

ESTUARIES & COASTAL WETLANDS OF LAKE SUPERIOR

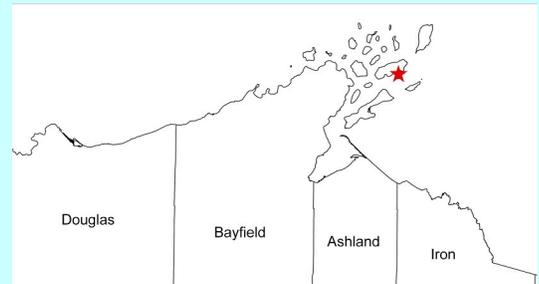
Stockton Island Tombolo

Approximate Size: 680 (wetland area: 290 acres)*

Ownership: National Park Service

Year Last Surveyed by WDNR/NHI: 2014

GLCWC Classification: Barrier Beach Tombolo



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Site Description

The tombolo is an exceptionally diverse and complex association of rare landforms and natural communities on the southeast end of 10,000-acre Stockton Island. Two sandspits have connected Presque Isle Point, historically an islet, with the main body of the island. The spits enclose a large wetland and lagoon which are traversed by a series of narrow, parallel, sand ridges. The swales between the ridges support a variety of wetland types including Submergent Marsh, Shore Fen, Poor Fen, Alder Thicket, and Tamarack (poor) Swamp communities.

Communities associated with the sandspits include Great Lakes Beach, Great Lakes Dune, Great Lakes Barrens, Boreal Forest, Northern Dry-mesic Forest, and Interdunal Wetland. Several small streams drain the island's interior and reach Lake Superior via an outlet through the eastern sandspit into Julian Bay.

The Shore Fen occurs on a floating mat of sedge rhizomes and is dominated by coast sedge (*Carex exilis*), twig-rush (*Cladium mariscoides*), beak-rush (*Rhynchospora alba*), sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), and bogbean (*Menyanthes trifolia*). Poor Fen occurs on grounded mat more heavily dominated by Sphagnum mosses, ericaceous shrubs, few seeded sedge (*Carex oligosperma*), and scattered small tamarack trees in the drier swales and along the wetland margins. An Interdunal Wetland supports an unusual flora that includes many rare plants. An Open Bog occurs in an isolated portion of the wetland, located behind a wide, ancient, forested dune ridge in the northwestern portion of the site. It is quite acidic, dominated by ericaceous shrubs, few-seeded sedge and beaked sedge (*C. utriculata*).

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

Threats

No non-native invasive plants were noted in 1997 or 2014 surveys. Periodic monitoring for invasive species is recommended. This site features one of the least disturbed of the coastal wetland complexes and could serve as a reference site compared to other coastal wetlands under a greater variety and severity of stressors.

Additional Comments

A high concentration of rare species (mostly plants and birds) has been documented here. Apart from the many rare species, the diversity, extent, and quality of the natural communities are reflected in the very high overall species diversity at this site. Some species are at the southern edge of their range in the state; monitoring for impacts of climate change or changes in the Lake Superior water level would be beneficial. Stockton Island Tombolo is a State Natural Area within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.

Abbreviations and Helpful References

GLCWC - Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Classification.- 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"



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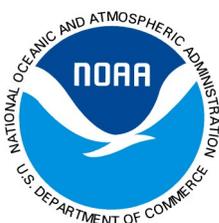


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An intertidal wetland occurs between the foredune and barrier beach ridge separating the lagoon from Lake Superior (left); a shore fen lies behind the barrier beach ridge on a floating sedge mat interspersed with a series of linear swales of water (right).

Suggested Citation

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