Priority Conservation Actions & Conservation Opportunity Areas

NORTHWEST SANDS ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

HIGH PRIORITY SGCN AND NATURAL COMMUNITIES

- American Bittern
- American Golden Plover
- Black-backed Woodpecker
- Brown Thrasher
- Connecticut Warbler
- Dunlin
- LeConte’s Sparrow
- Marbled Godwit
- Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow
- Northern Harrier
- Red Crossbill
- Sharp-tailed Grouse
- Short-billed Dowitcher
- Solitary Sandpiper
- Trumpeter Swan
- Vesper Sparrow
- Wilson’s Phalarope
- Yellow Rail
- Banded Killifish
- Greater Redhorse
- Pugnose Shiner
- Boreal Chorus Frog
- Bullsnake
- Northern Prairie Skink
- Dusted Skipper
- An Issid Planthopper
- Gorgone Checkerspot
- Henry’s Elfin
- Karner Blue Butterfly
- Olympia Marble
- Phlox Moth
- Prairiana kansana (Leafhopper)
- Purple Wartyback
- Pygmy Snaketail
- St. Croix Snaketail
- Coldwater streams
- Coolwater streams
- Emergent Marsh-Wild Rice
- Impoundments/Reservoirs
- Inland Lakes
- Northern Dry Forest
- Northern Sedge Meadow
- Northern Wet Forest
- Northern Wet-mesic Forest
- Oak Barrens
- Pine Barrens

PRIORITY CONSERVATION ACTIONS

- Create financial incentives to manage for jack pine and oak.
- Create financial incentives to address the differential market values between plantation production and natural regeneration, retention of old-growth patches, or prescribed burning in and around core managed areas.
- Develop educational tools and demonstration/training areas that promote prescribed fire and other barrens management practices.
- Implement the Northwest Sands Integrated Ecosystem Management Plan to manage the full range of barrens succession stages and diverse habitats in a landscape context. A comprehensive landscape plan requires identification and management of early succession cores. The “barrens” also needs to have places managed in a shifting mosaic of timber harvest with many clearcuts, some older than rotation-age stands, some thinning of stands for savanna structure and a few protected groves. Many stands should be thinned to a safe amount of residual standing timber then burned for stand regeneration while leaving charred legacies. Manage shallow publicly-owned lakes by maintaining open shorelines. To enhance landscape attributes, red pine plantations can be applied to appropriate sites where the historic fire regime indicates groves occurred.
- Restore jack pine and oak barrens and shrub habitats on public lands in appropriate Conservation Opportunity Areas through fire, ground layer enhancement, and timber management.
- Identify additional sites containing high quality or restorable barrens.
- Develop a practical “toolkit” for maintaining structural and compositional characteristics of barrens ecosystems.
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- The landscape is especially well suited to conduct research to determine Franklin’s Ground Squirrel distribution, habitat use, population, and mortality factors.
- Maintain large blocks of habitat; manage complexes of sedge meadow in conjunction with associated wetlands such as open bog, poor fen, emergent marsh, shrub-carr, alder thicket and northern wet forest where possible.
- Protection and restoration of natural lake and stream habitat, including establishment of refuge areas and appropriate management of aquatic plants, are needed for conservation of the Pugnose Shiner, which requires clear waters and littoral zone vegetation.
- This landscape has an especially important role for managing shorebird habitat on public lands at flowages and impoundments. Through dikes, water levels can be raised to flood these areas, and through water control structures, water levels can be manipulated to benefit shorebirds. Migration phenology and specific habitat requirements must be considered when managing for shorebirds.
- Opportunities to manage for boreal birds, Lepidoptera, and other boreal taxa are important considerations in the Brule Spillway and Blueberry Swamp.

CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREAS

Pine-Oak Barrens – Global Significance
Large outwash plain with a continuum of Pine Barrens, Oak Barrens, Northern Dry Forest, Northern Dry-mesic Forest, Northern Wet-mesic Forest, Northern Hardwood Swamp, Northern Wet Forest, Northern Sedge Meadow, Open Bog, Alder Thicket, Interior Beach, Inland Lakes, and Bedrock Glade.

COA(s): Crex Barrens and Wetlands (2.02), Namekagon Barrens (2.03), Douglas and Bayfield County Barrens (2.04), Moquah Barrens (2.06) and Fish Lake Barrens and Wetlands (2.07)


Public Land – Brule River State Forest, Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, Douglas County Wildlife Area, Fish Lake Wildlife Area, Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area, St. Croix National Scenic River, Governor Knowles State Forest, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Burnett County Forest, Bayfield County Forest, Polk County Forest, Washburn County Forest, Douglas County Forest.

Legacy Places – Danbury to Sterling Corridor, Crex Meadows, Namekagon-Brule Barrens, Chequamegon-Nicolet NF.

Important Bird Areas – Namekagon/Solon Springs Barrens, Crex Meadows, Fish Lake Wetlands and Barrens, and Moquah Barrens.
Large Sedge Meadows, Fens, and Prairies – Upper Midwest/Regional significance
Large sedge meadows and open marshes with a continuum of Northern Sedge Meadow, Emergent Marsh, Emergent Marsh-Wild Rice, Submerged Aquatic, and Surrogate Grassland. Also including impoundments focused on the open water and mudflats during drawdowns.

**COA(s):** Fish Lake (2.01), Amsterdam Sloughs (2.08) and Crex (2.09)


Public Land – Amsterdam Sloughs Wildlife Area, Crex Meadows Wildlife Area, Fish Lake Wildlife Area, Polk County Forest, Burnett County Forest.

Legacy Places – Danbury to Sterling corridor, Crex Meadows.

Important Bird Areas – Fish Lake Wetlands and Barrens, and Crex Meadows.

Medium-sized Rivers and Streams – Upper Midwest/Regional significance
The Upper St. Croix River and Namekagon Rivers and the adjacent upland ridges feature medium-sized river systems and the adjacent terraces communities including Warmwater Rivers including riparian communities, Sand Prairie, Northern Dry Forest, Northern Dry-mesic Forest and Forested Seeps.

**COA(s):** Upper St. Croix River and Namekagon Rivers (A.45)


Public Land – Burnett County Forest, Douglas County Forest, St. Croix National Scenic River, Governor Knowles State Forest.


Important Bird Areas – Namekagon-Solon Springs Barrens.

Diverse Aquatic Communities – State Significance
Including drainage lakes through which flow medium-sized river systems including Coldwater Streams, Coolwater Streams and riparian communities.

**COA(s):** Yellow River including Big Sand and Yellow Lakes (A.47)

SGCN – Banded Killifish, Gilt Darter, Least Darter, Pugnose Shiner, Greater Redhorse, Blanding’s Turtle, Boreal Chorus Frog, Mink Frog, Mudpuppy, Pickerel Frog, Wood Frog, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Pygmy Snaketail.

Public Lands – Burnett County Forest, Washburn County Forest.

Legacy Places – Yellow River.
High Quality Wetland Communities – State Significance
Large forested wetlands including the Brule Spillway contain Northern Wet Forest, Northern Wet-mesic Forest, Open Bog, Poor Fen, and Muskeg.

**COA(s):** Blueberry Swamp (2.05)
- Public Land – Brule River State Forest, Douglas County Forest.
- Important Bird Areas – Brule Glacial Spillway.