



Safari Club International Foundation

Michigan Wildlife Habitat Initiative

1. Background

The Safari Club International Foundation (SCIF)'s Michigan Wildlife Habitat Initiative (MWHI) evolved from a recognition of the need to manage wildlife habitat across ownerships on a regional scale. Major landownership categories in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan include private non-industrial, corporate, Federal, and State holdings (see Figure 1). Each of these entities have goals for these lands and reasons to retain their ownership. Wildlife is a public resource and does not recognize ownership boundaries. Critical habitat for wildlife occurs across all ownership categories. Most landowners have a fiduciary responsibility for sustaining wildlife and their habitats, others claim that wildlife is a high priority and reason for their continued ownership of property. Serious loss of some of the most valuable wildlife habitat has occurred in recent decades due to the lack of a coordinated approach to management of forestland across ownership categories and a failure to communicate the needs of wildlife among landowners and administrators.

2. Mission Statement

The mission of the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Initiative is to work collaboratively across organizational boundaries and ownership categories to implement wildlife habitat improvement projects that will enhance habitat conditions and landscape connectivity for a variety of game, non-game, and sensitive species.

3. Guiding Principles

Guiding principles of the MWHI were developed following Michigan's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025, Michigan White-tailed Deer Stand Specific Habitat Management Guidelines (MDNR 2016), Michigan White-tailed Deer Landscape Specific Habitat Management Guidelines (UP Habitat Workgroup 2017), Deer Winter Complex Management Plans (UP Michigan Habitat Workgroup 2016), Ottawa National Forest Wildlife Habitat Improvement Project, and Lakewide Action and Management Plan for Lake Superior (LAMP).

We seek to cooperatively implement projects that will enhance habitat requirements of wildlife species native to the UP. Projects will be selected through a collaborative process involving working with cooperators and guided by a steering committee (see Figure 2. Organizational Chart). Wildlife habitat areas for emphasis include: openings and early successional habitat, mesic conifers, Deer Wintering Complexes (DWCs), Xeric conifers, large opening complexes and savanna, mature forest conditions, fragmentation and corridors, within-stand diversity, and hard and soft mast. Specifically we seek to support and implement projects that promote:

- Reducing fragmentation of, and providing forested corridors for dispersal and genetic connectivity for a variety of wildlife species
- Protecting and enhancing wetland habitat (including forested wetlands) and riparian buffers for protection of water quality as well as enhanced habitat for a variety of species

- Helping to minimize the threat of invasive species
- Helping to improve quality and distribution of food and cover essential to protect wildlife against extreme weather events and long term climate change
- Increasing within-stand habitat structure of all forestland
- Increasing forest diversity through management practices of releasing, planting, underplanting, or site prep for targeted regeneration of various species (e.g., Hemlock, yellow birch, oak).
- Increasing the quantity and quality of early succession habitat, including openings and upland brush. Maintaining or expanding large opening complexes.
- Enhancing, expanding, or recovering existing and historic DWCs by emphasizing browse or shelter species management.

4. Goals and Objectives

The goals of the MWHI are to:

- Identify opportunities to improve wildlife habitat conditions across all land ownership, large and small, in the Upper Peninsula and the Northern Lower Peninsula. To do this, we will:
 - 1) Provide seasonal food and habitat such as mesic conifer for winter cover, maintain openings, early successional and shrub/mast for spring and summer habitat;
 - 2) Expand and ensure conifer connectivity;
 - 3) Protect denning and escape cover for a variety of birds and mammals.
 - 4) Leverage technical and financial resources to implement prioritized projects on public and private lands
 - 5) Share resources and assist cooperating organizations and private landowners with technical and financial assistance.
 - 6) Increase public awareness of issues and engage public and private landowners in wildlife habitat improvement opportunities.

MWHI Objectives Include:

- Adopting a standardized method for consistent evaluation and selection of projects to receive financial assistance.
- Evaluating project applications and awarding funding to recipients and/or cooperators that meet the intent and species/habitat benefits for which the money was provided.
- Providing oversight and quality assurance for selected projects implemented on public and private lands.
- Documenting and reporting annual accomplishments to cooperators that provide funding.
- Informing and involving the public in habitat restoration and protection efforts, and opportunities to get involved in hands-on restoration work with our cooperators.
- Evaluating practices and using adaptive management to optimize success.

FIGURE 1. Major land ownership categories in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan

