

Threats to Ecological Value

Non-native plant species pose the most serious threat to this PCA. Oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, autumn olive, common buckthorn, and garlic mustard are particularly



Dry garlic mustard plants ready to spread their seeds

common in the understory. Few spring wildflowers were encountered during a site visit in early May, which could be a consequence of

the widespread garlic mustard out-competing the native wildflowers.

Oriental bittersweet is particularly prevalent in this forest and appears to be taking advantage of light gaps that develop in areas where large trees have been blown down. In some areas oriental bittersweet has climbed over younger trees and shaded them to death.

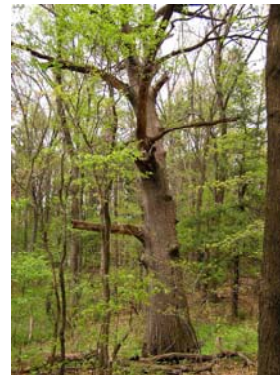
The red and scotch pine plantations appear to harbor fewer understory species than the surrounding dry-mesic southern forest habitat.

Management Recommendations

PCA 12 is a good candidate for conservation priority. This site is primarily used for recreation, and many hikers and horseback riders can enjoy traversing this area without examining the widespread non-native flora.

To the casual observer, much of the upland forest is a pleasant forest to walk through; it is shady and large enough to give the sense that the observer is far removed from roads, buildings, and other human structures. The size of this forest is also adequate for canopy nesting song birds who require at least 40 acres of uninterrupted forest to be successful. With proper management, pines could be replaced by oak and hickory trees.

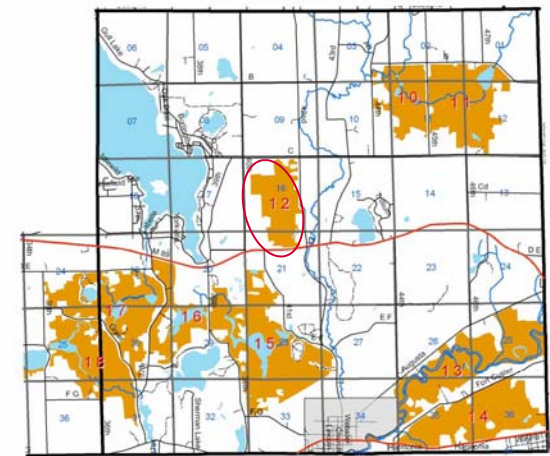
Consequently, future management should embrace the recreational uses of this property instead of combating the widespread non-native plant species in an attempt to increase the site's ecological value.



Ross Township Pine Meadow Farm and the Cheff Center PCA 12

Location

Potential Conservation Area (PCA) 12, a 325-acre upland forest, lies east of the southern end of Gull Lake and comprises most of the upland forest bounded by C Ave, 42nd St., M-89, and 40th St.



High priority potential conservation areas
Ross Township (and portion of Richland)

Legend

- state highways
- county roads
- ▭ township boundary
- ▭ Village of Augusta
- ▭ lakes
- rivers
- sections
- ▭ potential conservation areas



MICHIGAN STATE
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EXTENSION



Michigan
Natural
Features
Inventory

Diverse Ecosystems

Site Description

Trails, including the North Country Trail, cross this site and provide access for hiking, horseback riding, and hunting. Much of the property is owned by the Cheff Center for the Handicapped and Pine Meadow Farms. The property is bordered largely by old fields, agricultural fields, and low-density housing.



Potential conservation area 12
Ross Township
325 acres

Legend

- potential conservation area
- roads
- wetlands

Communities and Ecosystems

This Potential Conservation Area (PCA) is comprised primarily of dry-mesic southern forest, with predominantly oak-hickory trees, with some gradation into mesic southern forest, with tulip trees, in areas of lower elevation. There are several red pine and scotch pine plantations on the site.



Based on presettlement vegetation maps, most of PCA 12 was once black oak barren. The transition to dry-mesic southern forest over the last two centuries is likely a result of fire suppression and conservation efforts.



Plants and Animals of Interest

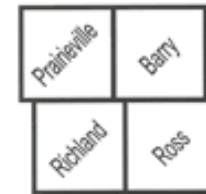
The dry-mesic southern forest is home to a healthy population of white-tail deer and wild turkey. Due to the upland habitat, no frog and toad data have been collected by the Michigan Frog and Toad Survey; however, eastern American toads and gray tree frogs were heard in this area during site visits.

The 2003 Michigan Breeding Bird Census reported 22 species of breeding birds in this PCA.

There is a small population of wild lupine growing in an opening in the canopy of younger growth, possibly caused by a fire or clear cut at an earlier time.



Wild Lupine



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Resources Council**

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