

A6 Potential Conservation/ Natural Areas

OAKLAND COUNTY POTENTIAL CONSERVATION/ NATURAL AREAS REPORT

Excerpt from Introduction to April 2004 Update
“Natural resource conservation is a fundamental component of a community’s long-term environmental and economic health. Natural resource areas perform important natural functions such as water filtration and they provide recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat that enhance the overall vitality of a community. Abundant natural resources once surrounded population centers in Oakland County. Now, much reduced in size, natural resource areas are becoming encircled by population. These remaining sites are the foundation of Oakland County’s natural heritage; they represent the last remaining remnants of Oakland County’s native ecosystems, natural plant communities, and scenic qualities. Consequently, it is in Oakland County’s best interest and to a community’s advantage that these sites be carefully integrated into the planning for future development. Striking a balance between development and natural resource conservation and preservation is critical if Oakland County is to maintain its unique natural heritage. This approach will provide the greatest opportunity to maintain high property values and continued market demand. Part of what makes Oakland County such a unique and desirable place to work, live, and play is the combination, quality, and accessibility of its natural landscapes, lakes, rivers, and streams.

Successful land use planning requires more than simply protecting small preserves and trusting that they will remain in their current condition indefinitely. Many human activities such as road construction, chemical and fertilizer application, fire suppression, and residential development can have a detrimental impact on populations of plants, animals, and insects and the natural communities in which they live. In order to maintain the integrity of the most fragile natural areas, a more holistic approach to resource conservation must be taken, an approach that looks beyond the borders of the site itself. What happens on adjacent farmland, in a nearby town, or upstream should be considered equally as important as what happens within a preserve. By looking to the past, understanding the present, and

considering the future, it becomes apparent that a balance must be struck between development and natural resource preservation.

This report identifies and ranks Potential Conservation Areas remaining in Oakland County. Potential Conservation Areas are defined as places on the landscape dominated by native vegetation that have various levels of potential for harboring high quality natural areas and unique natural features. In addition, these areas may provide critical ecological services such as maintaining water quality and quantity, soil development and stabilization, pollination of cropland, wildlife travel corridors, stopover sites for migratory birds, sources of genetic diversity, and floodwater retention. However, the actual ecological value of these areas can only be truly ascertained through on the ground biological surveys. The process established by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) of identifying potential conservation areas can also be used to update and track the status of these remaining sites. The Michigan Natural Features Inventory recommends that Oakland County Planning & Economic Development Services Division (PEDS) incorporate this information into their comprehensive natural area mapping services. The site map and ranking data can be used by local municipalities, land trusts, and other agencies to prioritize conservation efforts and assist in finding opportunities to establish an open space system of linked natural areas throughout Oakland County."

Editorial Statement

The Oakland County Potential Conservation/Natural Areas Report ranked areas as either Priority One, Two, or Three. The green areas on the Village Map on page A6-3 were all ranked as Priority Three in the original 2002 evaluation. The primary limiting factor in Bingham Farms appears to be the fragmented ownership of the resource, rather than its quality. Because of the presence of a stream ecosystem, the local importance of these Potential Natural Areas is actually quite high, based upon comments received during the Future Vision Workshop.



POTENTIAL CONSERVATION/
NATURAL AREAS*

VILLAGE OF BINGHAM FARMS
OAKLAND COUNTY

* Identified by the 2002 Michigan Natural Features Inventory
Source: Oakland County Planning and Economic Development Services



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