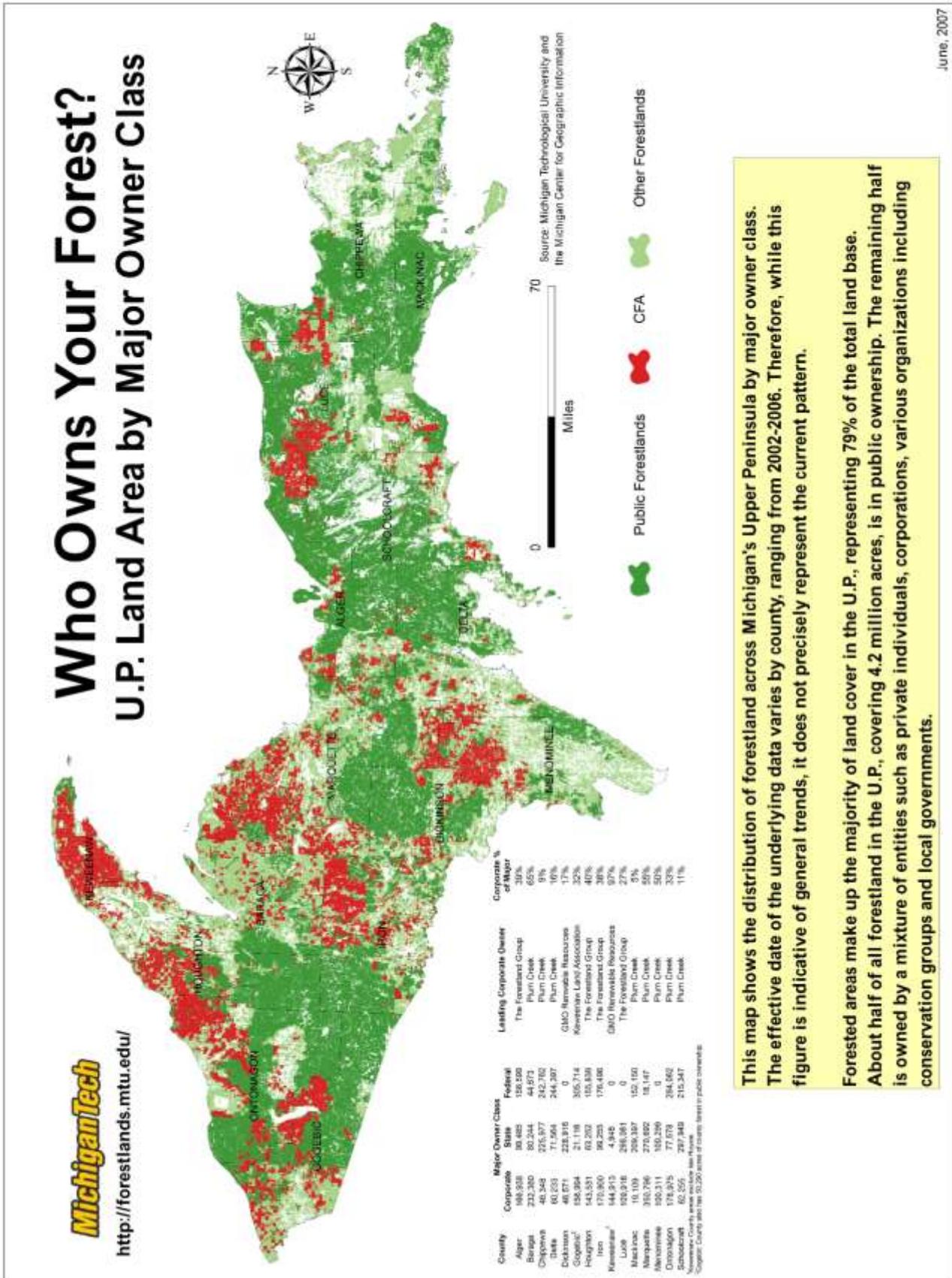
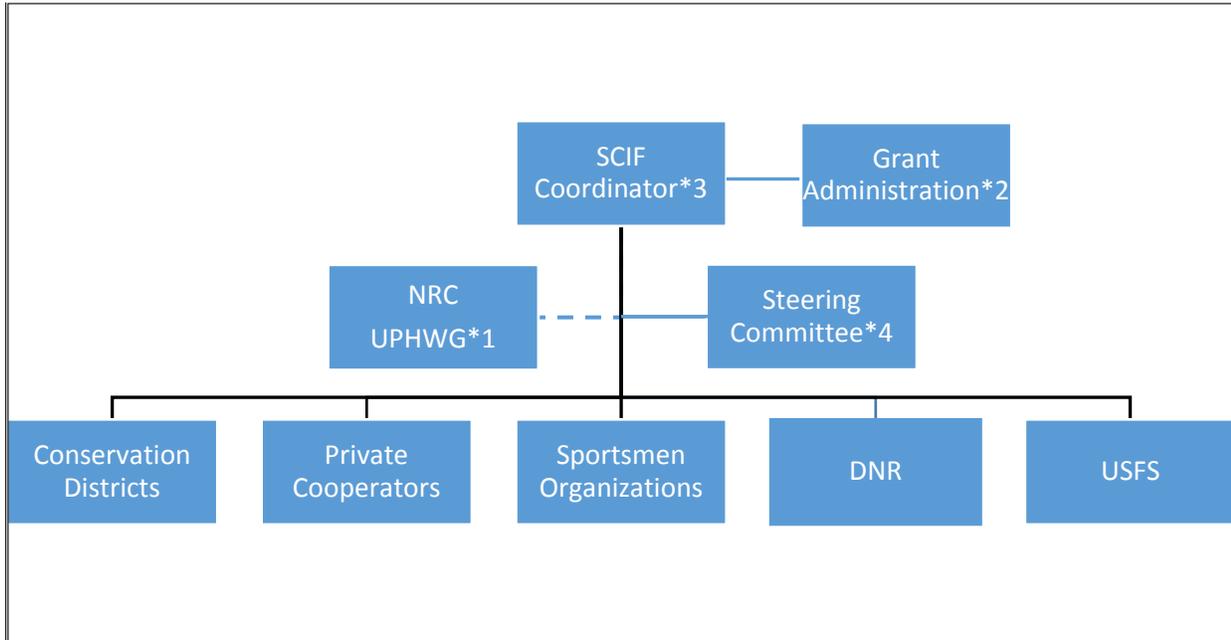


FIGURE 2. Organizational Chart



*1 – Natural Resources Commission; UP Habitat Workgroup

*2 – Sustainable Resource Institute (www.sustainableinc.org)

*3 – Jim Hammill, SCIF (jimhammill@hughes.net)

*4 – Stuart Boren (sborfor@gmail.com); Jake Walciskak (jwalciskak@gmail.com);
Bob Doepker (doepkerr@baycollege.edu); Jim Hammill (jimhammill@hughes.net)