



## Michigan Department of Natural Resources & Environment Biodiversity Stewardship Area Information Gathering Workshops

Southern Lower Peninsula Workshops	
Date, Time & Location	Facility
July 19, 2010 6:00-9:00 PM Kalamazoo Area	Wolf Lake Fish Hatchery, Visitor's Center 34270 County Road 652, Mattawan, MI 49071 269-668-2876
July 26, 2010 6:00-9:00 PM Lansing	Lansing Community College West, Conference Ctr. 5708 Cornerstone Drive, Lansing, MI 48917 517-483-9300
July 27, 2010 6:00-9:00 PM Bay City	Delta College Planetarium, Room 114 100 Center Avenue, Bay City, MI 48708 989-667-2260
July 29, 2010 6:00-9:00 PM Auburn Hills	Oakland Community College, Auburn Hills Campus M-TEC, Room 242 2900 Featherstone Rd., Auburn Hills, MI 48326-2845 248-232-4100

### ~ Frequently Asked Questions ~

#### **Why are these workshops being held?**

These Information Gathering Workshops are being held to solicit recommendations for specific areas that should be considered for inclusion in the Biodiversity Stewardship Area network. This network is a product of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment's (DNRE) Biodiversity Conservation Planning Process.

#### **What is Biological Diversity (Biodiversity)?**

Biodiversity refers to the full variety of living organisms (species), the variation in the genes these species contain AND the variation in assemblages of these species (ecosystems). Biodiversity conservation refers to how we go about ensuring that diversity at all three scales (genes, species, ecosystems) continues to exist and evolve .

#### **What is the Biodiversity Conservation Planning Process (BCPP)?**

The BCPP is a planning process that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) is using to help focus some of its own biodiversity conservation efforts. The goal of the BCPP is to conserve biodiversity on DNRE-managed lands and to cooperate with other landowners to conserve, restore and protect the native biodiversity of Michigan. This will be partly accomplished by identifying a network of areas that best represent the significant variation of Michigan's ecosystems. Much of the variety of living organisms and their genetic diversity will also be represented in these areas.

The portions of these representative areas, or 'Biodiversity Stewardship Areas' (BSAs), that occur on DNRE-administered land will be managed with an emphasis on biodiversity conservation. While owners of the other lands that occur with BSAs will be under no obligation to change what they are doing with their lands, the DNRE hopes that they will voluntarily choose to cooperate on actions that will help to conserve biodiversity.

## **What is the Biodiversity Stewardship Area (BSA) network?**

The BSA network will be a set of geographic areas that support intact functional examples of Michigan's native ecosystems. Natural communities are being used as a framework for describing the variety of ecosystems that occur in Michigan. The goal is for these areas to represent the wide range of Michigan's native biodiversity, including variation that occurs within each of these natural communities.

## **What are natural communities?**

Plants, animals and other organisms tend to occur in particular combinations that are repeated across the landscape in places with similar environmental conditions. These repeated combinations are called natural communities. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) natural community classification system describes combinations of organisms, as well as the non-biological components (climate, geology, hydrology, etc.) and natural processes that give rise to and sustain these unique species associations. The inclusion of both biological (species) and non-biological information makes the MNFI classification system a useful surrogate for describing ecosystems. MNFI has described each natural community and provided example images at its web site:

<http://web4.msue.msu.edu/mnfi/communities/index.cfm>. There are 76 natural communities described in total, although most occur in groups of associated natural communities.

## **What kinds of areas are being considered as potential BSAs?**

A good candidate BSA will have the following characteristics:

- It includes high-quality examples of one or more natural communities.
- It occurs in an area of, and is surrounded by lands with, limited human disturbance
- It is of a size and condition that will allow natural processes to either occur naturally or be mimicked through management and restoration activities. This size will vary by natural community type.
- It is not known to be significantly threatened by human development, invasive species or any other threat to its high-quality condition.
- It is in an area where current and likely future activities will not preclude conservation of the natural communities represented.

Not all BSAs will have all of these characteristics. For example, in some parts of the state, it is virtually impossible to find any areas that are not affected by human development or other disturbances. For some natural communities, high-quality examples no longer exist. In these situations, it may be necessary to identify lower-quality areas requiring substantial restoration efforts.

## **Do BSAs have to occur on State-owned lands?**

No. Potential BSAs can be identified on any land ownership, or combination of ownerships. The portions of BSAs on DNRE-administered land will be managed with an emphasis on biodiversity conservation, although many other current and future activities that do not detract from long-term conservation efforts will also be allowed. The Department will work with interested landowners to identify opportunities for cooperative biodiversity conservation efforts on the portions of BSAs that are not on DNRE-administered land.

## **How do I recommend an area as a candidate BSA?**

To recommend a BSA, you can attend one of the Information Gathering Workshops and provide your recommendation in person or submit a Conservation Area Recommendation Form, which is available on-line at

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PR4199ConservationAreaRecommendationForm\\_145873\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PR4199ConservationAreaRecommendationForm_145873_7.pdf).

A set of workshops are scheduled for the Southern Lower Peninsula (see schedule above). Workshops for the more northern portions of Michigan were held in 2009.

**Who will make the decision about what areas to include in the BSA network?**

Candidate areas will be assessed by regional teams of DNRE staff and stakeholders. These teams will make a formal recommendation to the DNRE for a set of areas that should be included in the BSA network for their region. DNRE leadership (the DNRE's Statewide Council) will make the final decision after internal and public review.

**Whom do I contact with additional questions?**

Please contact Amy Clark Eagle, (Biodiversity and Conservation Program Leader, DNRE Forest Management Division) at 517-335-3351 or [eaglea@michigan.gov](mailto:eaglea@michigan.gov).