



Eastern Region Briefing Paper

Renewable Resources & Tribal Relations ZAAGKII WINGS & SEEDS PROJECT

<http://wingsandseeds.org/>

With the recent signing of formal resolutions by the tribal councils of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (2/4/2012) and the Hannahville Indian Community (2/6/2012) in support of partnerships in landscape restoration, the Eastern Region is providing this briefing of the *Zaagkii Wings and Seeds Project*.

OVERVIEW

The importance for new, creative collaborative initiatives increasingly defines the future direction of the USDA-FS. An example here in the Eastern Region is the partnership known as Wings & Seeds/ Zaagkii Project, now in its fifth year. Our partners and activities are cross-cultural and cross-generational. They are multifaceted, yet consistently focus on the specific goal of landscape restoration. The program objectives and tools we employ center on the essential ecological roles that native plants and pollinators play in the sustainability of natural ecosystems. Various facets of our project include ethnobotany research, at-risk youth involvement, native plant restoration, regional tribal workshops, vocational mentoring, and technology transfer.

The word *Zaagkii* comes from the Ojibwe language. This Anishinaabe term serves as an example of collaborative partnership, suggested to The Cedar Tree Institute and USDA-FS by elders from the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community as one helpful way to frame our common efforts. Its translation is "*the loving gifts which come from the Earth.*" Here are brief summaries of components of The Zaagkii Project.



PARTNERS

Hannahville Indian Community
Indigenous Studies Association
Intertribal Nursery Council
Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC)
Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Marquette County Juvenile Court, State of Michigan
Northern Michigan University Center for Native American Studies
Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians
The Cedar Tree Institute (nonprofit)
Upper Peninsula Children's Museum
USFS Eastern Regional Office
USFS Hiawatha National Forest
USFS National Reforestation, Nurseries, and Genetic Resources Team
USFS Ottawa National Forest
USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station
USFS State and Private Forestry

ETHNOBOTANY

The recovery and protection of traditional knowledge regarding locally native plants remains a core component of the Zaagkii Wings and Seeds Project. This has involved over 100 hours of edited filming that involved ethnobotanical interviews with Northern Michigan University's Native American Studies students and 24 Ojibwe elders from five different tribal communities.

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

Over the last four years, 47 at-risk youth from Marquette County's Juvenile Court have contributed 3,157 hours of community service to native plants and pollinator protection work. They've collected and disposed of invasive plants, prepared research projects, constructed bee and butterfly shelters, hosted community educational forums, and helped in the construction of a greenhouse on an American Indian Reservation (KBIC). Correlations between landscape restoration and healing of the human spirit have been consistently underscored as part of this program design model. Plans are also being made to send a youth delegation, with selected underserved Native American youth representatives, to follow the Monarch butterfly migration in the future.



RESTORATION OF NATIVE PLANTS AND POLLINATOR PROTECTION EFFORTS



At the heart of the Zaagkii Project is a specific focus on the restoration of locally native plants, their pollinators, and the sustainability of their natural ecosystems. The building of the first native plants greenhouse on an American Indian Reservation east of the Mississippi remains a central achievement for our collaborative efforts. Using a geodesic dome design, the structure is 33' in diameter, is self-sustaining, and is used as a training site for regional tribal plant restoration projects.

WORKSHOPS, TRAINING, TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

The Zaagkii Project continues to collaborate with the USDA-FS and American Indian tribes in plant restoration efforts across North America. Intertribal Nursery Council, Key focal points of the Council include: technology transfer and sharing, conservation education, preservation of ecological knowledge, reforestation, restoration, and nursery training. Meetings are held annually and participation is open to tribal members and non-tribal members who work for or with tribal agencies. Our partners have attended this meeting for three consecutive years. Scott Herron, PhD, an ethnobotanist of Anishinaabe (Odawa) lineage, remains a



consultant for us. Larry Heady, Eastern Region Tribal Relations Specialist USDA-FS, a Delaware (Lenape) tribal member, also serves as key advisor and liaison for tribal communities.

RESOLUTIONS FROM REGIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES

Three American Indian tribes have provided tribal resolutions pledging their ongoing support for The Zaagkii Wings and Seeds Project. Two additional tribes are working as partners in unfolding program design. The five regional tribes with whom we are currently working are the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Hannahville (Potawatomi) Indian Community, Sault Ste. Marie Band of Chippewa Indians, and the Lac Vieux Desert Band of Chippewa Indians. Northern Michigan University's Center for Native American Studies also serves as a key partner in our cross-cultural mentoring program. The Cedar Tree Institute coordinates relationships and components of the Zaagkii Project in consultation with Jan Schultz, Botany, Non-Native Invasive Species, and Special Forest Products Program Leader of the USDA-FS Eastern Region.

Resolution No. 2011-009, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians: *“The Council of the Band desires to partner with the United States Forest Service, the Center for Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University, the Ottawa National Forest, and other Native American communities in Northern Michigan in the Zaagkii Project which works to recover native plants, encourage pollinator protection projects, and heal our threatened ecosystems.”*

Resolution KB -1877-2012, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community: *“The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community desires to join in partnership with the Cedar Tree Institute, the United States Forest Service, the Center for Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University, the Hiawatha and Ottawa National Forests, and other Native American communities in Northern Michigan in the Zaagkii Project, which works to recover native plants, encourage pollinator protection projects, and heal threatened ecosystems.”*

Resolution No. 02062012-A, Hannahville Indian Community: *“The Hannahville Indian Community desires to partnership with the United States Forest Service, the Center for Native American Studies at Northern Michigan University (“NMU”), The Ottawa National Forest, and other Native American communities in Northern Michigan in the Zaagkii Project which works to recover native plants, encourage pollinator protection projects, and heal our threatened ecosystem...”*

FISCAL COMMITMENT

For the past four years, FY 2009 through FY 2012, the Eastern Region has allocated \$50,000 per year in support of the Zaagkii Project.

CONTACTS

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