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Tamarack Lake

State Game Area



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE DIVISION

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This plan will be available for review and comment on the Michigan DNR website from January 6 to February 6. Please direct comments to: Sara Schaefer (SchaeferS1@michigan.gov)

Intended Purpose and General Management Direction

The Tamarack Lake State Game Area (SGA) was dedicated on May 18, 1984. The Natural Resources Commission dedication memo indicated that “the area exhibits important wildlife cover and diverse physical features that will insure expanded hunting, fishing and other recreational activities in an area close to metropolitan population centers.” The SGA is located in the Southwest Region (SWR) of the Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The SGA is in the northwest corner of Eaton County, 17 miles west of Grand Ledge, and 4 miles southwest of Lake Odessa (Figure 1).

Tamarack Lake SGA is approximately 265 acres, with 240 acres of deeded land which includes all of Tamarack Lake (about 18 acres), all of Looking Glass Lake (about 13.6 acres), the east half of Duck Lake (about 1.2 acres), the south half of Lost Lake (about 2.9 acres), and with about 25 acres States interest or rights due to meander boundary related to Saubee Lake on the west side of area. Historically Saubee Lake was two parts, then water levels rose to make one lake with a smaller northeaster lobe; now in recent years water levels have been lowering and marsh is developing on the western shoreline of Tamarack Lake. The western edge of the SGA area (based on shoreline) has been moving farther west slightly with time (Figures 2 and 3).

The SGA was created mainly by the purchase of two land tracts. The original 1984 acquisition was funded using funds appropriated for the Michigan Land Trust Fund. This tract is the southern portion of the existing SGA. The second purchase was in 1998 and was funded using funds appropriated for Wildlife Habitat Acquisition under the Pittman-Robertson Program. The second tract is the northern half of the existing SGA. St. Joe Highway, a paved two lane roadway, fronts the SGA along its southern boundary for a distance of approximately 2,800 feet.

The featured wildlife species for the SGA are cottontail rabbit, eastern wild turkey and white-tailed deer. The primary habitat management activities on the area have been brush management, opening maintenance and selective cutting in the small forested tracts. The SGA also serves as a popular fishing access site to adjacent Saubee Lake, Tamarack Lake, and Lost Lake. Maintenance of the parking areas and fishing access sites are the main infrastructure work completed annually on the game area.

In the future (5-30 years from now), we would like the area to increase to approximately 500 acres. It would be desirable to obtain additional upland acreage to be managed as habitat for the listed featured species. Maintaining access for fishing will also remain a priority because of interest expressed by anglers using this area.

Background

At a local level, this plan helps fulfill goals and objectives of other higher level Department and Wildlife Division plans and initiatives. The Department goals (protect natural resources, sustainable recreation, strong natural resource-based economies, and strong relationships and partnerships), the Wildlife Division's Guiding Principles and Strategies (Goal 2-Manage habitat for sustainable wildlife populations, Goal 4-Increase public participation in hunting and trapping), More Bang For Your Buck concepts (outstanding grouse, woodcock and turkey hunting, challenge of small game hunting, and great diversity of high quality waterfowl hunting), the Division's Southwest Regional Operational Plan, Southwest Region Habitat Guidance documents, and the Southwest Region Land Management Plan are all reflected in this master plan.

Wildlife Species

True to the intended purpose of the game area when it was dedicated in 1984, we continue to focus our efforts on species and habitats that help meet our goals to provide quality hunting opportunities and access for fishing.

Table 1. A list of species projects to be worked on during this planning period, reflecting opportunities for habitat or recreational management.

Common Name	Featured Species	T&E, SC Species	Climate Change Vulnerable	Remarks
Cottontail rabbit	X			Brush piles
White-tailed deer	X			Grassy opening maintenance. Planting of soft mast shrubs.
Wild Turkey	X			Grassy opening maintenance. Planting of soft mast shrubs

Existing Conditions

The SGA features level to gently rolling topography with approximately 100 acres of marginally drained soils along the frontage of the three lakes (Figures 4 and 5). The wet areas are primarily lowland hardwoods and brush. The remainder of the SGA is well drained upland soils consisting of abandoned agricultural fields adjacent to small areas of mixed hardwood forest. The abandoned fields have grown into mix of cool season grasses and weeds. The primary species in the forested areas are uneven-aged sugar maple, beech and oak. There is also a small clone of pole sized aspen along one of the

field edges. A small patch of phragmites has become established at the Saubee Lake boat launch. Patches of autumn olive exist in the abandoned fields.

