



What are Aitkin County's Model/High Conservation Value Forests?

Why do we care? Where are they? Why are they special? How do we manage them?

What are Aitkin County's Model Forests/HCVF sites?

Aitkin County's proposed Model Forests are areas that have unique biodiversity features including rare ferns, salamanders, and birds or generally have high value as wildlife habitat. The Model Forest candidates are three sites that qualify as high conservation value areas (HCVF) under FSC® criteria (HCV1). HCVF are forests of outstanding and critical importance due to their environmental, socio-economic, cultural, biodiversity and/or landscape value.

Why do we care?

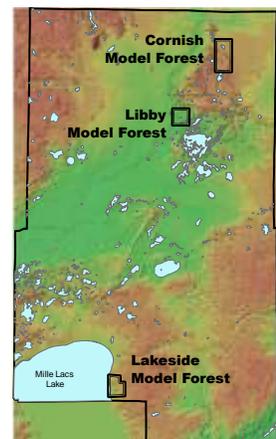
Aitkin County Land Department is requesting approval to apply for the Model Forest program and recognition as high conservation value sites. The Model Forest program would "put us on the map" of a national program that recognizes and highlights excellent forest management. So far, there are no forests from the Midwest – ACLD would be the first, if successful. High Conservation Value Forests are a required element of our FSC certification and lend themselves well as demonstrations (Model Forests) of our commitment to balancing ecology and people throughout the Aitkin County managed forests.

Where are the Aitkin County Model/HCV Forests?

The three sites are called Cornish, Libby, and Lakeside. Two are located in the northeastern quarter and one directly east of Mille Lacs Lake in Aitkin County.

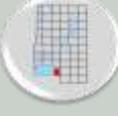
What Makes These Forests So Special?

These forests have rare, threatened, or special concern species from plants to salamanders and/or have unique wildlife habitat features. The wildlife habitat includes elements such as large blocks of forests in high development areas; valuable travel corridors for wildlife along a major river system, the Mississippi River; and rich floodplain and mesic hardwood ecosystems.



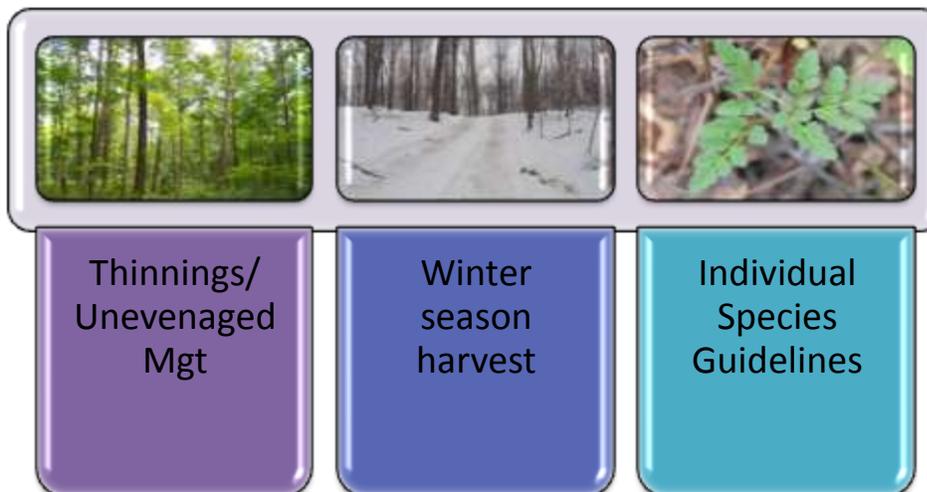
Locations of Aitkin County's Model Forests (HCVF Areas)

Table of Model Forests High Conservation Values

	Landscape Objective	Name	Conservation Values
	Mosaic Clustered	Cornish	Red shouldered hawk on ACLD property, rare plants, rare salamander. Large property with good proportion of MHN ₄₇ (4% North Central Landscape)
	Mosaic	Libby	Riparian (Mississippi corridor). Floodplain terrace, later-successional species
	Mosaic	Lakeside	Rare features and plants – high development pressure, East of Mille Lacs Lake

How Do We Manage the Model/HCV Forests?

Aitkin County uses a combined coarse- and fine-filter approach to manage conservation of forest ecosystems across Aitkin County. All of the Model Forest/HCVF forests are managed under the County-wide 100 Year Strategic Forest Management Plan which uses landscape habitat management zones and forest ecological system information as part of a broad (coarse-filter) plan to manage habitat for wildlife. For a fine-scale management approach, forest staff accounts for and considers rare, threatened, and endangered species on a case-by-case along with forest type objectives and appropriate harvest intensity on every timber sale. In other words, Aitkin County manages these forests similar to other county managed lands while keeping in mind the special features that make these areas unique.



These are three examples of special management approaches that may be used to conserve rare, threatened, or special concern wildlife and habitats in rich mesic forests.