North Central Forest

ecological landscape

Attributes and Characteristics

Running across much of northern Wisconsin, this ecological landscape encompasses what many residents refer to as the “north woods.” Lying on top of the end and ground moraine left by the glaciers about 12,000 years ago, these vast northern hardwood forests support a variety of wildlife, including many that need large blocks of habitat to survive. Although there are very few large lakes on this ground moraine, many large wetlands, small creeks, rivers, and small kettle lakes occur throughout. Soils are primarily acid silt loams, often rocky, and poorly drained. Areas of loam and loamy sand are also present.

Many of the state’s major rivers, such as the Flambeau, Chippewa, Wolf, Peshtigo, and Brule-Menominee rivers, originate in the North Central Forest. The exceptional water quality and aquatic

Legacy Places

BD  Bad River
BR  Black River
BI  Blue Hills
BL  Border Lakes Region
CN  Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests
CH  Chippewa Flowage
CL  Chippewa Glacial Lakes
DK  Deerskin River
EC  East and West Branches of the Eau Claire River
ER  Eau Claire River
FR  Flambeau River State Forest
GF  Gile Flowage
GM  Goodman Forest
HH  Harrison Hills
HB  Haugen-Birchwood Lakeland
JR  Jump River
LA  Langlade Moraine
LH  Laona Hemlock Hardwoods
LO  Lost Lake Bog
MR  Menominee River
MF  Monico Forest
MT  Montreal River
MO  Moose Creek Hemlock Woods
NR  Namekagon River
NF  North Fork of the Chief River
diversity of these rivers is a result of the heavily forested landscape. The major land use is pulp and sawlog production with only a limited amount of agriculture, mostly small dairy farms.

Over the last several decades, this area has experienced tremendous growth in second-home development and a trend to significantly smaller parcel sizes. Although most of this new housing is centered on lakes, flowages, and rivers, even areas without water frontage are increasingly being subdivided and developed.

Conservation Needs and Opportunities

The existing vegetation is primarily hardwood forest. Aspen and birch dominate younger forests; older forests are typically comprised of a mix of sugar maple, basswood, red maple, and other hardwoods. Hemlock, white pine and red pine are present in varying densities throughout the landscape. Tamarack, white-cedar, black ash, and black spruce are present in the conifer swamps. Many large wetlands are associated with the kettle lakes and streams.

This landscape offers opportunities to manage large blocks of forest land, ranging from northern mesic to hardwood swamps, for species adapted to predominantly unfragmented landscapes. These include several mammals, such as elk, wolves, bear, bobcats, and pine martens, as well as many birds like northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, and spruce grouse.

This ecological landscape and the Northwest Lowlands are probably the only places in Wisconsin with enough public land to manage a broad scale “shifting mosaic” of forests—that is, forests at a variety of successive stages, with different age structures and species compositions, in different patch sizes. At present, older forests and conifers are under-represented in this landscape.

Recreation Uses and Opportunities

With the large amount of public land in this area, the North Central Forest is a very popular vacation and outdoor recreation destination. The uplands draw hunters, wildlife watchers, snowmobile and ATV riders, off road bikers, skiers, and horseback riders, among others. The rivers, streams, lakes, and flowages attract anglers, boaters, kayakers, and canoeists from throughout the Midwest.

Given the extensive public ownership here and the adjacent Northern Highlands ecological landscape, this is one of the best areas in the state to provide a diverse set of long distance and loop trails for both motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation. Some key gaps occur between existing public lands.
Figure 59a: Legacy Places and public conservation lands of the North Central Forest

Legacy Places and public conservation lands
North Central Forest

Public Conservation Lands
- State
- Federal
- County Forest

Legend:

- State
- Federal
- County Forest

Scale: 0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Map: Legacy Places by Ecological Landscape
Wisconsin Land Legacy Report
Legacy Places and land cover
North Central Forest

