Brule St. Croix Legacy Forest Receives Wings Across the Americas Conservation Award

MORGANTOWN, W.Va.—U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell presented awards last evening to recipients of the 2016 Wings Across the Americas Conservation Award in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The ceremony was part of the 81st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. The awards recognize Forest Service employees and their partners for their outstanding work to conserve birds, bats, butterflies, and dragonflies.

The Brule St. Croix Legacy Forest, which spans four counties in northwestern Wisconsin and the headwaters of both the St. Croix National Scenic River and the Bois Brule River, received an award in the Habitat Conservation Partnership category. This 65,867-acre forested tract contains valuable water resources and wildlife habitat that will remain undeveloped under a Forest Legacy conservation easement managed in perpetuity by the State of Wisconsin. It represents a missing puzzle piece of protected land across the Great Lakes States because it links a nearly 1-million-acre expanse of protected lands.

This work is important because the unique ecosystem that this forest provides – pine barrens – supports many bird species. These include sharp-tailed grouse, the federally endangered Kirtland’s warbler, and 28 species found on the Wisconsin State list of Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including the Vesper sparrow and brown thrasher.

The Forest Legacy Program is administered by the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry unit of the U.S. Forest Service, headquartered in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between States and the Forest Service to identify and conserve environmentally important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. Conservation easements are the main tool used for protecting these important forests.
The Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry works cooperatively with States, other Federal agencies, tribes, landowners, and other partners to protect, conserve, and manage forests and community trees across the 20 Northeastern and Midwestern States and the District of Columbia. The Northeastern Area provides leadership, technical support, sound science, and financial assistance to help ensure that our forests and trees continue to provide clean water, forest products, wildlife habitat, recreation, and other ecosystem services for present and future generations.

Chief Tidwell presented six other conservation awards in five categories:

**Urban Communities in Conservation**

“Green” Bat Houses for National Forests: Connecting Bats, People & Public Lands

**Research Partnership**

Multi-scale Landscape Approach for Studying the Secondary Effects of White-nose Syndrome in Bats of the Upper Midwest

**Habitat Conservation Partnership**

Big Muddy Bottomland Habitat Improvement

**Bird Conservation Partnership (2 awards)**

Kirtland’s Warbler Recovery Team

Arapaho National Recreation Area Osprey Management

**International Cooperation**

Southern Cone Grasslands Alliance

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