

# ESTUARIES & COASTAL WETLANDS OF LAKE SUPERIOR

## Fish Creek Slough

Approximate Size: 510 (wetland area: 340 acres)\*

Ownership: WDNR/City of Ashland

Year Last Surveyed by WDNR/NHI: 1997

GLCWC Classification: Barred & Open Drowned River Mouth



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### *Site Description*

The drowned mouth of Fish Creek and its associated wetlands occupy the head of Chequamegon Bay. Located on the outskirts of the City of Ashland and crossed by busy U.S. Highway 2, this site has been subjected to many disturbances in the past and remains vulnerable to further deterioration unless efforts to address problems are maintained. This wetland is particularly dynamic, owing to the funnel shape of Chequamegon Bay and the seiche activity that causes frequent and sometimes substantial short-term water level changes.

The primary wetland communities are emergent marsh, shrub swamp, and hardwood swamp. The open waters of the "sloughs" also constitute an important feature. The emergent marsh occupies several hundred acres close to the creek mouth. Dominants include bur-reeds, bulrushes, lake sedge, arrowhead and water sedge. Beds of submergent and floating-leaved aquatic macrophytes occur in the open waters of the sloughs and intermingle with the emergents where conditions are suitable. The marsh grades into a shrub swamp of speckled alder and willows, eventually giving way to an extensive forest of swamp hardwoods, containing mostly ashes.

Near the mouth of Fish Creek, flats of sand and mud exposed when the water level is low are used heavily by waterfowl, gulls, terns, and shorebirds as loafing or feeding sites. Efforts to maintain the functional values of this site should continue, as Fish Creek Sloughs are important wildlife and fish habitat. Purple loosestrife control is a critical management need.

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

### *Additional Comments*

Though somewhat compromised by the location of Highway 2, the wetland communities are extensive, in generally good condition, and provide significant habitat for many wildlife species, including several that are rare.

### *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/>

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 Fish Creek Slough. 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 fish creek slough"



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