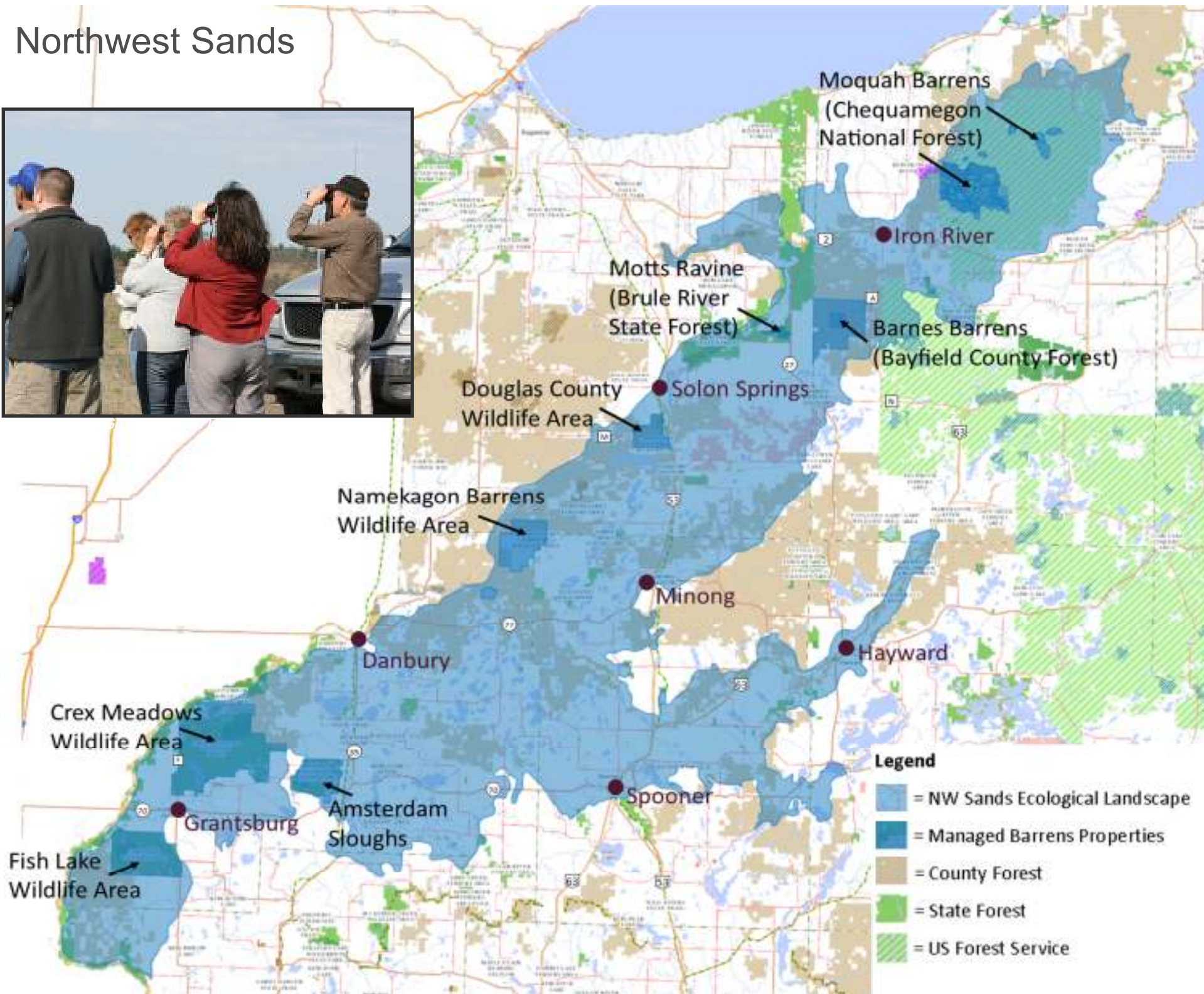


Northwest Sands



Northwest Wisconsin Barrens



A Landscape of Global Significance

Stretching from just south of Lake Superior in Bayfield County to northern Polk County, the Northwest Sands covers about 1.2 million acres. The sandy soils that define the region, along with the numerous lakes and rivers are all remnants of past glaciers. European explorers often described the region as “barrens” or “brush prairie” created by fires that for centuries burned over much of this land creating an open landscape. While appearing to be barren due to the scarcity of older forests, the grassy and brushy landscape contained a rich diversity of plants and animals.



Sharp-tailed Grouse photo provided by WI-DNR

Today the open landscape has become quite rare due to modern fire control and landowners focus on growing trees. Today only about 26,000 acres of open barrens exist in the Northwest Sands on properties specifically managed for brush prairie habitat. Many formerly common plant and animal species in this region are now mostly found only on these managed properties.

A Globally Significant Landscape

Barrens have declined in the world and have been listed as globally rare. Scientists have identified the Northwest Wisconsin Sand Region as the best opportunity to restore barrens, especially open barrens, due to its relatively small human population and vast amount of public land.



Blueberry by Dave Evenson

Bountiful, Beautiful Barrens

The barrens of Northwest Wisconsin may lack mature trees but are truly bountiful and beautiful. They contain countless insect species including the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly. Over 200 plant species, many with spectacular flowers, and over 225 bird and other animal species, including the increasingly rare sharp-tailed grouse and upland sandpiper.



Upland Sandpiper by Jim Williams

Public Lands Managers and Foresters to the Rescue

Working forests, parts of county forests in six counties – Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Sawyer and Washburn – together with large private industrial forests cover about a half million acres in the Northwest Sands. These forests can be managed in a way that provides habitat corridors to reconnect the barrens for wildlife.



Blocks of forest and barrens photo provided by WI-DNR

These corridors would be made up of blocks of forest that are harvested and regenerated on a rotating cycle. A newly harvested block would begin as a temporary open barrens. As a block regrows to provide future forest products an adjacent area would be harvested, which would create a rolling barrens concept.

Rolling Barrens provide these benefits:

- Provide habitat for barrens wildlife that need space, such as sharp-tailed grouse and upland sandpipers
- Foresters can administer large blocks of forest more efficiently than scattered stands
- Loggers save time and effort in moving equipment
- Open barrens phase provides temporary fuel breaks to assist fire fighting efforts

What can you do to support barrens management?

- Visit one of the barrens properties on the map and experience first-hand their beauty and bounty.
- Join one of the organizations listed below.
- Support foresters and timber managers in Northwest Wisconsin in creating rolling barrens

Contact Bob Hanson, Northwest Sands Wildlife Biologist for more information and ideas about how we can connect the barrens in the Northwest Sands at robert.hanson@wisconsin.gov or 715-463-2896.

Online Resources

Northwest Sands Ecological Landscape: <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/lf/LF0040nwsands.pdf>

Northwest Sands Corridor Plan: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/nwsandsplan.pdf>

Sharp-tailed Grouse Management Plan: dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/stgrplan.pdf

USFS Moquah Wildlife Area: www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/regions/eastern/MoquahPineBarrens/index.shtml

This brochure is published by the Friends of the Northwest Sands, a working group made up of representatives from the following non-profit member organizations:

Friends of Crex: www.crexmeadows.org

Friends of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area: www.fnbwa.org

Friends of the Bird Sanctuary: www.fotbs.org

Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society: www.wisharptail.org

The St. Croix River Association: www.stcroixriverassociation.org