

Rice Pond Pine Barrens ERA Plan

Administrative Information:

- Location:
 - Gladwin Forest Management Unit; Upper Muskegon Management Area
Compartment 4
 - Clare County; T20N R40W, Section 7
- Contact Information:
 - Plan Writer: Derek Cross, Inventory and Planning Specialist, Cadillac Operation
Service Center
 - Local Forester(s) & Biologist(s): Patrick Mohny Unit Manager, Steve Nyhoff
- State of Michigan owned lands
- Existing Infrastructure/Facilities: None
- Other Documents Related to This ERA: None

Conservation Values

Describe the natural community occurrence for which the ERA is recognized:

- Pine Barrens, EO_ID 8223, EO Rank-D (Poor estimated viability), Last observed 8/11/2014
- ERA (ecological reference area) designation is for a rare natural community
- Pine Barrens are a coniferous, fire dependent savanna community that occurs on level sandy outwash plains and sandy glacial lakeplains in the northern Lower Peninsula and infrequently in the Upper Peninsula. Pine barrens are found on very strongly to strongly acidic droughty sands with very poor water retaining capacity and low nutrient availability. Pine barrens are characterized by a scattered overstory of pine with a grass/sedge dominated ground layer. Canopy cover is typically less than 60%. More details can be found in the [MNFI abstract](#).
- Description from the Element Occurrence Record: The open overstory of the pine barrens is dominated by jack pine with canopy associates including black cherry and northern pin oak. Canopy closure ranges from 5 to 25% and canopy trees typically range from 10-20cm. Canopy and understory black cherry have encroached onto the barrens due to decades of fire suppression. The pine barrens is characterized by scattered clumps of trees and shrubs. The scattered understory includes sapling jack pine along with black cherry. The sapling jack pine have established in the absence of fire and therefore the canopy jack pine have semi-serotinous cones. The patchy low shrub layer is dominated by sweet fern, with associates including northern pin oak, blueberries, and bearberry. The graminoid dominated herbaceous layer is dominated by Pennsylvania sedge, poverty grass, big bluestem, and little bluestem with hawkweed, wild bergamot, goldenrod spp., and rough blazing star. Reindeer lichen (*C. mitis* and *C. rangiferina*) are locally abundant.
- Other High Conservation Values Present: None
- Other Values for Consideration:
 - Recreation- There is a snowmobile trail that runs through the area.

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- Aesthetics/visual management- There are a few large sugar maple that were planted along Muskegon Rd. These will be retained for visual management.
- Timber products- There are short-term values that will be gained for timber products, but the long-term management for timber products will be minimal.

Threats Assessment

- Primary threats include roads within the ERA boundary, invasive species establishment, illegal firewood gathering and illegal ORV use. Existing invasive species include spotted knapweed, white sweet clover, and common ragweed. These threats individually or combined have the potential to cause irreversible damage that could jeopardize the ecology of the site.
- Potential long term threats include oil and gas development on the site, ORV disturbance to the soils which can lead to invasive species establishment, and the conversion to plantation management which would lead to a closed canopy. .

Management Goal(s)

- Manage for a canopy closure of 40%
- Expand the current boundaries outward into the adjoining mixed conifer stand where permanent cover type breaks are more practical for long term management.

Management Objectives

- Reduce canopy closure to at least 40% with overstory removal and maintain open understory conditions for the next 10 year planning cycle
- Implement access plan to address snowmobile trail and forest roads prior to organization of the timber sale and prescribed burn (spring 2017).
- Promote biological legacies within the barrens area. Large dead and dying oak and red pine and sparse bushy jack pine will be some of the composition to promote.
- Monitor for and address invasive species.

