

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 9/16/2024 4:00:00 AM

First name: Sean

Last name: Hollowell

Organization: Tribal - Little River Band of Ottawa Indians Natural Resources Department

Title: Wildlife Division Manager

Comments: I am pleased to see that the Forest Service is reevaluating their approach to managing old growth forests with an increased focus on adapting to local environmental conditions and incorporating Indigenous Knowledge. While old growth forests are an important part of the landscape that the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians (LRBOI) have lived in for thousands of years, current old growth forest management can be a hindrance to the tribe's goals of ecological integrity. The Manistee River, which flows through the Huron-Manistee National Forest (HMNF), is a National Recreational River with a management plan that calls for forests within the river corridor to be managed as old growth forest. Unfortunately, many of these forests are monotypic red pine plantations, which provide minimal ecological benefits or cultural benefit to the tribe. It is the opinion of the LRBOI Natural Resources Department that the lowland red pine plantations should be replaced by swamps or old growth mesic forest and that the upland red pine plantations should be replaced by pine barrens. These alternative management regimes would benefit culturally important species like sugar maple, paper birch, white cedar, and box turtle, as well as overall ecological integrity. The HMNF staff is helpful and more than willing to collaborate with LRBOI on managing land and wildlife, but preexisting management plans can limit their ability to do so in some instances. I encourage the Forest Service to continue to engage tribes in old growth forest management and explore additional ways to incorporate site-specific information into old growth forest management plans.