This area has not been surveyed by Michigan Natural Features Inventory and it has not had a Stage 1 cover-type inventory completed to date. There are no known unique ecological features, natural communities or species of greatest conservation need on the game area.

Recreational Use

The primary recreational use on the area is access for anglers using small boats. There is primitive dirt boat launch on both Saubee Lake and on Tamarack Lake. Both of these launches are very shallow and only accommodate the size of boats that can easily be carried by hand. The SGA is also used by hunters, with deer being the major species pursued.

Impacts on the Local Economy

Contributions to the local economy resulting from activities on the game area are limited since there is no sharecropping and at this time no timber harvests are planned. In the future, firewood harvest may be used to clear brush and small to medium trees from idle fields which would be a benefit to local residents. This property is used by hunters as well as anglers which provide a direct boost to local restaurants, sporting goods stores and convenience stores and gas stations.

Management Direction

The desired future condition for the Tamarack Lake SGA is outlined in the table below.

Table 2. Future desired condition for Tamarack Lake SGA.

Cover Type	Desired Future Condition	Action Needed
Grassland/brush (abandoned fields)	Maintain	5-10 year brush mowing rotation
Grassland	Increase	Purchase additional acreage that can be converted to grassland
Upland Forest	Increase	Purchase additional acreage that can be converted to upland forest
Upland Forest	Improve quality	Complete Stage 1 Inventory. Determine forest

		management goals based upon inventory.
Lowland forest	Improve quality	Remove invasive species.

Goals, Objectives, and Management Actions

Goal I – Sustainable populations of white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit and Eastern wild turkey on the Tamarack Lake SGA.

Objective A – Maintain abandoned fields in a grassland and brush cover type

Action – Control invasive species in the abandoned fields.

Action – Mow fields with a brush mower every 5-10 years to maintain.

Action - Mow one opening every year to maintain.

Objective B – Improve hard and soft mast production in the uplands.

Action – Plant fruiting shrubs every 20 feet along the transition zones between grassland/brush cover and forested cover. (50-100 shrubs per opening)

Action – Complete stage 1 inventory at Tamarack Lake SGA to determine if any forest management treatments are needed to improve future mast production.

Objective C – Provide additional winter cover for rabbits.

Action – Create 20-30 brush piles in the transition zones between grassland/brush openings and forested patches. (5-10 brush piles per year)

Goal II – Improve the quality of the lowland forest areas

Objective A – Prevent the spread of invasive species

Action – Annually evaluate for invasive species.

Action - Treat current patches of invasive species in the lowland areas.

Goal III – Continue to provide small boat access to lakes on the SGA for anglers and hunters.

Objective A – Maintain current parking areas and boat launches in operable condition.

Action – Monthly monitor the condition of the parking areas and boat launches and take corrective action as needed.

Acquisition and Disposal of Land

The SWR Land Strategy Document calls for an increase in the size of Tamarack Lake SGA up to 500 acres. It would be desirable to obtain additional upland ground to increase the number of acres of grassland and upland forest cover types which are the primary cover types used by the listed featured species.

Review and Approval

Figure 1. Location of Tamarack Lake SGA.

