



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. "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 Northern Lower Peninsula is considered degraded or very degraded with regard to the availability of large contiguous landscapes (~65%). However, about 30% of the region is considered fair or good in relation to large contiguous landscape(s).

Associated Natural Communities

N/A – No defined natural communities

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

INSECTS

blazing star borer (*Papaipema beeriana*)

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*)

BIRDS cont.

Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)
Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)
Acadian Flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*)
Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica*
caerulescens)
Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*)
Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*)
Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*)
Hooded Warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*)
Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

Associated Threats

MODIFICATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES

- Altered fire regime: A lack of fire aids succession of grass and shrubland feature types to forested feature types.
- Fragmentation: Rights-of-way may contribute to fragmentation. Fragmented ownership leads to smaller habitat parcels. Increasing land values and property taxes encourage private landowners to divide and develop their property.

HABITAT CONVERSION

- Industrial, residential, and recreational development: Urbanization and road development may impact these systems.
- Incompatible natural resource management: A lack of planning contributes to uncoordinated management goals on abutting properties.

CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Mining practices: Oil and gas development may impact these systems.

NON-CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Non-consumptive recreation: Uncontrolled ATV and ORV use may impact these systems.

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

- Manage to approximate natural disturbance regimes using prescribed fire. [Altered fire regime]
- Work with land managers to develop priorities and plans for creation and management of large blocks of contiguous natural landscape. [Incompatible natural resource management]
- Provide contiguous dry and mesic grassland areas of at least 250 acres. [Habitat Conversion—multiple]

**MICHIGAN'S WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN
TERRESTRIAL SYSTEMS: NORTHERN LOWER PENINSULA**

- 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, Fragmentation]
- Develop new and enforce existing regulations for mitigation of oil and gas extraction facilities. [Mining practices]
- Develop and enforce regulations to curtail recreational activities that cause significant damage. [Non-consumptive recreation]

RECREATION

- Promote responsible ATV and ORV use. [Non-consumptive recreation]

Research and Survey Needs

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

Monitoring

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