



# **Detroit River Area of Concern Canadian Priority Habitat Sites**

Habitat Work Group  
Detroit River Canadian Cleanup

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## Introduction

This report was prepared by the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Habitat Work Group. The purpose of the report is to update existing information about priority habitat sites in the Detroit River Area of Concern in order to guide future habitat-related actions. It is hoped that by drawing attention to these significant habitats, future efforts can be focussed on protecting, restoring, and/or acquiring them. This report is, by no means, intended to be a comprehensive listing of all habitat sites in the watershed, nor should it be interpreted that only the sites in this document should be considered for action. It is recognized that the goals of habitat restoration and protection must be adapted as circumstances change, and that activity in areas not previously identified may be warranted if the appropriate circumstances arise.

The information presented in this report draws on the expertise and experience of members of the Habitat Work Group, but also relies heavily on several previous reports dealing with habitat in the Area of Concern (AOC), including:

- ⇒ *Survey of Candidate Sites on the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers for Potential Habitat Rehabilitation/Enhancement*, prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, 1993
- ⇒ *Detroit River Update Report*, prepared by the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup Committee, 1999 .

Further research is needed to identify local habitat areas that are home to threatened or endangered species, but that work will be done by the Species at Risk Recovery Team for the area.

It was not the intention of this report to rank these habitat sites against one another. All of these sites are important for various reasons, and all play an important habitat role in the Detroit River watershed. Each of the sites has been given one or more of the following designations:

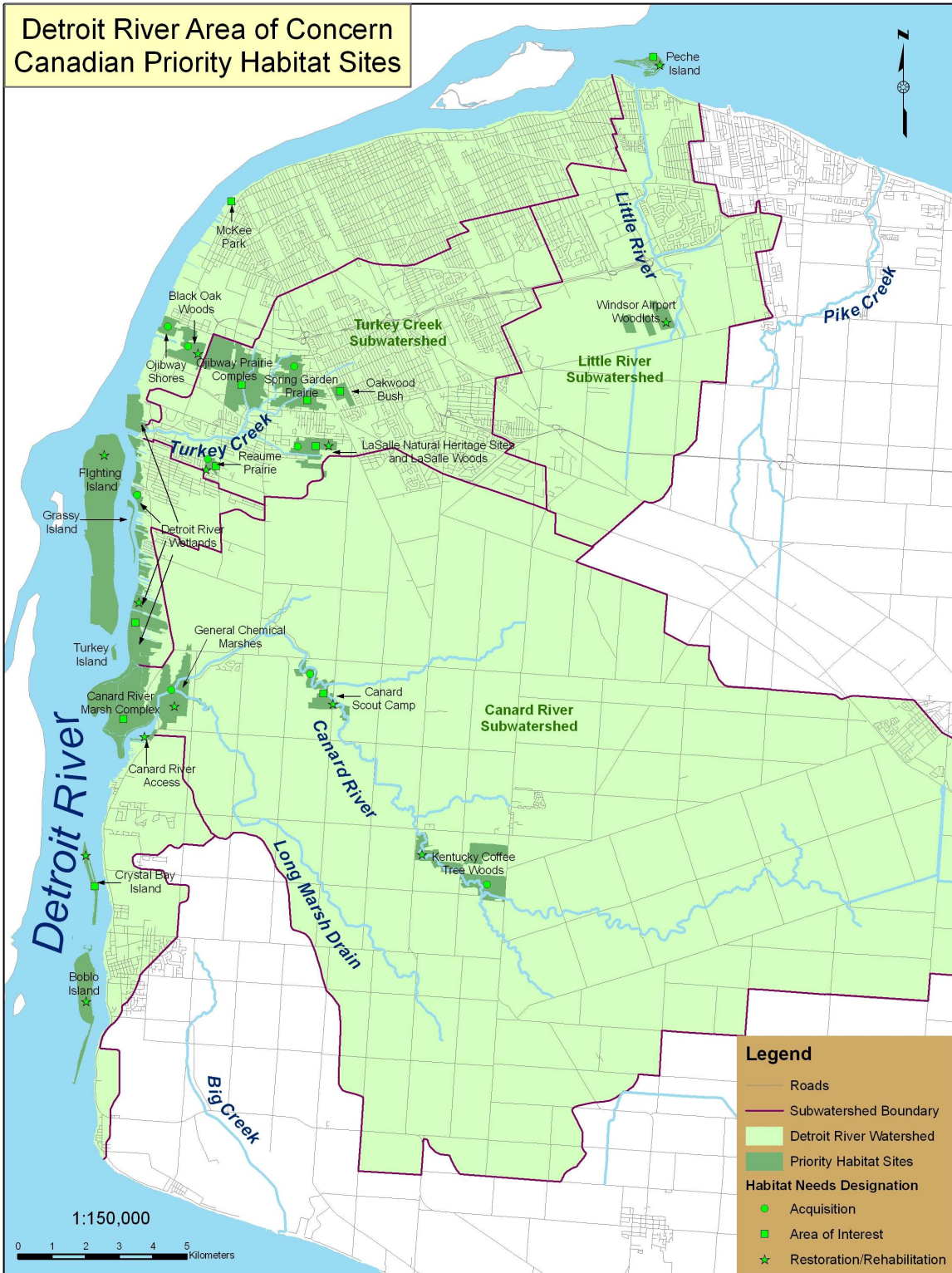
**Acquisition:** Area should be acquired and placed into the public trust, or placed under a conservation securement in private hands if the opportunity arises.