Legacy Places
BD - Bad River
BR - Black River
BI - Blue Hills
CN - Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forests
CH - Chippewa Flowage
CL - Chippewa Glacial Lakes
ER - Eau Claire River
FR - Flambeau River State Forest
GF - Gile Flowage
HB - Haugen-Birchwood Lakeland
JR - Jump River
LO - Lost Lake Bog
MT - Montreal River
MO - Moose Creek Hemlock Woods
NR - Namekagon River
NF - North Fork of the Chief River
PG - Penokee-Gogebic Range
PA - Pennington Hills
TP - Thornapple-Bruneau River Woods
TH - Timm’s Hill
TF - Turtle-Flambeau Flowage
UC - Upper Chippewa River
UF - Upper Forks of the Flambeau River
WC - Weyerhauser Cedar Swamp
YC - Yellow (Chippewa) River

Land Cover
- Urban
- Agriculture
- Grassland
- Shrubland
- Forest
- Open Water
- Open Wetland
- Forested Wetland

Scale 1:2,500,000
Legend
- 0
- 2.5
- 5
- 10 Miles

North Central Forest
Figure 59b: Legacy Places and public conservation lands of the North Central Forest
Figure 60b: Legacy Places and land cover of the North Central Forest

Legacy Places and land cover
North Central Forest

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report
## Public Conservation Lands

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<th>Map#</th>
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### Federal
- Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest1 | 1,186,860
- St. Croix National Scenic Riverway | 3,390

### County Forest
- Ashland County Forest | 32,810
- Barron County Forest1 | 5,210
- Bayfield County Forest1 | 28,230
- Chippewa County Forest1 | 31,410
- Douglas County Forest1 | 6,610
- Florence County Forest | 15,260
- Forest County Forest1 | 10,690
- Iron County Forest1 | 150,370
- Langlade County Forest1 | 86,500
- Lincoln County Forest1 | 90,160
- Marinette County Forest1 | 36,450
- Oneida County Forest1 | 56,850
- Price County Forest | 88,010
- Rusk County Forest1 | 86,920
- Sawyer County Forest1 | 110,630
- Taylor County Forest1 | 13,330
- Vilas County Forest1 | 4,240
- Washburn County Forest | 74,940

**TOTAL** | 2,335,195

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1. Actual acres owned in this Ecological Landscape.
2. This property also falls within adjacent Ecological Landscapes.
3. Includes public access sites, fish hatcheries, fire towers, streambank and non-point easements, lands acquired under statewide wildlife, fishery, forestry, and natural area programs, small properties under 100 acres, and properties with fewer than 100 acres within this Ecological Landscape.
4. Locations and sizes of county owned parcels enrolled in the Forest Crop Law are presented here. Information on locations and sizes of other county and local parks in this Ecological Landscape is not readily available and is not included here, except for some very large properties.
5. Acres acquired under the Forest Crop Law are presented here. Information on locations and sizes of other county and local parks in this Ecological Landscape is not readily available and is not included here, except for some very large properties.
Wisconsin Land Legacy Report

Legacy Places

North Central Forest ecological landscape

BD Bad River
See the Superior Coastal Plains ecological landscape.

BR Black River
See the Forest Transition ecological landscape.

BI Blue Hills
A large, very old quartzite outcropping forms the Blue Hills. The Hills support an extensive forested tract intermingled with lakes, wetlands and a number of high quality streams. The Hills are a potential link between the Chippewa Moraine to the south and the large forest blocks to the north. Although little farmland exists within the area, agriculture is a dominant land use to the south and east. The Blue Hills support a high quality, second growth forest. Dominant tree species include sugar maple, red oak, aspen, and basswood, although the topography of the area provides a diversity of microclimates that support a wide variety of trees and other plants. The Hills harbor many birds dependent on forest interior conditions, including numerous aquatic, high-gradient streams originate in the Hills and support productive brook trout fisheries. Within the hilly landscape there are a number of small, mostly undeveloped lakes and impoundments that provide fishing for species such as bass, northern pike, and panfish. Several large fens—(valleys slopes that generate a consistent upwelling of cold air from their base and support a number of rare plants and invertebrates), along with other important geological and archaeological features, are also found here. Maintaining the large forested landscape will be critical to meet the area’s conservation potential, particularly the full range of forest age classes and patch size. Reducing habitat fragmentation could enhance populations of forest dwelling birds. Although a considerable portion of the Blue Hills is within county forest programs, many key areas remain unprotected. The Hills are popular destinations for hunters, anglers, snowmobilers, hikers, and skiers. Given the size of the area, maintaining the large forested landscape here might allow multiple recreation uses, including both motorized and quiet activities, to successfully coexist.

