Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Biodiversity Conservation on DNR-Managed Lands
Conservation Area Recommendation Process

The DNR process for biodiversity conservation on DNR-owned lands is contained in the Biodiversity Conservation Planning Proposal of April 2005. This document outlines the framework of the selection process for inclusion of property in the biodiversity conservation network. The document can be viewed at: http://www.midnr.com/publications/pdfs/forestslandwater/Biodiversity/BiodiversityConsPlanningProposalApril2005.pdf

The biodiversity conservation process is based on a filtering concept in which the process moves from coarse filters (e.g. Michigan Natural Features Inventory natural community types throughout Michigan) to using fine filters (selecting sites from several to hundreds of acres based on knowledge of local ecology and specific knowledge of species location and habitat).

The recommendation process begins with the Statewide Biodiversity Team (SBT) which oversees the entire planning process. It has the overarching responsibility of ensuring that the selection process is applied consistently on a statewide scale.

The process continues with ecoregional teams that are charged with planning and coordinating management of Michigan's natural resources utilizing ecosystem management principles. They identify conservation objectives, targets and values specific to a given ecoregion, in addition to the guidance and information provided by the Statewide team. There are four ecoregional teams, and their geographic responsibilities are the Southern Lower, Northern Lower, Eastern Upper and Western Upper Peninsulas.

Within the ecoregional teams there are core design teams. The core design teams work with local stakeholders to identify and recommend candidate sites/communities and specific parcels of land for inclusion in the biodiversity conservation network. A flow chart describing the conservation area recommendation process can be viewed by clicking on the following link:

Conservation Area Recommendation Process Flowchart

Biodiversity conservation areas are comprised of three primary categories: Special Conservation Areas (SCAs), High Conservation Value Areas (HCVAs), and Ecological Reference Areas (ERAs).

1. SCAs are areas of DNR-owned lands that have one or more identified special conservation objectives, interests or elements.

2. HCVAs are areas of DNR-owned lands that have been recognized for their contribution to specific conservation objectives or attributes through a formal process such as legislation, administrative rule, or Director's or Natural Resource Commission Orders.

3. ERAs are areas that serve as models of ecological reference within the State. They are high quality examples of functioning ecosystems that are primarily influenced by natural ecological processes, and they may be located upon any land ownership in the State. Known high quality sites in the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) natural community classification system with an Element Occurrence (EO) rank of A or B and Global (G) or State (S) element ranking of endangered (1), threatened (2), or rare (3) serve as an initial base of ERAs. Additional information on the MNFI natural community classification system can be found at: http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/data/MNFI_Natural_Communities.pdf

Additional information regarding these areas can be found in the DNR document Conservation Area Management Guidelines at the same DNR website as above.

Identified ERAs, HCVAs and SCAs are managed to conserve, protect and/or to enhance the defined conservation objective or value. The methods used will vary depending upon the objective and type of designation. Land managers, field staff and stand examiners use technical materials, program staff and/or other references when assessing management options that are suitable for the specific conservation objective. Management options include limited or no treatments. All areas are managed to protect the immediate natural resource values or human health and safety.

The public may submit recommendations for inclusion of lands in the biodiversity conservation network using the DNR Conservation Area Recommendation Form. The form may be accessed by clicking on the following link:

Conservation Area Recommendation Form PR 4199

Persons should complete all sections of the form to best of their ability. The form should be submitted to the following address:

Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Forest, Mineral and Fire Management Division
Forest Resource Management Section
Stevens T. Mason Building
P.O. Box 30452
Lansing, MI 48909-7952

Upon receipt of the form the DNR will log the submitted information into a database and forward copies of the form to the SBT and the appropriate DNR division. If the parcel is located within the State Forest system, the form will be forwarded to the appropriate core design team and Forest Management Unit for inclusion in the compartment review process. This process operates on a year of entry basis over a looping 10-year cycle, and consideration of the recommendation will be acted upon when the compartment within which the parcel is located is scheduled for review.