Tamarack Lake State Game Area

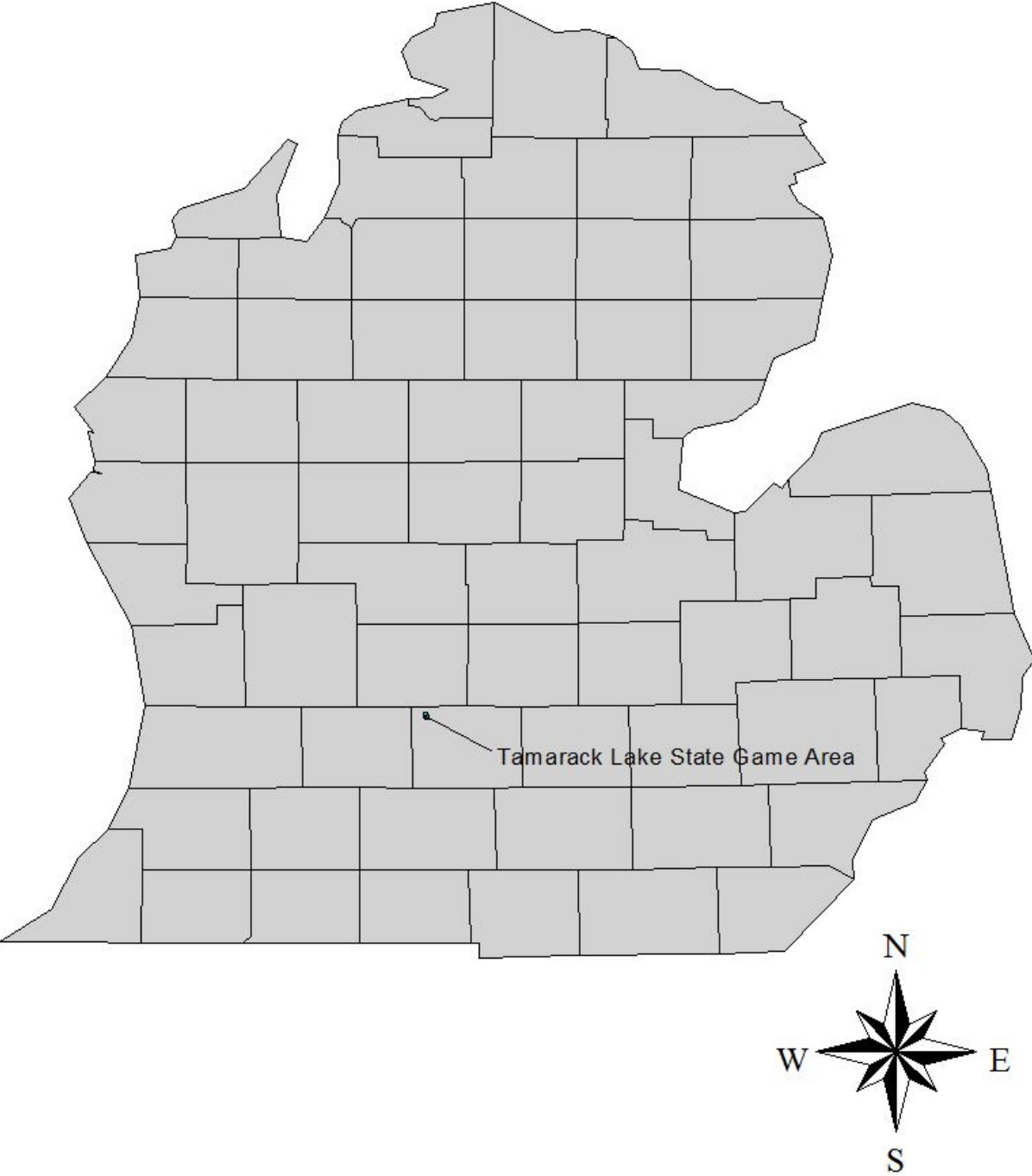


Figure 2. Tamarack Lake SGA boundaries.