BL Border Lakes Region
Over 80% of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest occurs within the North Central Forest ecological landscape, covering an area close to 1.2 million acres. The National Forest occurs primarily on glacial moraines and till plains with loamy soils that provide mesic and wet-mesic conditions. Forests are predominantly aspen and northern hardwoods, with some red pine plantations and wetlands. Northern hard-wood forests provide habitat for a number of native herbaceous plant species, and for forest interior birds during the breeding season. Aspen forests provide habitat for early-successional wildlife species, and offer opportunities for ruffed grouse and woodcock hunting. Hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, biking, snowmobiling, and off road vehicle riding are among the many popular recreation activities. Off-road vehicle use has been permitted on most of the Chequamegon National Forest, but restricted to roads posted for such use on the Nicolet National Forest. Current guidelines for off-road vehicles are being revised as part of the National Forest planning process.

While the Chequamegon and Nicolet portions of the National Forest are similar in geologic origin and forest cover, there are some notable features unique to each. The Chequamegon contains a portion of the Penokee-Gogebic Range, noted for its steep topography and relatively contiguous northern hardwood forest cover, which provides interior forest habitat for species that require large extensive forests. Much of the area around Clam Lake is a drumlinized ground moraine, with wetland forests in the low-lying areas between the drumlins. Wilderness areas on the Chequamegon include the Rainbow Lake Wilderness of 6,583 acres, and the Porcupine Lake Wilderness of 4,446 acres, both located near Drummond. The North Country Trail passes between the towns of Drummond and Mellen, and a number of other recreational trails are available for Forest visitors. The Medford Ranger District is disjunct from the rest of the Forest, and its more southern location leads to the
North Central Forest
ecological landscape

Legacy Places

CH Chippewa Flowage
Size: Large
Protection Initiated: Limited
Protection Remaining: Large
Conservation Significance: Limited
Recreation Potential: Medium

This 15,000-acre impoundment hosts a seemingly endless maze of islands, points, bays and channels. With over 230 miles of mostly undeveloped shoreline and 280 islands, the Chippewa Flowage is one of the state’s most spectacular waterbodies. Forests of aspen, birch, pine and oak line much of the shore and the surrounding rolling landscape. Herons, eagles, loons and waterfowl are commonly seen. Since it was initially dammed in 1923, the flowage has drawn visitors from throughout the Midwest. Fishing, in particular for muskellunge, is a prized activity. Walleye, pike, perch and crappie are also popular among visitors. The flowage has 18 island camping sites that create a unique wild and uncrowded experience.

CL Chippewa Glacial Lakes
Size: Large
Protection Initiated: Medium
Protection Remaining: Moderate
Conservation Significance: Limited
Recreation Potential: Medium

This rugged, wooded terrain contains numerous ephemeral wetlands, bogs, kettle lakes, and large seepage lakes that have little or no development. This area also contains an excellent representation of a variety of glacial features including moraines, eskers, ice block depression lakes, ice-walled lake plains, and a glacial meltwater channel. Forests in portions of the area are very high quality and contain a high diversity of forest interior bird species. Existing land protection and management efforts occurring within the Ice Age Reserve and Chippewa County Forest could be substantially enhanced to create a landscape linkage between those properties and existing public ownership in the Blue Hills of Sawyer, Barron, and Rusk Counties. Protection efforts in the Chippewa Glacial Lakes area could provide quality hunting, hiking, wildlife watching, paddling, and fishing opportunities for the numerous residents in the Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls areas. Given its close proximity to US 53, it is also easily accessible to many others.

