



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

The Western Upper Peninsula is generally considered to be in fair to good condition in terms of large contiguous natural landscape(s).

Associated Natural Communities

N/A – No defined natural communities

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need

INSECTS

red-disked alpine (*Erebia discoidalis*)

BIRDS

Sharp-tailed Grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus*)

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*)

Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*)

Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*)

Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)

Black Tern (*Chlidonias niger*)

Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*)

BIRDS cont.

Kirtland's Warbler (*Dendroica kirtlandii*)

Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*)

Western Meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*)

MAMMALS

gray wolf (*Canis lupus*)

cougar (*Puma concolor*)

lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)

moose (*Alces alces*)

Associated Threats

MODIFICATION OF NATURAL PROCESSES

- Altered fire regime
- Fragmentation: Ownership parcelization occurs and large landowners divide their property for sale and development resulting in many owners of smaller developed parcels and a lower likelihood that the property will be managed for large blocks of consistently managed habitat. Road development contributes to fragmentation.

HABITAT CONVERSION

- Industrial, residential, and recreational development: Urban sprawl takes land out of feature types with higher value to wildlife.

CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Forestry practices

NON-CONSUMPTIVE BIOLOGICAL RESOURCE USE

- Non-consumptive recreation: Uncontrolled ATV and ORV use contribute to degradation and fragmentation.

EDUCATION

- Lack of scientific knowledge

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]
- Develop and enforce forestry best management practices which address the needs of wildlife, specifically the importance of large habitat blocks. [Forestry practices]
- Support Landowner Incentive Programs to foster conservation on private land [variety of threats]

LAW & POLICY

- Develop local ordinances to retain larger parcel sizes in natural land cover. Work with municipalities to promote planning and zoning insuring adequate protection for large contiguous landscape blocks. [Fragmentation; Industrial, residential, and recreational development]
- Develop and enforce regulations to curtail recreational activities that cause significant damage. [Non-consumptive recreation]

EDUCATION & AWARENESS

- Provide education to landowners on the value to wildlife of maintaining large parcels of wildlife habitat. [Industrial, residential, and recreational development]

RECREATION

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

Research and Survey Needs

- Quantify the characteristics of large habitat blocks that provide value for wildlife.
- 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.