Management Actions

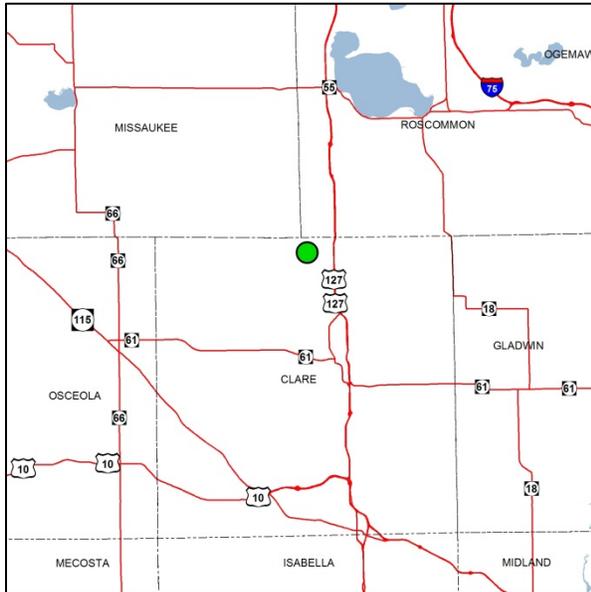
- Conduct thinning treatment to reduce canopy closure to 40% in stand 54.
- Conduct a prescribed burn 1-3 growing seasons after the timber sale.
- Coordinate an access plan that would shift the snowmobile trail further east and be utilized as the east boundary for management or shift the boundary for management further west utilizing the existing snowmobile trail. All forest roads inside the desired 76-acre ERA boundary will be closed to vehicle traffic to protect the area from off-road vehicles and invasive species.
- Restrict fuelwood harvesting to promote the retention of biological legacies.
- Assess area for invasive species.

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Monitoring

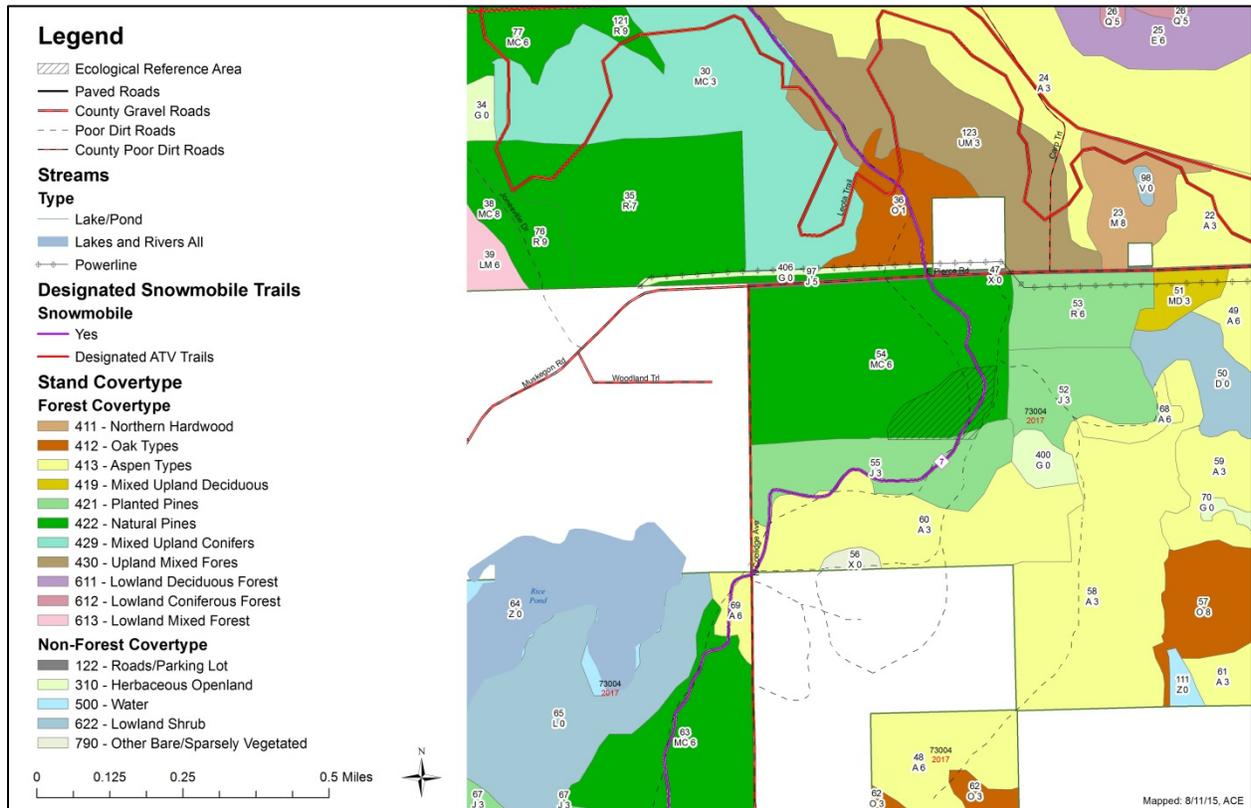
Indicator	Current Status	Desired Future Status	Summary Assessment
% Canopy Closure	75%	40%	TBD
# ERA Acres	10	76	TBD

Site Location:



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Site Map:



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Pictures:

