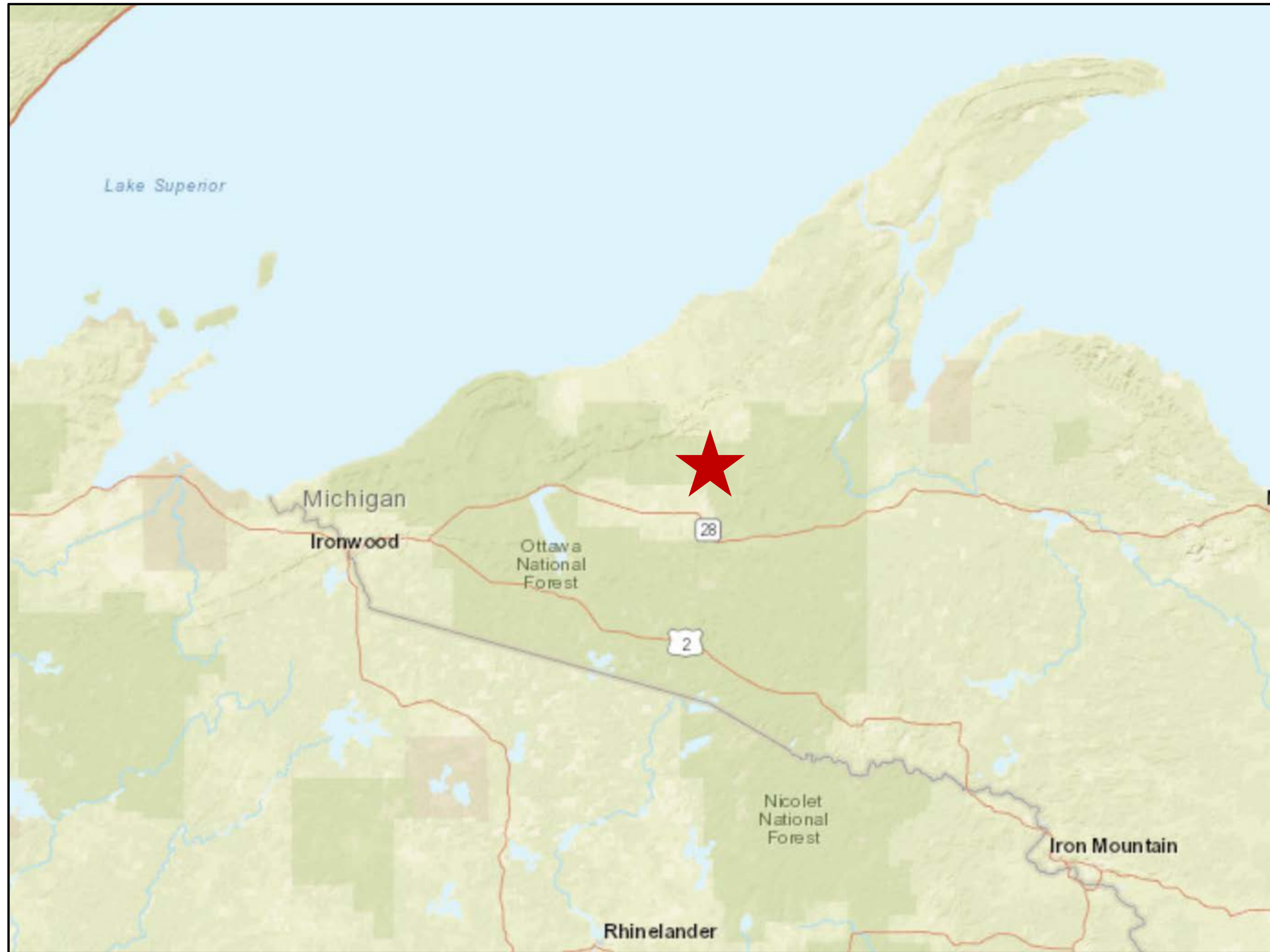


# Ottawa National Forest Archaeological Resource Management Plan

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## Abstract

As part of an Immersive Learning project (funded by the BSU Office of the Provost), members of ANTH 457/557 compiled a Historic Preservation Plan for the Ottawa National Forest to manage and maintain the historic property identified as site 20 ON 29. The site is a rare example of prehistoric placer copper mining in the Upper Peninsula's Keweenaw region. The site has the potential to address a number of important issues for understanding the nature of prehistoric activities in the region as well as contributing to our understanding of acquisition and exchange of copper throughout eastern North America. However, the archaeological resources of 20 ON 209 face several environmental preservation problems that will need to be resolved for the future survival of the site. The goal of this plan is to enhance long term maintenance and preservation of a unique archaeological resource with the potential for public education and outreach.



