

Wetlands Delineation and Functional Assessment Summary of Technical Memorandum

A field investigation for the presence of wetlands was conducted August 23 - 26, 2000; September 11, 2000; May 15 - 18, 2001; September 17 - 19, 2001, and April 22, 2002. Each of the four Practical Alternatives were traversed in their entirety. All natural areas within the project area were examined and routine on-site wetland determinations were performed.

In order to determine the presence and extent of wetlands, the methodology in the *Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Wetland Identification Manual: A Technical Manual for Identifying Wetlands in Michigan*, was utilized. This methodology requires that the mandatory technical criteria of hydrophytic vegetation and wetland hydrology must be met for an area to be identified as a wetland. Functional assessments were completed using the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Rapid Assessment Methodology for Evaluating Functional Values (1992). The wetlands were classified utilizing the *Classification of Wetlands and Deepwater Habitats of the United States* (1979) developed by Lewis A. Cowardin, et al for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The project area contains numerous wetlands, many of them forested. Sizeable wetland areas exist adjacent to the White Pigeon River and Stag Lake, as well as adjacent to the Rocky and St. Joseph Rivers. Upon conclusion of the field surveys, 31 sites located within the immediate vicinity of one or more Practical Alternative were determined to meet the criteria to be classified as wetlands and were delineated. One wetland was identified but not delineated due to access issues (wetland 30). **Table 3.7** in **Section 3.13, Aquatic Issues** summarizes the wetlands delineated during the field surveys.

The potential wetland impacts, as anticipated to occur by alternative chosen, are summarized in **Table A.2**.

Table A.2 Summary of Potential Wetland Impacts

Alternative	Number	Hectares	Acres
No-Build	0	0	0
PA-1	15	6.59	16.24
PA-2	13	9.09	22.43
PA-3	16	9.31	22.96
PA-4	19	23.43	57.87
PA-5	2	0.21	0.51
PA-5 MOD	2	0.21	0.51

Wetlands are protected by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Part 303 of the Michigan Wetlands Protection Act. In keeping with these regulations, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) follows the recommended process of wetland mitigation. This process prioritizes avoidance of wetland impacts. Once a Recommended Alternative is identified, wetland impacts will be further minimized to the extent practical utilizing design methods such as steepening of roadside slopes and refinement of interchange configurations.