DK Deerskin River
Size: Medium
Protection Initiated: Limited
Protection Remaining: Limited
Conservation Significance: Limited
Recreation Potential: Medium

The Deerskin River is a cold water stream containing Class I and Class II trout waters in different reaches. Much of the upper part of the river goes through the Nicolet National Forest; the middle and lower reaches flow through private parcels. The river corridor includes impoundments at Long Lake and Scattering Rice Lake. A dam that held the former Deerskin Flowage has recently been removed, restoring wetlands and the natural streambed.

EC East and West Branches of the Eau Claire River
Size: Medium
Protection Initiated: Moderate
Protection Remaining: Moderate
Conservation Significance: Limited
Recreation Potential: Medium

Originating in the large wetlands and small lakes near Kempster, these streams are productive trout waters. The large wetland in the headwater area, known as Bogus Swamp, is a high quality open bog that supports rare butterflies and a diverse assemblage of plants. The water quality in the East Branch in particular has improved recently and is supporting higher numbers of trout. There are several public properties located in these corridors, including Langlade County Forest, the old Crystal Springs Hatchery, Peters Marsh Wildlife Area and some scattered fishery properties.

ER Eau Claire River
Size: Medium
Protection Initiated: Limited
Protection Remaining: Limited
Conservation Significance: Limited
Recreation Potential: Limited

See the Northwest Sands ecological landscape.
The Flambeau River State Forest is dominated by northern hardwood species such as sugar and red maple, yellow birch, aspen, and white ash. The North and South Forks of the Flambeau River combine within the forest to provide over 75 miles of nearly uninterrupted natural beauty and whitewater excitement. Canoeing and fishing are popular river-based activities, while hunting and snowmobiling are the most popular land-based recreation activities on the State Forest. Muskellunge, sturgeon, trout, walleyes, bass, and panfish occur in the river. Several large blocks of land, much in County Forest or industrial forest ownership, surround the Flambeau River State Forest. Maintaining these large blocks of working forest would help to buffer the state forest, offer excellent outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide an important source of wood fiber for paper and lumber. Downstream from the State Forest critical habitat exists for several threatened and endangered species of fish, mussels, and dragonflies. Two flowages and the surrounding uplands provide opportunities for fishing, boating, picnicking and camping. Many stretches of the lower river are undeveloped or lightly developed, with extensively forested shorelines.

The Gile Flowage is a large reservoir with a relatively undeveloped shoreline that provides fishing, hunting, trapping, boating, camping and swimming opportunities. The surrounding land is a mix of northern conifer and northern hardwood forest. The Gile Flowage has been designated an Outstanding Resource Water.

Lying between Lake Chetak and Long Lake is an area of kettle lake topography containing an exceptionally high density of small, mostly undeveloped lakes. It was formed primarily while the Chippewa lobe of the most-recent continental glaciation was melting back from its maximum extent. The lakes formed when large, buried blocks of glacial ice melted and left deep depressions. The surrounding wooded uplands support many rare birds. Some of the area is owned and managed as County Forest. Many of the small lakes in the County Forest are accessible only by foot and provide a remote, wilderness experience for visitors. Fishing in these lakes, many of which are less than 30 acres in size but more than 25 feet deep, is excellent. Extending a protected corridor south to near Birchwood and west to Haugen could alleviate user conflicts currently occurring on the Tuscobia State Trail, which passes south of this area. Such a corridor could provide a scenic alternative route for the Ice Age Trail and protect similar kettle topography formed by the Lake Superior lobe.

The Jump River system drains a predominantly forested landscape, although some farmland is present. Many of the headwater creeks drain from and flow through large wetland complexes. As the North and South Forks of the river gain volume, they also pick up speed as they pass through higher gradients. The entire river corridor has remained largely intact and supports a diverse aquatic community structure with several rare elements and few problems with exotic species.