**Restoration/Rehabilitation:** Area is a good habitat area, although some restoration work is required to allow it to reach its full habitat potential.

**Area of Interest:** Area is currently secure, and a good quality habitat. However, the site should continue to be monitored to ensure that it remains secure and in good condition.

For more information about the sites in the report, or about habitat in the Detroit River AOC, please contact the DRCC Habitat Work Group at [postmaster@detroitriver.ca](mailto:postmaster@detroitriver.ca).

# Map of Priority Sites



Notes: Canard River Marsh Complex - specific portions of the marsh may have separate designations (Canard River Access & General Chemical Marshes); Detroit River Wetlands include Grassy Island and Turkey Island.

## **Black Oak Woods**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Restoration/ Rehabilitation

### **Description**

Most of the site is Black Oak forest, with a fairly open canopy and understorey in the drier parts of the site, while damper areas have more shrub growth.

**Size:** 160 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, prairie)

**Ownership:** Portions are owned by Windsor, other portions by industry. Some are being leased for farmland.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

Designated Park Area; contains significant species at risk (SAR) habitat.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This unusual woodlot contains a large number of rare plants, particularly prairie species.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Black Oak Woods is part of the Ojibway complex, which provides an opportunity to maintain a substantial wildlife corridor.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Part of the area has already been designated by the City of Windsor as the Ojibway Black Oak Woods Heritage Park, but other areas are at risk of development

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Great Lake Conservation Blueprint

## **Boblo Island**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Restoration/Rehabilitation

**Description:**

This island was the site of an amusement park for many years. The vast majority of the island was purchased following closure of the park for high-end residential development. A number of large homes have already been built on the island.

**Size:** 96 hectare island, of which 9.2 hectares are natural vegetation.

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial; Aquatic; Wetlands

**Ownership:** Primarily private; Parks Canada owns small portions of the island

**Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

There is fish habitat potential off the southwest portion of the island; northern pike in the wetlands; a white bass nursery along the north tip; a smallmouth bass spawning and nursery area along the west side; yellow perch spawning on the southern tip and a nursery area on the north tip; a walleye spawning area on the northwest tip and a nursery area on the north tip; a channel darter element occurrence has been documented.

**Significance/ Uniqueness**

The island is an established bald eagle nesting area.

**Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The lower Detroit River (from Fighting Island downstream to the mouth) has been identified as a significant late fall staging area and wintering area supporting an average of 8,000 Canvasbacks and 7,000 Common Mergansers.

**Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

There are significant ongoing development pressures to all natural areas on the island.

**Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Destination Eagle Project; Fish Community Nesting Goals and Objectives; Important Birding Areas; North American Bird Conservation Strategy; Channel Darter Recovery; Essex Erie Aquatic Recovery Team

## **Canard River Access**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Restoration/Rehabilitation

**Description:** The Canard River Access consists of two long finger dykes into the Detroit River.

**Size:** Approximately 7 hectares

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Aquatic; Wetland

**Ownership:** Owned by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

There is a potential for high-quality wetland and upland restoration.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This is a documented nesting area for spiny softshell turtles.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The Canard River Access is the southern portion of the Canard River Marsh Complex.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The cove on the north portion is becoming covered in silt from the Canard River mouth. This will be an ongoing issue. This site has been owned by the Ontario Government since 1972, and although a management plan is in place, no active management has occurred in that time.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Eastern Habitat Joint Venture; Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Action Plan; Important Birding Areas; North American Bird Conservation Strategy



## **Canard River Marsh Complex**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Area of Interest (specific portions of the marsh may have separate designations)

### **Description**

This Provincially Significant Wetland is the largest wetland in the Detroit River, lying near the mouth of the Canard River. This marsh complex consists of two water impoundment cells on private land (Ruwe Marsh) and an open water marsh mostly within the Detroit River proper. To the north of the wetland cells a long "finger dyke" runs parallel to the wetland dyke. This finger dyke protrudes into the Detroit River approximately 1,125 metres and eventually turns in a downstream direction. The finger effectively trains and re-directs the flow from the Fighting Island Channel around the wetland cells and associated shallow water areas. The Marsh Complex includes the Canard River Access to the south, Ruwe Marsh and Atchinson Marsh to the west, and the General Chemical Marsh to the east. The Canard River Access and the General Chemical Marsh have particular issues relevant to those areas, and are detailed separately in this document.