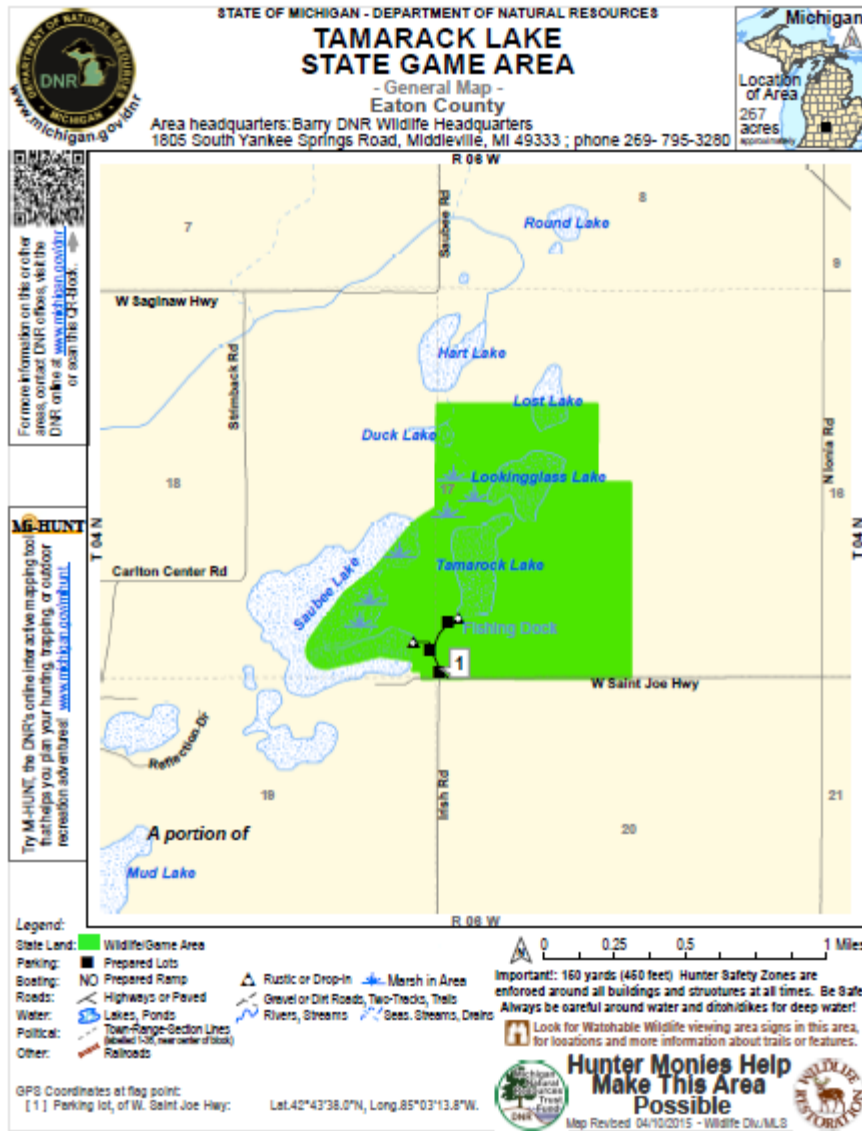


Figure 3. Tamarack Lake SGA boundaries on 1998 areial imagery.

