



Terrestrial characteristics: Large contiguous unfragmented landscape

Description

A large contiguous unfragmented landscape is a relatively large area of a particular landcover type, or a mosaic of landcover types, excluding industrial, residential and urban (low or high density) landcovers. Specifically, this feature refers to species-specific requirements for habitat (or a mosaic of habitats) that span a relatively large spatial extent with relatively little fragmentation. What qualifies as "large" may vary by landcover type (i.e. a large forest or forested complex in Michigan will likely have a much greater spatial extent than a large grassland or grassland complex). Large contiguous unfragmented landscape is also used for species that require a fairly specific mosaic of landscape features that span a relatively large area (e.g., eastern massasauga, golden borer). The quality and spatial extent of the habitat required will be species specific and may include intensively managed landscapes; some species that require large contiguous grasslands will do well with a mixture of native and more heavily human-influenced (e.g., agricultural) landcovers, while others require contiguous native grasslands.

General Condition of Feature

Much of the Eastern Upper Peninsula is considered degraded or very degraded with regard to the availability of large contiguous landscapes (~65%). However, about 35% of the region is considered fair, good, or excellent in its representation of large contiguous landscape(s).

Associated Natural Communities

N/A – No defined natural communities

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

REPTILES

- blue racer (*Coluber constrictor foxii*)
- eastern massasauga (*Sistrurus catenatus catenatus*)

BIRDS

- Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)
- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)
- Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)
- Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)
- Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)
- Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)
- Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

BIRDS cont.

- Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)
- Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax vireescens*)
- Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*)
- Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*)
- Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*)
- Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

MAMMALS

- gray wolf (*Canis lupus*)
- lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)
- moose (*Alces alces*)

Associated Threats

MODIFICATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES

- Altered fire regime: The creation of fire breaks contributes to fragmentation.
- Fragmentation: Residential or road development and the creation or maintenance of rights-of-way may contribute to fragmentation.

HABITAT CONVERSION

- Industrial, residential, and recreational development: Rising land values and taxes provide an incentive for landowners to subdivide and sell off their property for development. Urban and suburban sprawl reduce the size of landscape features.

Conservation Actions Needed [Threats addressed]

LAND & WATER PROTECTION

- Expand conservation easement programs [variety of threats]
- Support and expand conservation purchase of high quality occurrences [variety of threats]

LAND, WATER & SPECIES MANAGEMENT

- Consider adjacency and block size issues in developing fire prescriptions. [Altered fire regime; Fragmentation; Industrial, residential and recreational development]
- Promote the closure of non-essential resource management roads and seek other road closure opportunities that do not conflict with other appropriate uses. [Fragmentation]
- Support Landowner Incentive Programs to foster conservation on private land [variety of threats]

LAW & POLICY

- Work with municipalities to promote planning and zoning insuring adequate protection for large blocks of contiguous natural landscape. [Industrial, residential and recreational development]

Research and Survey Needs

- Inventory existing examples of large contiguous natural landscape.
- Compare the value to wildlife of mosaics of similar features to patches of a single feature. Does a mosaic of prairie, hayland, and old field have the same value to wildlife as a similarly sized patch of just prairie?

Monitoring

- Track abundance and distribution of large contiguous natural landscape across the landscape.