## Background

Under the National Historic Preservation Act as amended, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act, 36CFR800, and 2360 of the Forest Service Manual, the Ottawa National Forest is directed to manage and maintain important historic properties listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Partnering with the Ottawa National Forest we developed a Historic Preservation Plan which outlines the current conditions, explores the geological make-up, examines the prehistoric and historic background within the regional context, determines issues of site integrity, and makes recommendations for management and interpretation of site 20 ON 209.

Site 20 ON 209 is a historic property located on the Ontonagon District of the Ottawa National Forest (above image) and is a copper mining site with terminal woodland period activity. It is a unique resource of the Ottawa National Forest and a rare example of prehistoric mining in the Upper Peninsula's Keweenaw region. Archaeological research conducted at the site in the 1990s revealed an intact deposit containing archaeological materials that date to A.D. 705 to 980. As currently known, the site consists of approximately three hundred mining pits (image right) and two workshop areas located adjacent to the East Branch of the Ontonagon River (Ferone 1999). More recently, research conducted by Hill and Nolan (2017) further confirmed the site's integrity and geophysical surveys revealed buried features and pieces of copper (image top center).



The site has the potential to address a number of important issues for understanding the nature of prehistoric activities in the region as well as contributing to our understanding of acquisition and exchange of copper throughout eastern North America.

## Methods

Under the guidance of Mark Hill and Kevin Nolan, three graduate and five undergraduate students developed a management plan for site 20 ON 209. We students researched previous investigations of the site to determine what was known about the site and why it was important. While consulting with the forest archaeologist, Cari VerPlanck, we then examined key environmental and preservation issues that may affect the site. We determined methods and procedures to be implemented during subsequent research at the site to reduce the gaps in the site data and culture history of the area. In addition, we explored various possibilities to determine the best approaches for site management to provide successful means of protecting, preserving and sharing the importance and history of the site.

Shortly following the development of the plan Ball State initiated a field school run by Mark Hill (see Munro et al. this session) to further look into the archaeological record and use the methods developed by the plan to add to the known information of the site.



## Identified Preservation Issues

Over the course of our research, we identified several issues that are potentially affecting the site and its integrity. Regarding the natural environment, the Ontonagon river is eroding the river bank (image below) which supports the site and is potentially eating away at the site. Also, soil acidity could be corroding the copper artifacts within the site, possibly wiping away the material culture. Fortunately, the site is not easily accessible which will keep human disturbance at bay and help maintain the natural appearance and primitive character of the Wild River Corridor, which the site is located within. Also, several surrounding tribes consider the site sacred and they should be consulted about the management of the site.



## Recommended Preservation Plan

After detailed analysis and deliberation, we recommend the following management actions for site 20 ON 209. We recommend that the site qualifies for the National Register of Historic places under criterion A, C and D. For future research of the site we recommend the National Forest Service take a preservation management approach. If the site and the artifacts are determined in danger of becoming lost due to environmental forces, we recommend the site be archaeologically investigated to recover as much material culture and data as possible.

We recommend that a standard subsurface archaeological survey be conducted to delineate site boundaries as well as determine the extent of related cultural activity in the area. Remote sensing technology should be used when possible to generate data from beneath the surface before deciding if more invasive measures should be taken. We recommend a number of mapping and dating methods to address the research questions of site organization, structure, occupation, and soil chemistry. Efforts should be made to monitor river erosion and curb the destruction before it has any more effect of the site. On-site interpretation is not recommended as the site is both difficult to access and increased visitation could further contribute to maintenance and preservation issues. Such visitation could also present opportunities for illegal looting. The area tribes should be informed about any artifacts recovered during site investigations and informed on the details of this plan.

We believe following the stated recommendations will achieve the goal of this plan, which is to enhance long term maintenance and preservation of a unique archaeological resource with the potential for public education and outreach.



## References

Ferone, Troy Joseph  
1999 Terminal woodland copper procurement strategies in the southern Lake Superior basin. PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, East Lansing.

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Cari VerPlanck, Forest Archaeologist at Ottawa National Forest for sharing with us her knowledge of the forest and wishes for the future of the forest and the site.

This project could not have been done without the help of Ball State University Office of the Provost's Immersive Learning Program which funded the project.