledged that intensive tree planting and maintenance along trail corridors will be expensive in these recreation areas.
- 5) **Public Involvement and Cooperative Efforts:** The process by which forest management activities are proposed and contracted will involve interested groups. NRM will make an annual public presentation to the PTAC and interested groups to review projects for the upcoming year. The NRM Department and PTAC will receive comments from those groups which may be used to modify plans. The PTAC may request a tour to see the proposed projects on the ground.
- 6) **Public Education Efforts:** The County is managing a resource where the decisions made today dictate what the forest will look like 40, 80, or 100+ years from now. What makes a trail a favorite of an individual may be the result of 40 years of forest management activities. The County will place appropriate interpretive signs at trailheads and along trails within the parks to explain forest management activities.
- 7) The County will also try to coordinate this effort with local schools and their environmental educational programs. The interpretive sites in Movil Maze and Three Island Park will serve as outdoor classrooms demonstrating how different forest management techniques help preserve, protect, and improve the health of the forest while providing for multiple recreational opportunities

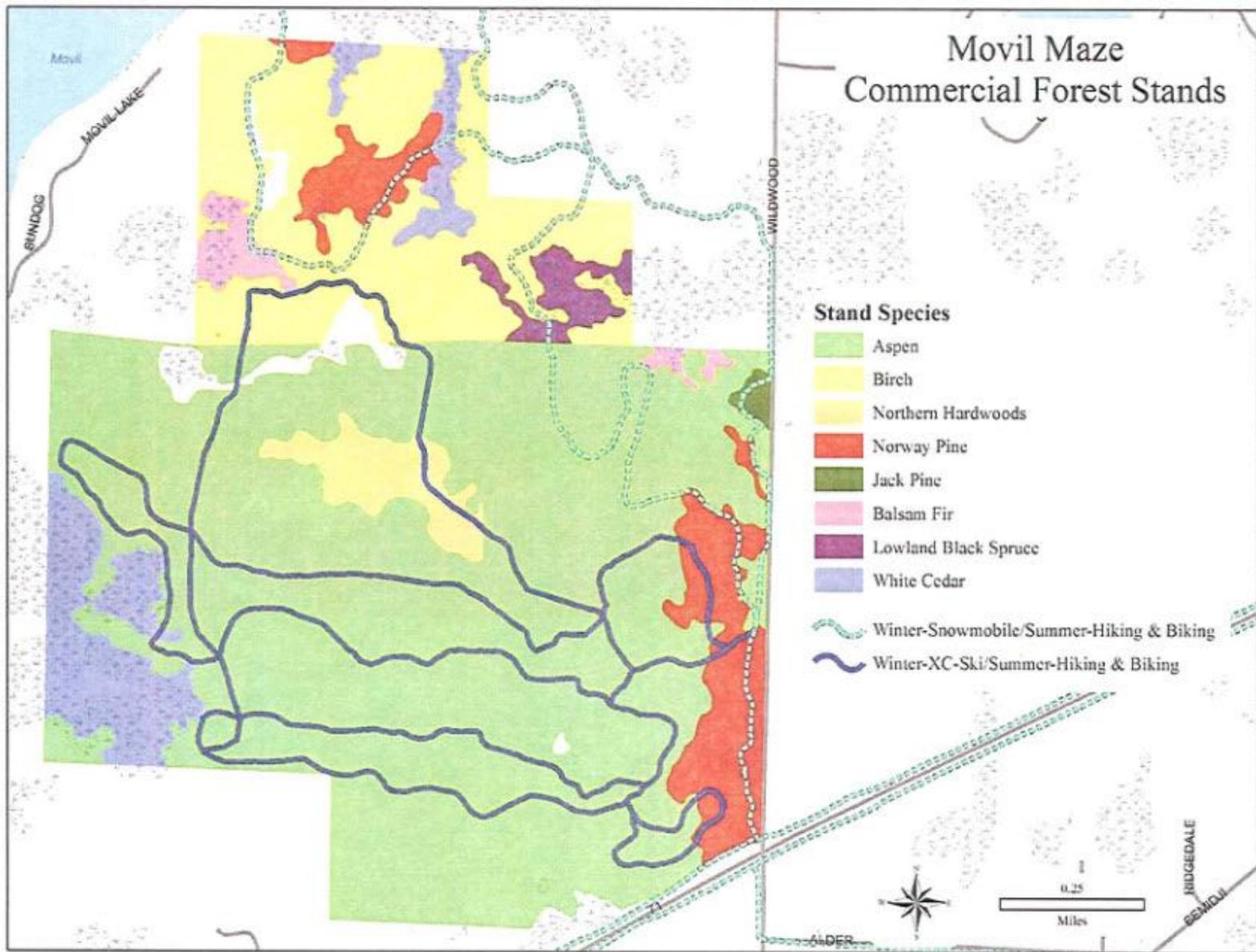
Conclusion

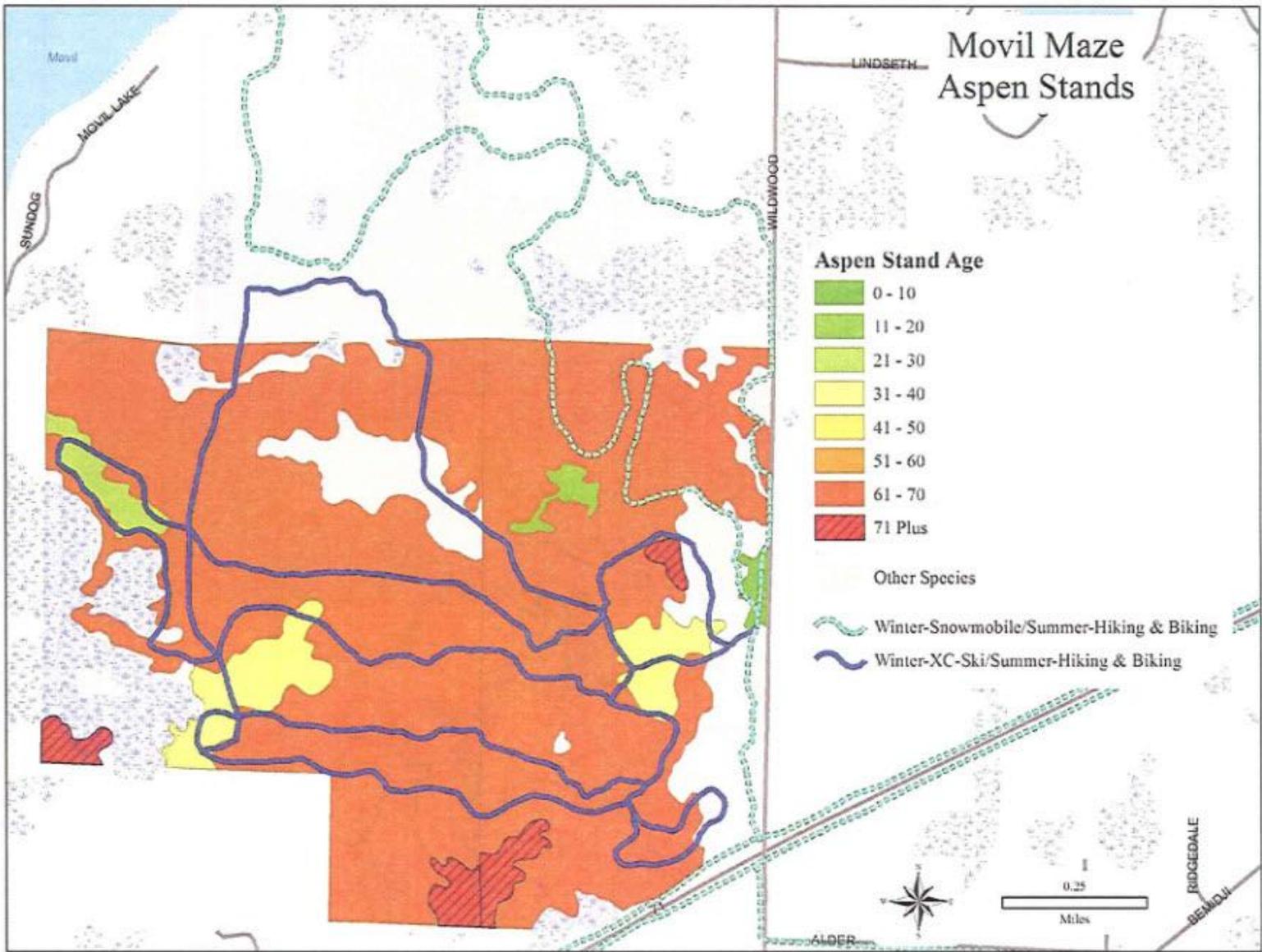
We are fortunate, in our county, to have forest resources that can meet numerous needs from timber harvest to hunting, and from recreational trail use to maintaining a very diverse habitat for native species. Within the Movil Maze and Three Island Park, the latter two uses predominate. As such, these areas need to be managed differently from other county owned forestlands. We will be guided by prescriptions utilizing the latest ecological community survey data and silvicultural interpretations. We will use timber harvesting, among other tools, to expedite progress toward a range of successional stages. Included are those stages characterized by more mature, longer lived trees, ecologically appropriate to the site, than are retained on most other county forest lands. Public involvement in management decisions will be overtly encouraged and the stamp of interest groups will be intentionally sought in operations that are carried out in this progression of ecological change to the extent that natural events allow it.

