

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Partnering for Watershed Restoration of Lake Superior

2017-2019



Person fishing at the mouth of Iron River along Lake Superior

The Upper Peninsula of Michigan is located in the heart of Lake Superior. Locals know that a healthy lake is linked to healthy forests and streams. Together these resources provide the region's local communities safe drinking water, jobs, and recreational opportunities. However, poor land management practices in the past, stream channelization, and habitat fragmentation have degraded the waterways. Consequently, these effects are felt by the at-risk sturgeon and priority commercial, recreational, and tribal fish species such as brook trout, salmon, and steelhead. In the adjacent forests, many at-risk species also reside, such as gray wolf, northern long-eared bat, Kirtland's warbler, common loon, red shoulder hawk, bald eagle, Conneticutt warbler, and golden-winged warbler. To help address these habitat needs the Partners for Watershed Restoration Collaborative (PWR) was established in 2013. The PWR has brought together the resources and expertise of 41 federal, tribal, state, and local agencies, as well as academic institutions, non-profit groups, and industry. This Joint Chiefs' project leveraged these efforts and delivered a suite of forest and stream restoration activities to benefit the community and at-risk species.

PROJECT IMPACT:

5,000 acres

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2017-2019: \$1,340,263
Total USDA and partner project funds: \$1,419,573

New forest management plans were written for 5,000 acres of non-industrial private forestlands.

PROJECT RESULTS



Little Iron River and forest edge

Economic benefits:
27 employment opportunities created in the community.

Community access:
7 miles of trails and 660 feet of boardwalk were restored and maintained on forested public lands.

Aquatic habitat improvements: removal of stream barriers restored flow to three trout streams, enhancement of riparian areas, treatments of non-native invasive weeds.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

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PARTNERING FOR WATERSHED RESTORATION OF LAKE SUPERIOR



Workshop facilities at Ford Center and forest (Credit: Michigan Technological University)

Working Across Boundaries

Much of the western Upper Peninsula of Michigan appears to be unspoiled wilderness but looks can be deceiving. The area was heavily impacted by logging, mining and other activities and the area's forests and rivers have still not recovered.

Partnering for Watershed Restoration of Lake Superior, a project created through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, was created to provide forest owners the resources of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and USDA Forest Service to improve forest habitat and water quality. To make the project successful, local representatives of the two agencies along with state and local partners had to make forest owners aware of the opportunity available to them.

The partnership organized three public workshops in November 2018 and sent invitations to nearly 8,000 landowners and forest professionals. The workshops were held in Iron River, Alberta and Ewen. "We had a lot of good speakers," said Jennifer Ricker, district manager of the Iron Baraga Conservation District.

In addition to Ricker, there were speakers representing NRCS, the Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Michigan Forestry Assistance Program. Topics covered during the workshops included water quality, aquatic habitat, forest health, wildfire risk, invasive species, forest diseases and insect pests and wildlife habitat improvement.

"We felt we had good information to keep people there despite the bad weather that was happening," said Ricker.

The purpose of the workshops was not only to educate landowners but also to allow networking between forest owners and professional foresters in the area. Technical support for NRCS and Forest Service programs are often provided by private technical service providers. Landowners hire their services and are reimbursed through programs like the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

For more information, please visit [nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports)



Little Iron River and Lake Superior shoreline

Key Partners

US Fish and Wildlife Service
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
KISMA
North County Trail Hikers
MCSC Flood Relief

Contact

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