

Threats to Ecological Value

Many small upland areas have been altered by humans. If this continues, it could fragment the upland forest, which connects the dispersed wetland habitats.

Some of the wetlands occur near Cobb Rd., Scott Park Rd., and Kingsbury Rd. The proximity of roads to certain wetlands may facilitate the colonization of aggressive plant species such as purple loosestrife in these wetlands. This could result in the loss of less competitive plants such as yellow lady's slipper.



Yellow Lady's Slipper

Management Recommendations

PCA 6 is an excellent candidate for conservation priority. The size and diversity of wetland communities and their associated flora are outstanding. Additional human-induced hydrologic alterations to Balker Lake, Gilkey Lake, and associated stream ecosystems should be avoided.



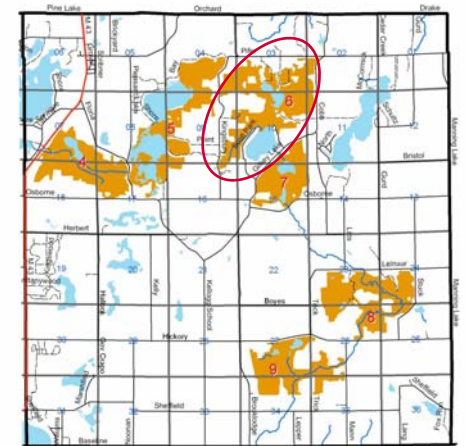
Virginia Chain Fern

Road and house construction would fragment an existing wildlife corridor and eliminate the sizeable range needed for larger animals. Reducing human development into the center of PCA 6 would help maintain the excellent plant and wildlife habitat provided by this special area.

Barry Township Balker Lake Swamp PCA 6

Location

Potential Conservation Area (PCA) 6, located in sections 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 16 of Barry Township, is a 589-acre property that is roughly bounded by Pifer Rd., Cobb Rd., Gilkey Lake Rd., and Kingsbury Rd.



High priority potential conservation areas
Barry Township

Legend

- state highways
- county roads
- township boundary
- lakes
- rivers
- sections
- potential conservation areas



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



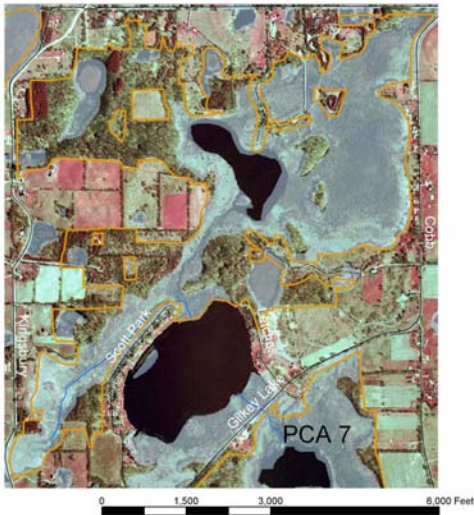
Michigan
Natural
Features
Inventory



Diverse Ecosystems

Site Description

Most of this Potential Conservation Area (PCA) is wetland habitat that encompasses Balker Lake and its associated wetlands. Other areas include the uplands and wetlands west of Balker Lake and the uplands and wetlands west of Gilkey Lake. The property is bordered by low-density housing and agricultural fields, although the housing density is higher near Gilkey Lake. A gravel pit is located east of Gilkey Lake.



Potential conservation area 6
Barry Township
589 acres



Communities and Ecosystems

Three quarters of PCA 6 is wetland, including what are predominantly marsh, forested swamp, shrub swamp, and lake habitats; the remaining areas are dry-mesic southern forest.



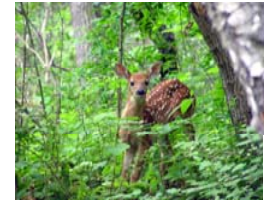
Balker Lake Swamp is a large hardwood-conifer swamp that lies east of Balker Lake. The swamp consists of a mosaic of hummocks and hollows that offer drier and wetter microhabitats for plants. The perimeter of Balker Lake Swamp grades into southern wet meadow and, in a few areas, inundated shrub swamp.

The isolated shrub swamp that is south of Balker Lake and northeast of Gilkey Lake supports an interesting plant community that is transitional between a bog and a hardwood-conifer swamp.

Dry-mesic southern forest communities at this site are oak-hickory forests that are typical of this area.

Plants and Animals of Interest

The varied topography of this mixture of wetlands and uplands and the proximity to other undeveloped areas creates wildlife corridors that allow animals to forage and for young to expand into new territories. This corridor is important to avoid overcrowding and to support biodiversity.



The blend of wetland habitats also supports numerous amphibians and reptiles. Eight of the eleven frogs and toads of southern Michigan were heard in this area.

The diversity of plant species also provides habitat for a variety of breeding bird species; migrating birds also take advantage of these areas to rest and feed. The 2003 Michigan Breeding Bird Census found 27 breeding species.

**Four Township Water
Resources Council**

P.O. Box 634
Richland, MI 49083-0634
www.ftwrc.org