

ESTUARIES & COASTAL WETLANDS OF LAKE SUPERIOR

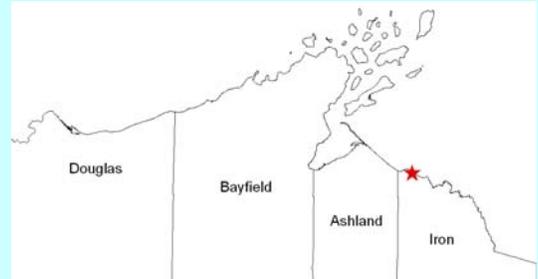
Graveyard Creek

Approximate Size: 7 acres*

Ownership: Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa/Private

Year Last Surveyed by WDNR/NHI: 2012

GLCWC Classification: Barred Drowned River Mouth



Ryan O'Connor



Amy Staffen

Site Description

Graveyard Creek is a cold water stream that meanders down a low-gradient sandy basin toward Lake Superior in northwest Iron County. A small wetland forms just upstream from the mouth of Graveyard Creek where a sandbar impedes its flow into Oronto Bay. Here a low- to fair-quality Alder Thicket buffers the narrow channel from the mostly undeveloped uplands within of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa reservation. This site hosts one rare plant and one rare bird and provides important spawning habitat for brook trout, rainbow trout, lake herring and coho salmon and is a priority site for coaster brook trout rehabilitation.

A small Great Lakes Dune community extends 30 to 50 feet from the barred mouth of Graveyard Creek along the lakeshore. This community is dominated by sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*), speckled alder (*Alnus incana*), common horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), red raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) and beach pea (*Lathyrus japonicus*). Upstream from the creek mouth, deep silt deposits line the stream bed as water moves slowly but distinctly through the 7- to 15-foot-wide channel. Woolgrass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), soft rush (*Juncus effuses*), bur-reed (*Sparganium* sp.), and arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia* var. *latifolia*) all grow among woody debris in the silty stream. A low- to fair-quality Alder Thicket has established along the streambank and stretches across the relatively flat topography. This specific example of Alder Thicket is unique in that its patchy canopy creates diffuse shade and allows for a denser understory than is seen in typical Alder Thickets at other Lake Superior coastal wetlands. In some places, the alders are sparse enough to support small patches of Northern Sedge Meadow.

*Area includes the first 0.25 miles of river and associated wetlands. Wetlands on Bad River property were not surveyed.

Threats

Effects from major flooding events include log jams and heavy siltation upstream from the creek mouth. These may impact future natural community composition through changes in soil characteristics, water chemistry and temperature. Also, the non-native invasive reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), which is present on site, can outcompete native plants and alter wildlife habitat.

Additional Comments

Graveyard Creek has been identified by the Lake Superior Binational Program as important to the integrity of the Lake Superior wildlife habitat and coastal wetlands. This site has also been named an Exceptional Resource Water (ERW), a designation which confers additional protection standards for pollution control.

Abbreviations and Helpful References

GLCWC - Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Classification. glc.org/wetlands/pdf/wetlands-class_rev1.pdf

WDNR Coastal Wetlands webpages - <http://dnr.wi.gov>, Keyword: "coastal wetlands"

WDNR/NHI - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Inventory Program.
<http://dnr.wi.gov>, Keyword: "natural heritage"

Lake Superior Binational Program - <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/lakesuperior>

Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa - <http://www.badriver-nsn.gov/home>

Wisconsin Lake Superior Basin Brook Trout Plan - <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/documents/lakesuperior/lakesupbrooktroutplan2005.pdf>



Brook trout displaying lake coloration (left) and stream coloration (right). Managers hope to restore Graveyard Creek to connect the stream population with its lakeshore habitat.

Suggested Citation

Doyle, K., R. O'Connor, and A. Staffen. 2012. Site Description for Graveyard Creek. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Madison, WI. <http://dnr.wi.gov>, Keyword: "coastal wetland graveyard creek"

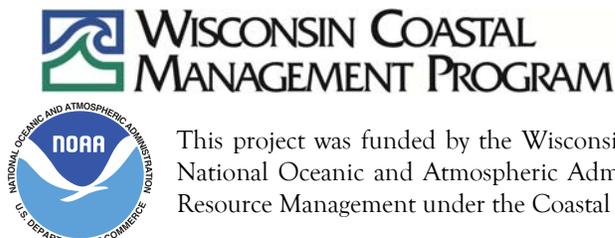
Ojibwe names of some plants mentioned in this document

English	Ojibwe
Arrowhead	waabiziipin
Beach pea	miinikaanan
Bur-reed	anaakanashk
Common horsetail	
Red raspberry	miskomin
Reed canary grass	
Sandbar willow	oziisigobiminzh
Soft rush	anaakanashk
Speckled alder	wadoop
Woolgrass	anaakanashkj

Sources:

“Onjiakiing – From the Earth. Non-medicinal Uses of Plants by the Great Lakes Ojibwe..” An electronic resource (CD) compiled by the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) in 2002 as a product of the elders from the 11 member Ojibwe tribes of the GLIFWC.

The Ojibwe People's Dictionary. An online resource at <http://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu>.



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