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Understanding Native American Perceptions of Sustainable Forestry *Midwest Case Study*

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and

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Methods

- Snowball Sampling
- Informed Consent
- 3 focus groups and 4 personal interviews were conducted.
 - Participants were composed of tribal members, employees of the Bands, and residents of the reservation communities.

Case Study Objectives

1. Examine historical and current forest uses (values).
2. Compare resource management practices.
3. Examine the relationship between tribal definitions of sustainable forests and criteria and indicators defined in the Montreal Process.
4. Identify barriers and opportunities for tribal participation in regional discussions of sustainable forests.
5. Identify commonalities and differences between tribal and non-tribal communities' forest uses (values) related to sustainability.

Participants



- Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
- White Earth Band of Ojibwe



FEDERAL LANDS AND INDIAN RESERVATIONS

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Department of Defense (includes Army Corps of Engineers lakes)
- Fish and Wildlife Service / Wilderness
- Forest Service / Wilderness
- National Park Service / Wilderness

Some small sites are not shown, especially in urban areas.



Albers equal area projection

Abbreviations

- IR Indian Reservation
- NF National Forest
- NP National Park
- NWR National Wildlife Refuge



White Earth Band of Ojibwe

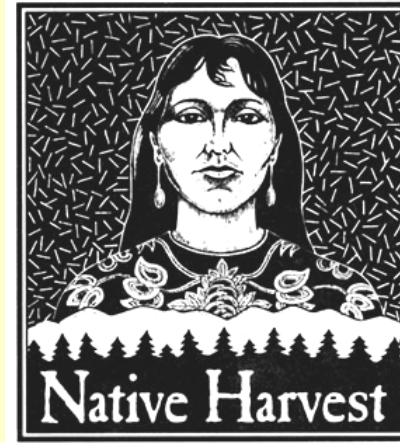
- The White Earth Reservation boundary spans across three counties in northwestern Minnesota.
- The reservation has been extensively logged from 1889.
- The White Earth Reservation is comprised of a complex patchwork of land ownership.

White Earth Band of Ojibwe

- Topography ranges from prairie to forest.
- Forests are primarily even-aged stands
 - aspen, paper birch, red and white pine, swamp conifers, black and white spruce, balsam fir, red and white oak, and swamp hardwoods
- Total Reservation land area: 837,120 acres.
- White Earth owns: 71,358 acres.

White Earth Land Recovery Project

•Goal: “To facilitate recovery of the original land base of the White Earth Indian Reservation while preserving and restoring traditional practices of land stewardship, language fluency, community development and strengthening our spiritual and cultural heritage.”



www.nativeharvest.com

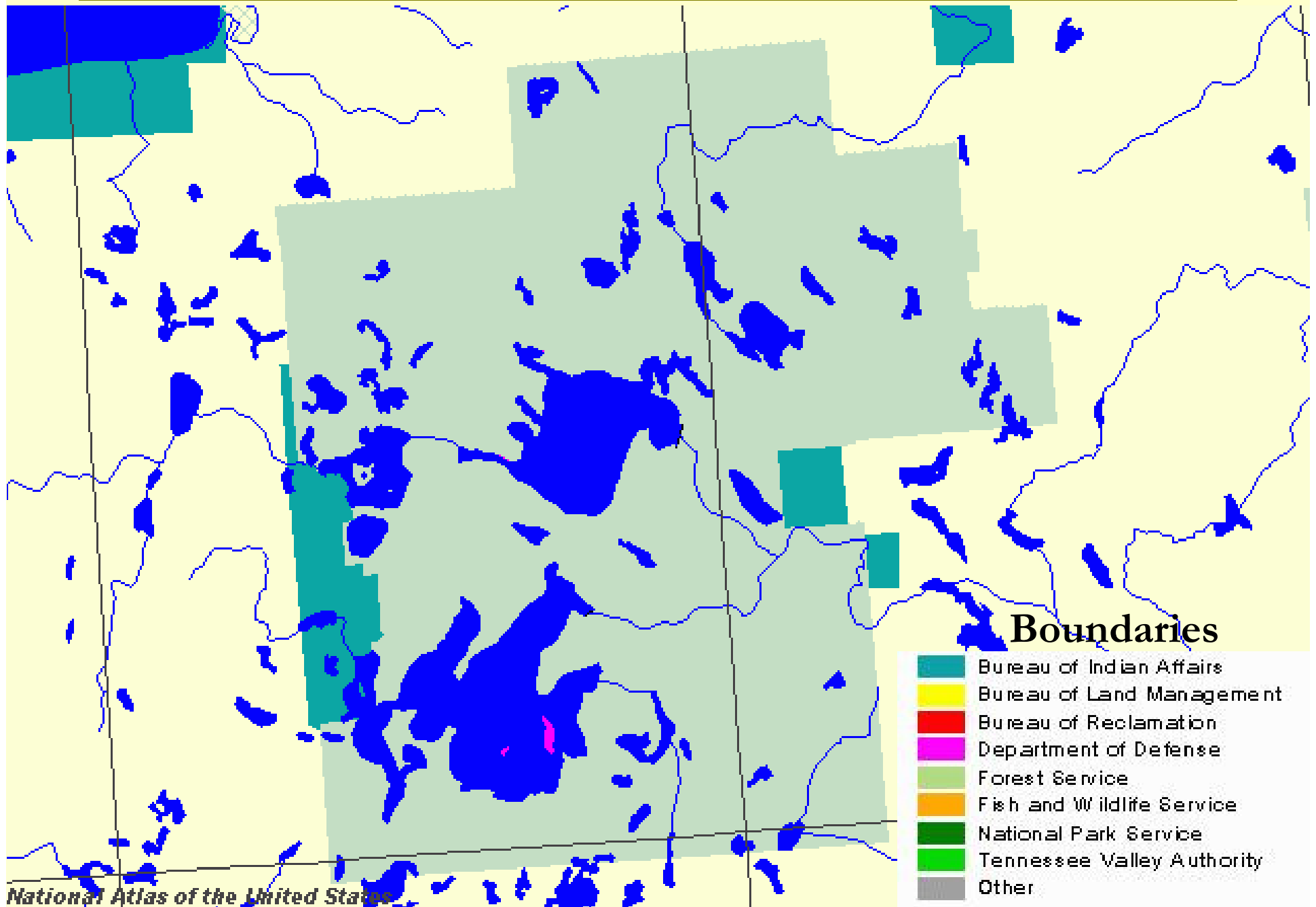
- WELRP Sugarbush forest is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certified.
- Involved in many projects that range from alternative energy to land acquisition to forest stewardship.



Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

- Leech Lake Reservation boundaries expand across four counties in north central Minnesota.
- Leech Lake has been extensively logged since the 1900s.
- The boundaries of Leech Lake Reservation are unique: they mirror almost exactly the boundaries of the Chippewa National Forest.
- There are 864,000 acres within Reservation boundaries. The Leech Lake Band has 29,000 acres of various tribal ownership.

Leech Lake Reservation and CNF Boundaries



How did you use the forest as a child? How do you use the forest now?

Then

- "The woods was our entertainment, it was our livelihood, it was a lot of things personally, growing up."

Now

- "One of the things I've learned a lot of is the cultural aspects of the forest. Such as what we use different plants for: for medicine, for pain, for some type of ceremony, or things we still really can't disclose to non-Indians. A lot of plants that we use are in the forest. There are teas, there are medicines, there are edible plants out there that we still use."

In the past, how did this Tribal Nation manage (take care of) the forest?
How does this community manage the forest currently?

- "Basically, we didn't have input until 1994 on how many acres were going to be harvested, what kind of forestry practices were going to be used, or what kind of timber would be harvested. We had no input."

Does your community's traditional knowledge of the forest influence forest management?

- "It's part of our beliefs, history and culture."

What plants and trees found in the forests near by are considered spiritually or culturally significant to your community?

“All of them.”

How do you define sustainable forestry?

- "My personal opinion of sustainable forestry is making sure that there's going to be a forest for future generations...Comparing our age to the age of trees, we're only here for a short time, and we have to make sure that it's always going to be here for their use. That's the way the Creator made it. You use what you need and you leave the rest for the next generation. Then it's their turn to take care of the resources after you're gone."

What are the indicators you would look for to determine if sustainable forestry was accomplished?

- “I would say a sustainable forest definitely has to be growing all the native plants back.”

What are the major differences between tribal and non-tribal management of forests? Similarities?

- "I think it's the use of the forest. Respect. Culturally and spiritually. Reservations are more apt to look at those considerations. We try to manage it for everyone, not for just one specific reason."

How do decisions made on nearby public lands affect your forests? Is the Tribe consulted?

- “Decisions made on other lands have a lot of effect.”

Agencies and groups have come together in the Upper Mississippi watershed to form partnerships on sustainable forestry.

What should the Tribe's role in these discussions be? What are the barriers to participation?

- The Tribe needs to be asked, invited, encouraged. The Tribe does not participate in county government. Tribe has a history of being ignored... There is a lack of respect. There is a lot of prejudice here... When White Earth does participate, they're not forceful, so they are ignored... A lot of the barriers are cultural and social issues.
- “There may be a lack of participation because: maybe the issue they have been invited to is not a priority for the Tribe.”
- “At meetings, Tribal members listen to everyone first, then add. Agencies try to run meetings at Leech Lake. They don't understand that there is a protocol that Leech Lake follows.”

Do you see barriers to tribal participation in these discussions? How might these be overcome?

- There is a “Lack of Participation” because: maybe the issue they have been invited to is not a priority for the Tribe. The Tribal employees are very busy...they’re swamped because of limited \$ resources. One person does many people’s jobs.

Summary and Recommendations

- Cultural differences
- Development of a network of ongoing relations and dialogue with each individual sovereign nation.
- Historical distrust

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