

# DNRE General Principles of Management for Biodiversity Stewardship Areas

## What is a Biodiversity Stewardship Area (BSA)?

- BSAs are a DNRE planning designation that will help with decisions about where and how the DNRE is going to promote conservation of Michigan's native biological diversity (biodiversity) on a landscape level.
- A BSA identifies a geographic area on the landscape where there is an emphasis on biodiversity conservation achieved through restoring and/or maintaining native natural communities. Within a specific BSA boundary, the emphasis is on one or more natural communities with a long-term goal of ensuring that these natural communities are conserved as examples of our State's biodiversity. BSAs may include land with multiple ownerships.
- BSA designation is one of many biodiversity conservation efforts of the DNRE. Other efforts include threatened and endangered species conservation, game species management, best management practices for timber harvest, natural areas and natural rivers.
- The network of BSAs will be evaluated in 10-year cycle planning processes. This review will allow for the potential addition or removal of BSAs.
- Biodiversity Stewardship Areas may include land with a variety of legal and/or management requirements (easements, deed restrictions, acquisition requirements) and ownerships.
  - The inclusion of land within a BSA boundary does not impose obligations on non-DNRE landowners.
  - On lands administered by the DNRE, subject to legal and/or management requirements, the emphasis of management within BSAs is biodiversity conservation for the identified natural communities. The acceptability of land use activities within DNRE-administered portions of BSA designated lands will be evaluated using severity, scope, and irreversibility criteria.
  - On other lands, the DNRE will try to identify landowners who are interested in cooperating on BSA objectives. Landowner participation is voluntary and will be affected by the owners' interests, obligations and commitments for their lands.

## The following general principles apply to Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs) ON DNRE-ADMINISTERED LANDS (STATE LANDS).

1. Management within the BSA boundary will be designed to achieve the desired future condition.
  - Each BSA will have site-specific desired future conditions and associated management direction developed for the natural communities identified. These will be provided in the planning document for the associated DNRE-managed area (e.g., Regional State Forest Management Plans, State Game Area Master Plans, and State Park Management Plans).

- Desired future conditions (DFCs) will be based on characteristics of high-quality natural communities<sup>1</sup> that are identified for the area. These characteristics will be determined by survey data from other high-quality occurrences, or from published research and other relevant literature.
  - The composition and structure of natural communities is dependent on the type and frequency of the natural disturbances characteristic of those communities. Disturbance may occur naturally or may be mimicked using conservation and management practices, depending on site-specific conditions, and DNRE resource priorities and limitations.
  - Maintenance of many natural communities within BSAs will be dynamic and dependent upon the frequency and extent of natural disturbances associated with each type of natural community.
2. While the emphasis of management within a BSA is to achieve the desired future conditions of identified natural communities, it is understood that desired future conditions may not be achieved throughout the entire BSA. This is because there may be other ownerships within the BSA boundary, the entire BSA may not be wholly comprised of natural communities, and other factors such as the presence of other existing permanent uses (e.g. major roads, campgrounds, etc.).
  3. Existing and new land use activities should be evaluated in the context of whether they detract from achieving the desired future conditions.
  4. The timeline for achieving desired future conditions will vary and may be 100 years or longer in duration.
    - The timeline and management will depend on site-specific conditions (how close the area is to its desired future condition) and DNRE resource priorities and limitations.
    - This may result in more or less intensive or aggressive management in different BSAs, or in different parts of a single BSA.
  5. Management will be adaptive.
    - BSAs will be monitored to determine if implemented management activities are moving the natural communities forward, or maintaining them at their desired future condition.
    - Management strategies may change as additional information becomes available.
    - An area may be removed from the statewide BSA network if its designation as a BSA no longer meets the mission or objectives of the Department.
  6. There are no restrictions on the types of conservation or management practices that may be considered for use in these areas, including timber harvest, planting, prescribed burning and modified fire suppression.
    - Practices will be identified on a site-specific basis, taking local conditions, BSA-specific management direction, DNRE guidance documents for BSA

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<sup>1</sup> There are currently 76 recognized natural communities that have been described by Michigan Natural Features Inventory (<http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/>).

management, DNRE resource priorities and limitations, and other concurrent activities into consideration.

- This may result in different practices being used in different BSAs, or in different parts of a single BSA, to achieve similar results.

**The following general principles apply to our approach to Biodiversity Stewardship Areas (BSAs) ON LANDS NOT ADMINISTERED BY THE DNRE.**

1. The DNRE understands and recognizes other landowners' authority for making decisions about their own lands. The BSA boundary does not impose any obligation for landowners to change their current management activities
2. The DNRE recognizes that other land owners (e.g., U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Park Service, Timber Investment Management Organizations, Real Estate Investment Trusts, land conservancies, private clubs and organizations, private citizens, etc.) will have varying degrees of interest in and ability to cooperatively manage their lands for biodiversity conservation.
  - The level of cooperation of other landowners will be affected by other obligations and commitments they have relating to their lands.
  - In no way does the BSA planning designation change any private landowner legal requirements such as those that may be associated with enrollment in conservation programs or the Commercial Forest program.
3. There is no expectation that the desired future conditions that are being applied to DNRE-managed lands should or must be adopted by other land owners for management of their lands.
  - Adaptation of all or a component of DNRE BSA desired future conditions on other lands will be on a voluntary basis and dependent upon landowners' interests, obligations and commitments for those lands.
  - However, it should be recognized that even small changes in the management of non-DNRE administered lands can positively or negatively impact the conservation of biodiversity.