

Threats to Ecological Value

In the emergent marshes near Lower Three Lakes non-native species such as purple loosestrife and narrow leaved cattail will likely remain now that they are well established. However, their continued spread will likely reduce the abundance of other plants in these communities.

Similarly, the botanical quality of the upland forest understory community will probably decrease in the future as adventive species such as garlic mustard, Japanese barberry, and multiflora rose become more widespread.



Dried garlic mustard with next year's plants already sprouting.

The Kalamazoo wells will alter the hydrology of the wetlands and the value of the unfragmented forest unless it is carefully planned and executed.

Management Recommendations

PCA 18 is a very good candidate for conservation priority. Its size and broad range of plant communities provide a wealth of wildlife habitat. Other than restricting development into the uplands at this site, most of the areas are probably best left unmanaged. This property is part of a larger chain of PCAs that, overall, provide one of the largest areas of potential conservation value in the four-township area. Greer Rd. notwithstanding, this site is well connected with PCA 17.



Swamp Rose

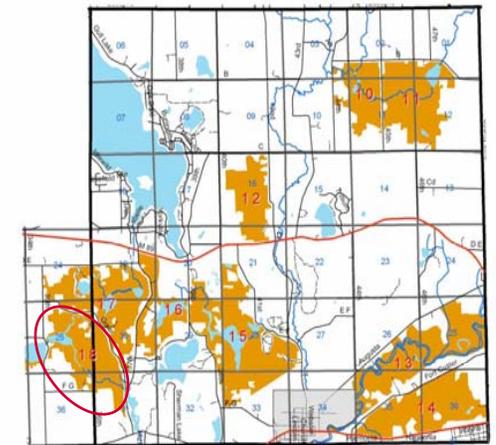


Wildflowers of a southern wet meadow

Ross & Richland Townships Lower Three Lakes PCA 18

Location

Potential Conservation Area (PCA) 18, located in sections 25 and 36 of Richland township and sections 30 and 31 of Ross Township, is a 532-acre property roughly bounded by Greer Rd., 37th St., G Ave., 36th St., FG Ave., and 35th 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



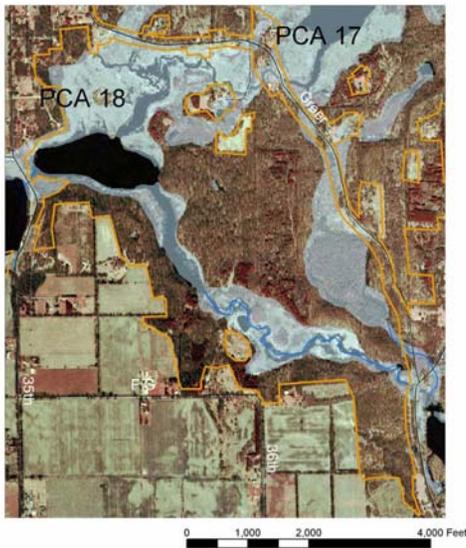
MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



Diverse Ecosystems

Site Description

This Potential Conservation Area (PCA) is primarily upland forest. Lower Three Lakes and its associated streams and wetlands are part of the Gull Creek drainage system. The property is bordered by agricultural fields, roads, and low-density housing.



Potential conservation area 18
Ross and Richland Townships
532 acres



Legend

- potential conservation area
- roads
- wetlands

Communities and Ecosystems

Dry-mesic southern forest comprises two-thirds of the land in PCA 18. Most of the forest is one large tract of land east of Lower Three Lakes. This PCA connects PCA 19 to a larger chain of natural areas in the southwest corner of Ross Township. This makes PCA 18 valuable as a wildlife travel lane.



There is a southern wet meadow where the Gull Creek enters this PCA. Northeast of Lower Three Lakes is an isolated shrub swamp which has some characteristics similar to a bog.

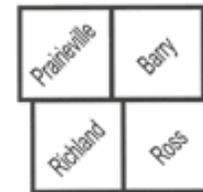
Lower Three Lakes consists largely of open water; the lake margins grade into emergent marsh. Southeast of Lower Three Lakes is a large southern swamp, part of which occurs near Greer Rd.

Plants and Animals of Interest

Maintaining wildlife corridors is important for wildlife that use these travel lanes as part of their migratory route and for larger mammals that require a large home range.

Large natural areas are also essential for upland birds of special interest such as the Cooper's hawk and red-headed woodpecker. The 2003 Michigan Breeding bird census recorded 64 species of breeding birds. One of the breeding birds noted in the census was the marsh wren, a species of special concern.

The southern wet meadow is a plant community of moderate to high floristic quality. The habitat created in the wetlands is ideal for birds, amphibians, and reptiles. Nine frog and toad species were heard in the area. The eastern massasauga rattlesnake has been reported here also.



Four Township Water Resources Council

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