Ecological Landscape

Hiking the Ice Age Trail in the Harrison Hills

Red Fox (Vulpes vulpes)
Lying west of Laona are several lakes surrounded by mature hemlock-hardwood forest. These woods, which continue north to the Peshtigo River, offer one of the best opportunities in the state to manage for old-growth characteristics. Species that do best in large blocks of mature forest, such as black-throated green warbler, northern goshawk, and bobcat are common here.

**LO Lost Lake Bog**

Like the Kettle and Chippewa Moraines, this area contains excellent examples of the glacial landforms associated with recessional moraines, although very few kettle lakes are found here. The undulating terrain harbors mostly early successional forest dominated by aspen. The Evergreen River and Evergreen Creek drain the south side of the area, both of which support good trout populations.

The Lost Lake Bog lies between several large forested tracts owned by the county and the Nicolet National Forest. The Wolf River borders the area on the north. Protecting some key places between existing public lands could create a very large area providing hunting, fishing, trail use, and other recreational opportunities within about two hours of the large population in the Fox Valley. Much of the area is currently in industrial forest ownership.

**LA Langlade Moraine**

This large block of woods sits between the Nicolet National Forest, Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, and a large block of county forest. Those and adjoining woods support a diverse set of forest interior birds, many uncommon. Although many large wetlands are present, the area could support a range of recreation activities.

**LH Laona Hemlock Hardwoods**

This medium-large river system provides excellent canoeing and kayaking opportunities with whitewater occurring in some segments, particularly near the confluence of the North and South Forks. The river also provides a connection between the Chippewa River corridor and the Chequamegon National Forest. The river and the two forks flow through extensive industrial forest lands. Maintaining these large blocks of habitat will be critical to meeting multiple economic, ecological, and recreation goals.

The Jump River and its two forks support a diverse assemblage of species including several rare insects, fish, and reptiles. In-stream habitat throughout the system is excellent. Lake Sturgeon, moving up from the Chippewa River, are present.

This medium-large river system provides excellent canoeing and kayaking opportunities with whitewater occurring in some segments, particularly near the confluence of the North and South Forks. The river also provides a connection between the Chippewa River corridor and the Chequamegon National Forest. The river and the two forks flow through extensive industrial forest lands. Maintaining these large blocks of habitat will be critical to meeting multiple economic, ecological, and recreation goals.
**North Central Forest ecological landscape**

North Fork of the Chief River

The North Fork of the Chief River flows from the Tiger Cat Flowage south to the Chippewa Flowage and provides an important muskellunge spawning area for the Chippewa Flowage. The surrounding area is characterized by generally rolling till plains with moderate slopes and ridges. Upland forest types include aspen, white birch, northern hardwoods, and balsam fir with scattered pockets of hemlock and white pine. Lowland forests include black ash, balsam fir, tamarack, black spruce, white cedar, and alder.

The existing Chief River State Wildlife Area protects some of the riparian zone and provides habitat for many northern wildlife species. Current management focuses on providing hunting, wildlife watching, fishing, snowmobiling, and day walking opportunities.

**PG Penokee-Gogebic Range**

This range supports a large quality forest matrix with several patches of old growth hemlock-hardwood forest. Several high quality rivers, including the Bad, Tyler Forks, Potato and Montreal, cut through the range. Waterfalls occur as these rivers pass over resistant rock ledges and attract many visitors. The large forest block supports a number of uncommon and rare birds, particularly warblers. The topography of the area and the variety of soil conditions result in a wide range of habitat that supports a diverse assemblage of species and natural communities.

The range acts as an ecological corridor between the Chequamegon National Forest and the national forests in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. This corridor is an important travel route for moose and wolves to and from the Upper Peninsula. The area’s highly varied topography offers many opportunities to maintain a mosaic of forest habitats. Although a significant portion of the Penokee-Gogebic Range is in county forest, mining companies also own large acres. Much of the area has been mined for iron ore in the past.

