

Lake Superior Basin

Landscape Context

The Lake Superior basin is the most northerly of the four basins in Michigan. It contains all water that flows north from the Upper Peninsula into Lake Superior.

The Lake Superior basin is 7706 square miles and includes the major watersheds of the Montreal, Black, Ontonagon, Portage/Sturgeon, Dead, Chocolay, Au Train, Two Hearted, Tahquamenon and Waiska rivers plus several small coastal watersheds. This basin is the least developed in the State. Seventy percent of the basin is forested and another 20% is wetlands. Agriculture is present, but it is only 4% of the land use.

Priority Threats

Twelve threats to wildlife and landscape features in this basin were identified as significant by participants at a workshop for this region (see Methods chapter in the Introductory Text & Statewide Assessments section for more information). Invasive species (both established species that require control or eradication, and the potential for more species to colonize) and altered sediment loads were identified as the most severe threats. These were followed by fragmentation and disease, pathogens and parasites. The remaining threats considered significant are, in descending order: dams, forestry practices, mining practices, non-consumptive recreation, altered hydrologic regimes, social attitudes, lack of scientific knowledge, and riparian modifications.

The difference in the types of threats recognized in the Lake Superior basin versus other basins reflects the different land uses that occur in this portion of the State; development pressures are at their lowest.

Priority Conservation Actions

The following are conservation actions that were repeated most frequently within each landscape feature category and, therefore, should be considered priorities for the basin, because they will have the most widespread benefits for wildlife conservation in this region (no order implied):

Great Lakes

- Continue vigilance and cooperation toward preventing the introduction and establishment of aquatic invasive species
- Educate landowners and shoreline users on preventing the spread of invasive aquatic species
- Restrict dredging and channelization activities, especially during spawning and migration seasons and around mussel beds
- Work with road commissions on the maintenance and placement of new bridges

Inland Lakes

- Continue vigilance and cooperation toward preventing the introduction and establishment of aquatic invasive species
- Work with Drain Commissioners to allow or closely mimic natural hydrologic processes on lake-level control structures and to use natural processes to manage sediment and flows
- Work with local governments to develop and refine planning and zoning regulations and ordinances that consider natural processes

Rivers

- Continue vigilance and cooperation toward preventing the introduction and establishment of aquatic invasive species

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- Work with local governments to develop and refine planning and zoning regulations and ordinances that consider natural processes
- Work with road commissions and forest management agencies to fix perched culverts, site new road crossings, and maintain existing road crossings

Wetlands

- Maintain, rehabilitate and protect natural corridors between wetlands and other habitats important to amphibians and reptiles
- Work with local governments to develop and refine planning and zoning regulations and ordinances that consider natural processes
- Protect existing and rehabilitate degraded wetlands and natural hydrology