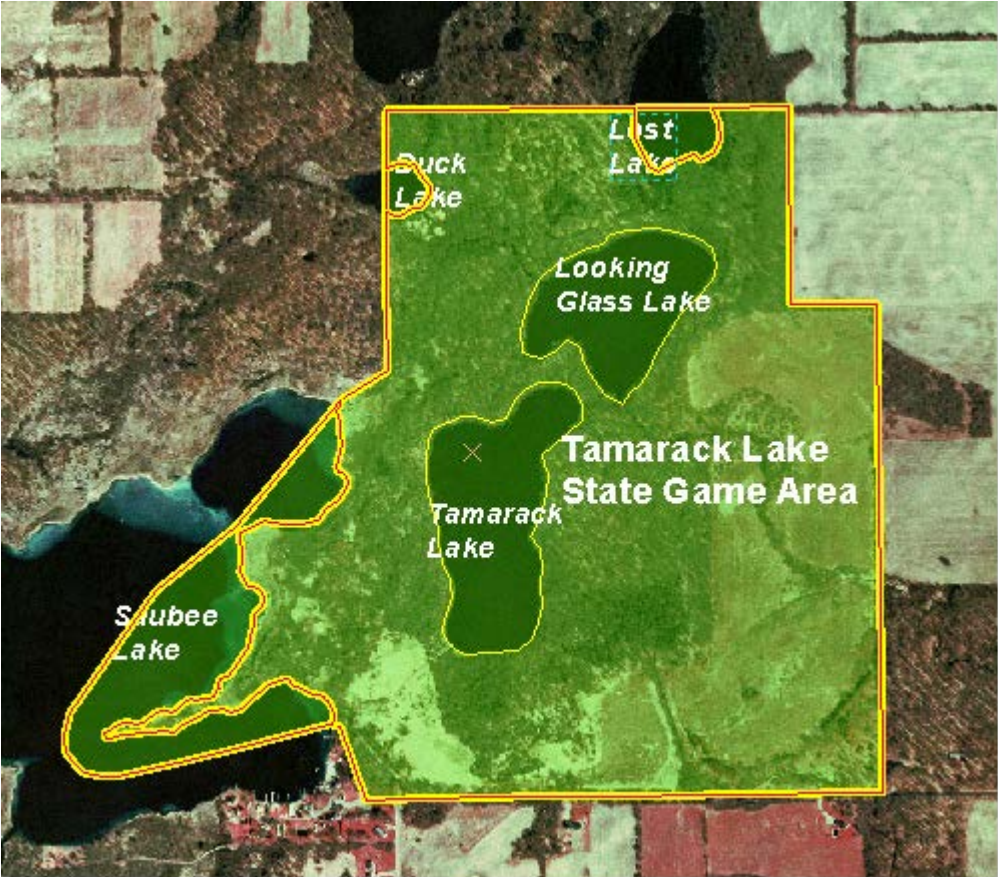


Figure 4. Topography of the Tamarack Lake SGA.