**PE Peshtigo River**

This river complex comprises the Big Somo and Little Somo Rivers, along with Hay Creek. All eventually flow into Lake Mohawksin at Tomahawk. These good quality streams harbor trout in their headwaters. The watersheds are wooded and quite wild. Numerous riffles and rapids exist in the rivers and help support a variety of aquatic life. Protection of the river corridor could connect several County Forest properties.

**PP Pine-Popple River**

This large forest block southeast of Winter contains mature northern mesic forest and northern hardwood swamps. The area has no paved roads and very few gravel ones, making it one of the state’s most remote areas. American marten fallow farmland, open wetlands, and scattered small parcels of northern and swamp hardwood forest. Much of the land between the two existing tracts contains a significant amount of former farmland that is now reverting to a more natural state. The Fisher River, and associated tributaries, which support several rare, threatened and endangered species, runs through the area. Maintaining the open space between the existing sections of the Wildlife Area and the Chequamegon National Forest just to the east would facilitate species movement, simplify management operations, and maintain (and potentially increase) recreation opportunities.

**PI Pipestone Hills**

This area contains a large block of forest representative of northern hardwoods and harbors all the glacial landforms of the area. The forest is mostly roadless and provides habitat for a wide variety of "big woods" species, including a large portion of the hardwood forest birds known to occur in northern Wisconsin. Given its size, the full range of forest recreation activities could be considered for this site.

**PA Pershing Area**

The Pershing Wildlife Area consists of two large and separate tracts, encompassing approximately 7,400 acres, which are intensively managed for the production of sharp-tailed grouse and waterfowl. The surrounding area is a mix of active and conservation lands.

**PR Prairie River**

This large forest block southeast of Winter contains mature northern mesic forest and northern hardwood swamps. The area has no paved roads and very few gravel ones, making it one of the state’s most remote areas. American marten...
North Central Forest

ecological landscape

appear to be colonizing here and occasionally moose are reported. The Thornapple and Brunet Rivers flow through the area and form ecological connections between the Chequamegon National Forest and Sawyer County Forest. The Flambeau River State Forest lies to the east. The area presents a unique opportunity to maintain a large wild tract that could support primitive camping, hunting, canoeing, and other low-impact activities.

TH Timm’s Hill
Size ................................. Medium
Protection Initiated ............................ Substantial
Protection Remaining .......................... Moderate
Conservation Significance .......................... Recreation Potential ..........................

The highest point in the state, Timm’s Hill is within a county park. Protection could be expanded to the surrounding area, which harbors many small lakes and extensive forest including old-growth hemlock. The steep-sided hills harbor different plants and animals depending on their slope and aspect. These steep slopes continue down below many of the lakes in the area and form very severe underwater shelves. As a result, these “mesotrophic” lakes are exceptionally deep for their small surface area and can become permanently stratified (i.e., they do not fully “turn over” in the spring and fall) resulting in unusual chemical properties. The area contains many recreation opportunities for public enjoyment including lake access, trails, observation platforms, and hunting.

TF Turtle-Flambeau Flowage
Size ................................. Large
Protection Initiated ............................ Limited
Protection Remaining .......................... Substantial
Conservation Significance .......................... Recreation Potential ..........................

Created by a dam at the confluence of the Turtle and Flambeau Rivers, this 14,000-acre flowage is one of northern Wisconsin’s most popular backcountry destinations. Surrounding the flowage are over 18,000 acres of state-owned land that support forests of aspen, birch, maple and other northern hardwoods. Scattered through the area are some pockets of old-growth hemlock and pine that provide excellent nesting habitat for eagles and osprey. Many grass openings have been created and maintained to increase the variety of wildlife in the area, particularly game species. In addition to deer, bear, fisher, beaver, and otters, wolves and moose are occasionally seen on the property. The Flowage has the highest density of breeding pairs of eagles, osprey, and common loons in Wisconsin. State ownership includes 114 miles of shoreline and 195 islands. With 60 campgrounds accessible only by boat, the flowage offers a unique, remote setting for boaters and paddlers. Fishing for black crappie, smallmouth bass, muskellunge, and in particular walleyes, is excellent throughout the flowage.

