

## Threats to Ecological Value



The primary threat to this PCA is extensive road development, which would fragment some of the larger natural areas. Road development will continue to occur in areas where veterans are buried west of the central administrative areas. However, if possible, road development into the eastern half of the property should be minimized and localized in order to reduce impacts on the plants and wildlife communities that utilize the larger intact upland forest. In this way conservation goals and the needs of the Veterans Administration may both be met satisfactorily.

M-96 has impacted the wetland adjacent to it by separating the riparian habitats associated with Eagle Creek. Portions of the wetland near M-96 are noticeably wetter and are dominated by broad leaved cattail and purple loosestrife.

## Management Recommendations

PCA 14 is an excellent candidate for conservation priority. Unlike most of the other PCAs, this site is administered by only two parties; the Veterans Administration and the MDNR. The MDNR property in the western end of PCA 14 is currently managed as a conservation area. The natural areas in the Fort Custer National Cemetery are also being managed under a conservation program.

By reducing impact on more remote areas of the property, the wild character of the upland forests can be maintained in the future.

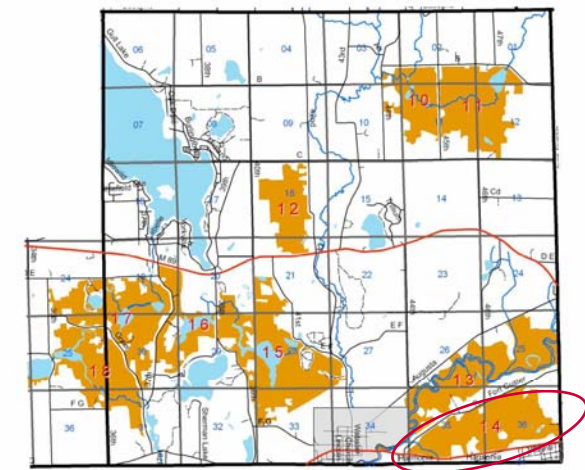


The wetlands have not been altered in the last two decades or more. Management of non-native species like purple loosestrife could be done, but would be time-intensive and costly. Therefore, the wetlands are likely best left unmanaged unless aggressive plants greatly threaten the prairie fen community.

## Ross Township Fort Custer National Cemetery PCA 14

### Location

Potential Conservation Area (PCA) 14, located in sections 34, 35, and 36 of Ross Township, is a 583-acre property located east of the village of Augusta. The property is bounded by Fort Custer Dr., County Line Rd., and M-96.



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  
UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

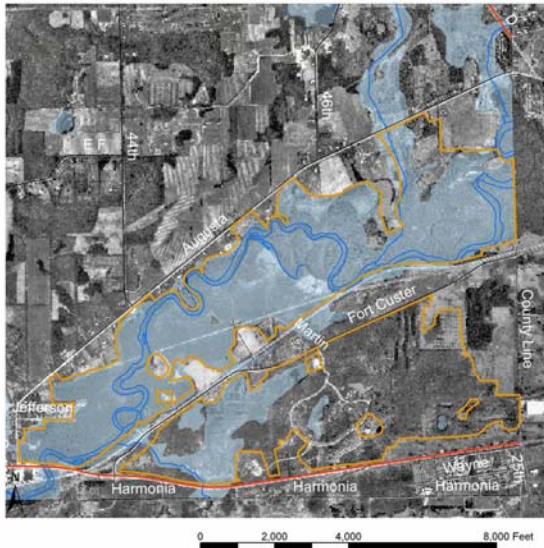


Michigan  
Natural  
Features  
Inventory

# Diverse Ecosystems

## Site Description

Most of this Potential Conservation Area (PCA) comprises the Fort Custer National Cemetery; the western end is administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The property is bordered by roads and old fields.



Potential conservation area 13 and 14  
Ross Township  
Area 13: 831 acres  
Area 14: 583 acres

### Legend

- potential conservation area
- roads
- wetlands

## Communities and Ecosystems

Upland forests predominate at this PCA, although a large wetland complex occurs on the western end of the site.

Although some areas of the upland forest are dry southern forest, the majority is dry-mesic southern forest dominated by oak and hickory trees.

Two small depressional wetlands occur on the east end of the PCA. One is a water-filled depression with no vascular plants; the other is inundated shrub swamp.

The wetland complex on the western end of the property can be separated into three general sections. The southernmost portion includes three community types: southern shrub-carr, southern wet meadow, and prairie fen. North of this is a drier southern swamp. Lastly, the northeastern end of the depression grades into a wetter southern swamp containing several inches or more of standing water.

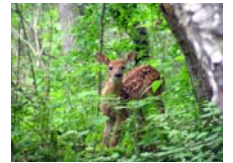


## Plants and Animals of Interest

The wetland complex in the southwestern end of the PCA is of moderate to high floristic quality. The prairie fen and southern wet meadow remain in relatively good ecological condition. Five frog and toad species were found in this area.

The large areas of dry-mesic southern forest and dry southern forest are also noteworthy. Some upland forest areas contain mostly native species, and offer the large uninterrupted forest canopy for many song birds. The 2003 Michigan Breeding Bird Census noted 43 species of birds.

This site is important for wildlife because it opens a corridor that connects the Kalamazoo River floodplain ecosystems to similar communities in the Fort Custer Recreational Area, which is located south of this PCA.



## Four Township Water Resources Council

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