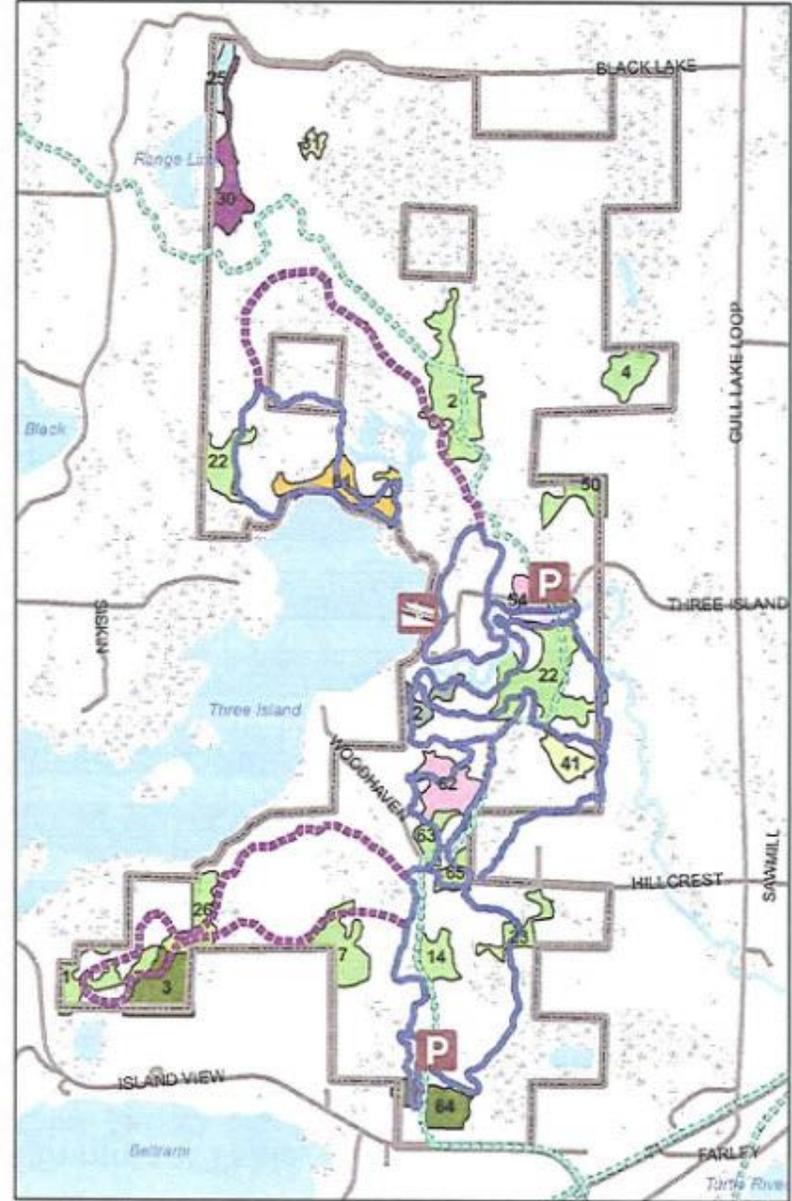
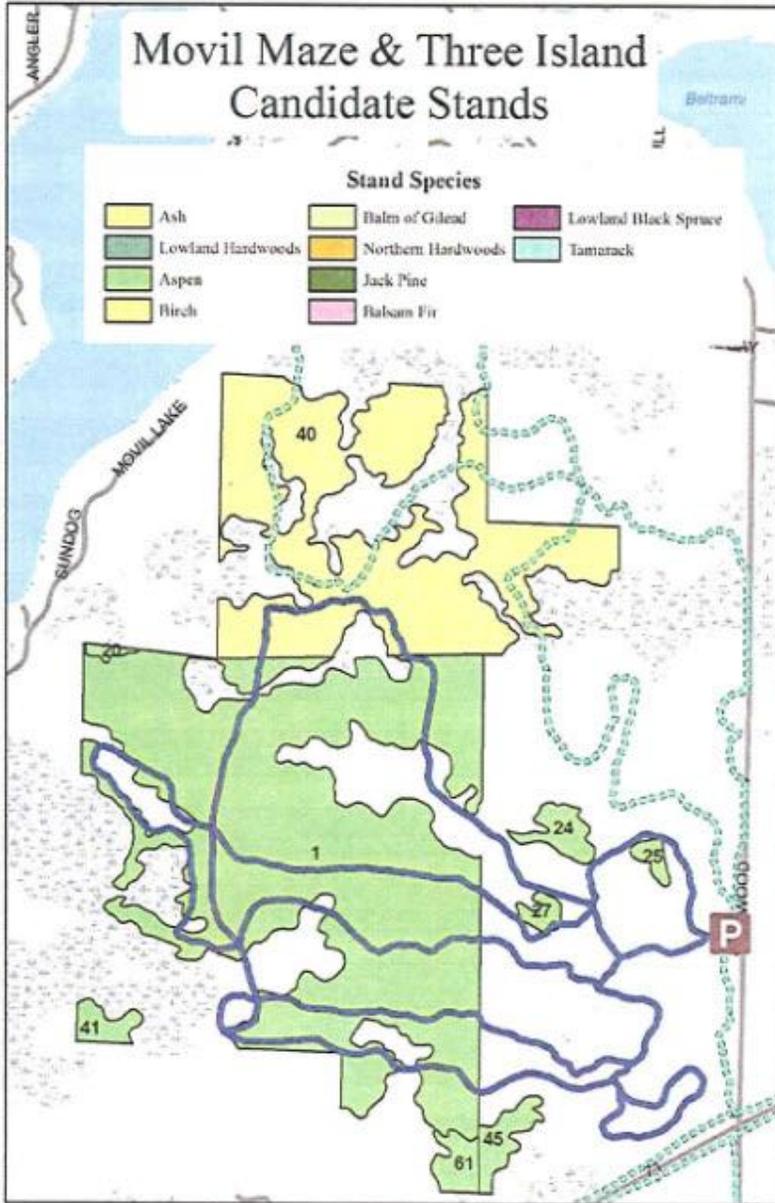
Beltrami County Forest Plan with revision
Approved by the Beltrami County Board May 3, 2011











10 Year Desired Harvest Summary Table

		Treatment Acres	Rotation Age	Decade Total	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Ctype 1 Ash	Normal	100		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	ERF	125		10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ctype 9 LH	Normal	100		7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	ERF	125		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 12 Aspen	Normal	45		512	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51
	ERF	60		64	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
Ctype 13 Birch	Normal	50		70	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
	ERF	65		7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ctype 14 Balm of Gilead	Normal	40		15	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	ERF	60		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 20 Northern Hardwood	Normal	95		18	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	ERF	120		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 30 Oak	Normal	100		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	ERF	125		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 51 White Pine	Normal	130		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	ERF	200		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 52 Red Pine	Normal	100		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	ERF	170		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 53 Jack Pine	Normal	50		104	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
	ERF	65		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 61 White Spruce	Normal	55		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	ERF	75		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 62 Balsam Fir	Normal	45		56	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	ERF	60		5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ctype 71 Black Spruce, Lowland	Normal	95		30	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	ERF	130		2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ctype 72 Tamarack	Normal	60		16	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	ERF	105		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Desired Harvest Goals				916	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92