Although nearly all of the shoreline is privately owned, the Chippewa River provides an excellent, quiet river experience. The area around the confluence of the Chippewa and Flambeau Rivers is particularly scenic and could provide multiple recreation opportunities including camping, wildlife watching, and many trail uses. Between Lake Holcombe and Eau Claire, the river shoreline is more heavily developed, but is still scenic and very popular. The short stretch between Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire harbors numerous sandstone outcrops. White cedar, hemlock and white pine are prevalent throughout this stretch.

UC Upper Chippewa River
Size ................................. Large
Protection Initiated ............................ Limited
Protection Remaining .......................... Substantial
Conservation Significance .......................... Recreation Potential ..........................

From the Chippewa Flowage downstream to Eau Claire, the Chippewa River corridor provides opportunity to link the state forest with the Chequamegon National Forest, the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, some county forest lands, and several large State Wildlife Areas. The North Fork provides one of the longest river wilderness experiences in the state. Currently, river users can paddle from the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, through the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, and down to the Flambeau River State Forest. Significant portions of this 65-mile stretch are in public ownership and managed to provide a wild setting along the water. Most of the land between the public properties is in industrial forest production, which contributes to the river’s remote nature.

The South Fork of the Flambeau is much more dependent on surface water drainage with the flow varying dramatically based on precipitation. The South Fork originates in the Chequamegon National Forest and joins the North Fork in the Flambeau River State Forest. Unlike the North Fork, the private lands between the public properties are in relatively small ownership parcels with little industrial forest production. Several very large blocks of working forest lie adjacent to and between the Upper Forks. These blocks include typical northern hardwood forests, aspen stands, bogs and the “Million Acre Swamp.” These large blocks of forest help to maintain the ecological corridor along the North and South Forks, offer excellent outdoor recreation opportunities and provide an important source of wood fiber for paper and lumber.

UW Upper Wisconsin River
See the Northern Highlands ecological landscape.

UP Upper Wolf River
Size ................................. Large
Protection Initiated ............................ Substantial
Protection Remaining .......................... Moderate
Conservation Significance .......................... Recreation Potential ..........................

The Wolf River is Wisconsin’s largest trout water. Its beauty and significant whitewater attract anglers and paddlers from throughout the Midwest. From its headwaters in Forest County down to the Menominee Reservation, the river corridor contains excellent examples of old-growth forest. The Upper Wolf offers the opportunity to link the Menominee Reservation and its tremendous natural resource base with the Nicolet National Forest.
North Central Forest ecological landscape

Starting in Pine Lake, the upper stretch of the Wolf River winds through several large, high quality wetlands, some of which contain wild rice. As a result of several lakes, the river gains considerable volume and speed. Although much of the immediate river corridor is in public ownership, some important stretches are not formally protected. Some of the highest quality portions are within industrial forest ownership. Enhancing the width of the protected corridor would significantly increase its ecological value.

Important tributaries include Swamp and Nine-mile Creeks, and the Hunting, Evergreen, and Lily Rivers. All contribute to the Wolf River's excellent water quality. Of particular interest to many residents is Swamp Creek, known as the Little River of Medicines by the Chippewa. The creek, the surrounding hills, and the wild rice beds—particularly the extensive beds in Rice Lake—have played central roles in the cultural, spiritual, and economic lives of the Chippewa community. This area has been the focus of considerable interest and controversy since the announcement in 1976 of the discovery of a highly concentrated copper deposit here. Recreational opportunities may be limited to low-impact activities because much of the land is forested.

WF Willow Flawage
See the Northern Highlands ecological landscape.

WC Weyerhauser Cedar Swamp
Size: Small
Protection Initiated: Limited
Protection Remaining: Moderate
Conservation Significance: Recreation Potential: This is the largest remaining cedar swamp in western Wisconsin south of the Bois Brule River. The cedars grow along seepage areas a few miles south of the Blue Hills and are most likely integrally connected via groundwater. Many rare plants and Neotropical migrant birds are found here during the summer. Seepage areas and springs provide water to small streams emanating from the slopes. Recreational opportunities may be limited to low-impact activities because the land is very wet.

