

Date: June 26, 2002

To: Elaine M. Stewart
Smith and Bybee Lakes Area Manager

From: Joseph Pesek
Wildlife Biologist

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the habitat values of, and the future plans for, the Smith and Bybee Lakes Wildlife Area.

The following comments concern that area of the site that lies north of and along the channel immediately north of the landfill site. This is an area of Oregon ash forest which is unique to the S&B lakes area. It is the last remnant of more extensive ash forests that occurred in that general vicinity. The area is dominated by Oregon ash with a typical understory of shrubs, forbs, and grasses. Some of the ash trees are greater than 4 feet DBH which indicates extreme age. Some decadent snags with numerous cavities remain and there are a good number of young trees in the understory. The size of this forested area indicates that it is a significant portion of the upland habitat of the overall area and as such is an irreplaceable component of the total habitat matrix.

On a recent but somewhat abbreviated visit to the area, I made sightings of or observed signs of, fifteen species of birds and 5 species of mammals. Both feeding and nesting activities were noted. Ash forests are known to support many more species and further study of this area would, I am sure, bear this out. I know that bats would be attracted to the many cavities present and downed trees would provide habitat for several species of amphibians and reptiles.

It is my understanding from our conversation that a segment of the Forty Mile Loop trail is planned for this area and current plans call for constructing this segment somewhere in the ash forest area. In light of the uniqueness of this habitat type and its value to wildlife I believe this would be an unwise decision. Wherever the trail was situated the construction would significantly reduce the size of the forest and the subsequent use of the trail would greatly impact the use on the remaining portion. If the trail bisected the forest it could, in effect, preclude most use by wildlife. I believe a more appropriate site for the trail would be on the landfill where it would be buffered from the ash forest by existing channel.

Again thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important issue in the overall plan for the Smith and Bybee Lakes Area.

Sincerely,

Joseph Pesek