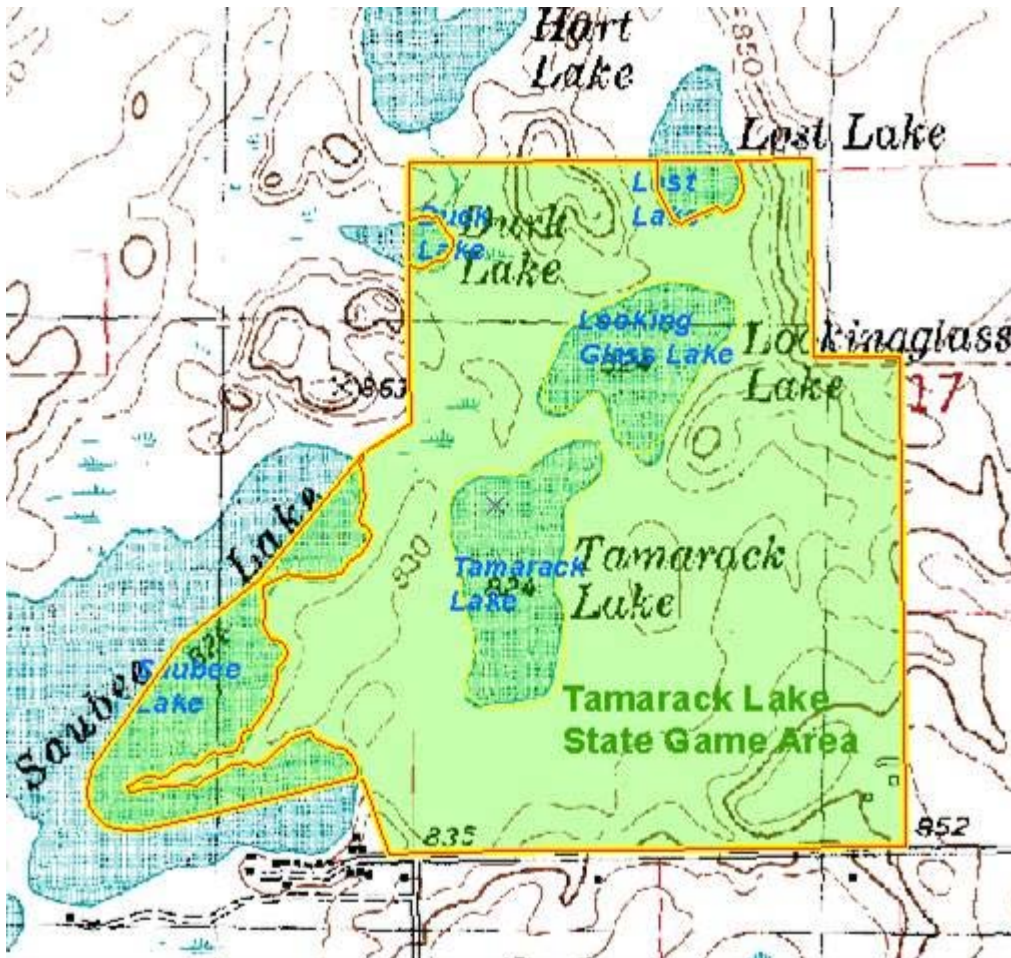
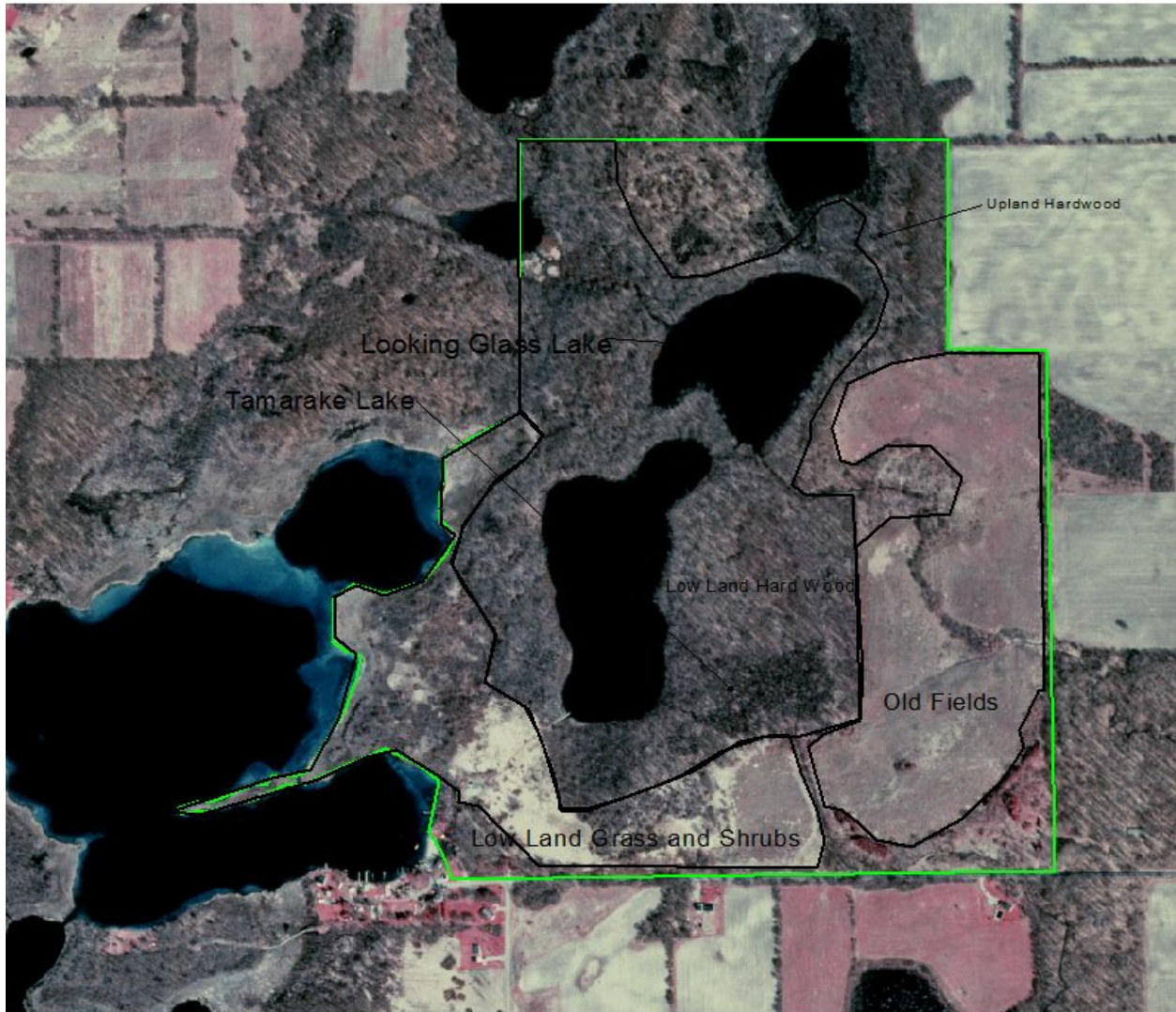


Figure 5. Management Areas of the Tamarack Lake SGA.

Tamarack Lake



 Tamarack lake sga.shp



0.3 0 0.3 0.6 Miles