YC Yellow (Chippewa) River
Size: Medium
Protection Initiated: Limited
Protection Remaining: Moderate
Conservation Significance: Recreation Potential: The Yellow River is a large tributary of the Chippewa River located in Chippewa and Taylor Counties. The main river harbors over 40 miles of free-flowing, medium to high gradient, riverine habitat with numerous small coldwater, coolwater and warmwater tributaries. Upland vegetation consists of deciduous and coniferous forest; lowland vegetation consists of floodplain forest, alder thickets and various other wetland communities. The surrounding area is a mixture of private recreational and agricultural land. The Yellow River provides an opportunity to connect the Taylor County section of the Chequamegon National Forest with the Chippewa River corridor.

Other Areas of Interest

Big Island-Nelson Lake
(Sawyer County)
Nelson Lake, a 2,500-acre flowage located in northwest Sawyer County, is famous for its walleyes and panfish. A large portion of the remaining undeveloped privately-owned shoreline is found on Big Island, the largest island in this lake. This island is approximately 560 acres, about half of which is owned by Sawyer County. The shoreline, however, is primarily in private ownership that is receiving increased development pressure. The riparian edge contains typical upland to lowland plant communities except for the west side of the island where a stand of wild rice is present.

Bootjack Bog
(Oreida County)
Adjoins to Chequamegon National Forest, this very large, undisturbed wetland complex contains two high quality lakes and numerous headwater streams. The area is very remote.

Couderay River
(Sawyer County)
Most of the river flows through forested land, with predominantly wild shorelines. This river supports several endangered species and is a major tributary to the Chippewa River. The river drains several high quality lakes including Grimstone, Whitleaf, Lac Courte Oreilles and Sund Lake in Sawyer County.

Elvoy and Brule Creeks
(Forest County)
These Class I trout streams contain a native brook trout fishery with Elvoy Creek harboring the only known naturally reproducing brown trout fishery in Forest County. These creeks are very important tributaries to the Brule-Menominee River and add significantly to the system's trout fishery.

Montagne Creek
Headwater Woods
(Florence County)
This area contains a mosaic of mature hemlock-hardwood forest (hemlock, sugar maple, yellow birch), wild lakes, old-growth cedar swamp, high quality brook trout streams, and wild rivers. The area is adjacent to the Whisker Lakes Wilderness area and is an important bird nesting area.

Mosquito Brook
(Sawyer County)
This area, to the north and east of Hayward, provides excellent fishing and hunting opportunities. Mosquito Brook, a 3-mile long Class I trout stream, originates from an unnamed lake and is fed by springs along its banks. Brook trout are abundant throughout its length. The banks are forested with second growth conifers and hardwoods.

North Otter Creek
(Forest County)
This is a Class I trout stream and is a very important tributary to the Peshtigo River. This stream is one of the best brook trout fisheries in Forest County. Much of this area is within industrial forest ownership.

South Fork of Main Creek
(Brown County)
This spring fed stream supports a healthy brook trout population as well as a diverse non-game fish community. The stream flows through northern hardwood and softwood forests and moderately developed agricultural lands. Parts of the existing creek have been restored through intensive in-stream habitat improvement.

Springstead Area Woods
(Iron County)
This block of high quality woods, lakes, and wetlands lies between the Hay Creek-Hoffman Lakes Wildlife Area, Turtle Flambeau Flowage, and the Chequamegon National Forest. The area is heavily used by wildlife moving between these large public properties.

Weirgor Springs
(Sawyer County)
Weirgor Springs form the headwaters of Little Weirgor and Beaver Creeks, two excellent trout streams. Aspen and northern hardwoods dominate the surrounding upland forests. Several spring ponds are present. The Weirgor Springs State Wildlife Area protects some of this area and could be the foundation of a protected corridor between the Blue Hills and the Coudery and Chippewa Rivers.