

# ESTUARIES & COASTAL WETLANDS OF LAKE SUPERIOR

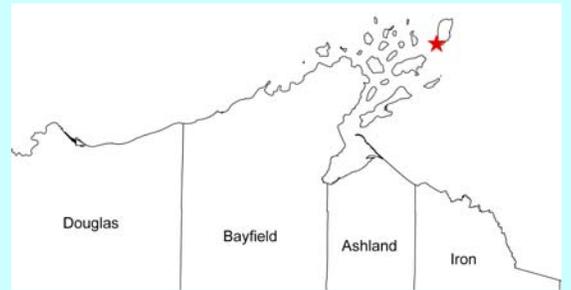
## Outer Island Sand Spit & Lagoon

Approximate Size: 250 (wetland area: 110 acres)\*

Ownership: National Park Service

Year Last Surveyed by WDNR/NHI: 1997

GLCWC Classification: Barrier Beach Lagoon



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### *Site Description*

The attenuated southern tip of remote 8,000-acre Outer Island, part of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, forms a long sandspit, enclosing a large lagoon and wetland. The spit features extensive non-vegetated beach, lake dunes and a xeric pine forest. The open peatlands surrounding the lagoon are sedge-dominated to the south and more boggy to the north. Thickets of tall shrubs and small, open, scattered stands of conifers add diversity to the community mosaic.

The open mat around the southern end of the lagoon is composed primarily of sedges, buckbean and sweet gale. To the north, the mat is boggy, with Sphagnum mosses dominant, and ericaceous shrubs, wire leaved sedges, and pitcher plant are prominent.

Of the terrestrial communities, the open dunes are vegetated with marram grass, beach-pea and sand cherry. The xeric forest dominants are red and white pines and paper birch, and the groundlayer includes bracken fern, bunchberry, cow-wheat, wintergreen, early low blueberry, and clubmosses.

The islands hosts notable concentrations of migratory birds in the fall, especially among the passerines and raptors. Loons, grebes and cormorants congregate in the waters off of the spit, and there are frequent visits from southbound shorebirds. Outer Island has been designated as a State Natural Area. There are no immediate threats to this site, but it should be monitored periodically for invasive species, changes in abundance of rare species, and human use (currently light).

\*Acreages are rough estimates based on GIS and aerial photographs and do not reflect ownership or management boundaries.

### *Additional Comments*

Excellent undisturbed sandscape with a beach, dune, Great Lakes barrens, and large enclosed lagoon with floristically rich fen community. Use by migratory birds particularly raptors, passerines and shorebirds is very high especially in the fall.

### *Abbreviations and Helpful References*

GLCWC - Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Classification.- [http://glc.org/wetlands/pdf/wetlands-class\\_rev1.pdf](http://glc.org/wetlands/pdf/wetlands-class_rev1.pdf)

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

National Park Service Apostle Islands National Lakeshore - <http://www.nps.gov/apis/>

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

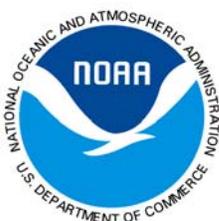
WDNR/NHI - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Natural Heritage Inventory Program.  
<http://dnr.wi.gov> , Keyword: "natural heritage"

"Managing Woodlands on Lake Superior's Red Clay Plain" - WDNR publication #PUB-FR-385 2007.  
<http://dnr.wi.gov>, Keyword: "bmp landowner guides"

Text describing this site was published previously in a 2002 WDNR publication entitled "A Data Compilation and Assessment of Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes" by E.J. Epstein, A. Galvin and W.A. Smith. To view this information within the context of the full report, go to <http://dnr.wi.gov> and enter the keywords "coastal wetlands."

### *Suggested Citation*

E.J. Epstein, A. Galvin and W.A. Smith. 2002. Site Description for Outer Island Sand Spit and Lagoon. In: "A Data Compilation and Assessment of Coastal Wetlands of Wisconsin's Great Lakes." PUBL ER-803 2002.  
<http://dnr.wi.gov>, Keyword: "coastal wetlands outer island"



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