**Size:** 580.26 hectares

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Wetland; Aquatic

**Ownership:** Private (Ruwe Marsh and Atchinson Marsh are currently managed as a hunt club)

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The functional values of the finger dyke sheltering the Ruwe marsh extend throughout the wetland system. The finger dyke and aquatic vegetation of the Ruwe marsh buffer the remainder of the wetlands and dykes from the brunt of riverine forces, shipping channel wash, and ice scour, as well as diverting sediments. The wetland cells support some of the most abundant wild celery beds in the Detroit River, which is an important food source for many species of waterfowl.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

The recognized significance of the Canard River Marsh ecosystem as staging areas for canvasback and redhead ducks, especially during fall migration, results from the finger dyke's diversion of suspended sediments from the marsh. The finger dyke effectively creates a significant amount of calm water area and associated aquatic vegetation. Decreased turbidity allows diverse, abundant aquatic vegetation with high value as food for wildlife.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The lower Detroit River (from Fighting Island downriver to the mouth) has been identified as a

significant late fall staging and wintering area supporting an average of 8,000 Canvasbacks and 7,000 Common Mergansers.

**Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The Ruwe Marsh area is privately owned and is currently primarily used for private hunting activities.

**Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Lower Detroit Important Bird Area

## **Canard Scout Camp**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Restoration/Rehabilitation; Area of Interest

### **Description**

This site contains the most extensive tract of upland forest on the Canard River, as well as some floodplain forest. The upland woods are of high quality, and support at least 20 rare tree, shrub, and plant species.

**Size:** 90 hectares of forest, 3 kilometres of riparian forest

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, riparian)

**Ownership:** Private

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

This area is a designated Environmentally Significant Area, with pockets of Provincially Significant Wetland.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This area includes the largest upland forested area along the Canard River.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

These woods are part of an extensive wooded corridor along the Canard River, and comprise the longest stretch of relatively continuous woodland in Essex County.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The site is currently secure, but since most is in private ownership, development pressures are possible.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Essex Region Biodiversity Conservation Strategy

## Crystal Bay Island

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Area of Interest; Restoration/Rehabilitation

### **Description**

This man-made island consists of two arms joined at an apex on the upstream side of the island. The western arm is located in US waters, while the eastern arm is located in Canadian waters. The structure of the island creates a large, calm bay which averages one to two metres in depth.

**Size:** 29 hectares

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (riparian); Wetland; Aquatic (nearshore)

**Ownership:** ERCA conservation area

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The island was designed as a current deflector which has created a calm water bay with good fish habitat potential. However, efforts could be made to diversify the bay's substrate. The site may be used as a demonstration site for river restoration initiatives.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

The water in the bay is extremely clear, as sediments are prevented from entering the area, and therefore submersed aquatic vegetation is abundant. Nationally and continentally significant numbers of redheads stage at Crystal Island.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Primarily recreational activities such as boating and camping.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The site is currently managed by ERCA as a conservation area.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Lower Detroit Important Birding Area

## **Detroit River Wetlands (including Grassy Island and Turkey Island)**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Restoration/Rehabilitation; Area of Interest

### **Description**

The Detroit River wetland is comprised of many individual units located between Turkey Creek and the Canard River. It also includes Turkey Island and Grassy Island. The wetland is classified as riverine, and consists primarily of marsh land with some small pockets of swamp vegetation. Some natural shorelines and fish habitat have been created in areas.

Turkey Island is actually a series of dry land islands with several small islands of emergent vegetation scattered to the west and south of the main island. The island and the submerged aquatic vegetation surrounding the island are entirely within the boundary of the surrounding PSW.

**Size:** 575 hectares

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Wetland (marsh, swamp, riverine); Aquatic; Terrestrial (riparian)

**Ownership:** Most privately owned, although parts are owned by ERCA and the Town of LaSalle. Turkey Island is privately owned and utilized for waterfowl hunting.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The area contains extensive fish habitat and spawning areas. The existing island complex was at one time a larger island comprised of dry land and emergent vegetation. An expansive underwater shelf surrounds the existing island complex and essentially outlines where the old island footprint was. This shallow shelf is characterized by a good submersed aquatic macrophyte bed consisting primarily of wild celery.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This area is designated as a Provincially Significant Wetland, and is a known home range of Detroit River lake sturgeon. An abundant amount of both flora and fauna are found in these wetlands, including many provincially significant animal species

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The lower Detroit River (from Fighting Island downriver to the mouth) has been identified as a significant late fall staging and wintering area supporting an average of 8,000 Canvasbacks and 7,000 Common Mergansers.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The major threat to the wetland is from encroaching development from the east, although it is currently secure as a PSW which limits development. Boat traffic and wave action cause erosion

in the wetland. A priority task is to create channels in cattail choked marshes, to allow fish access and diversity, to reduce the extent of phragmites, and to come closer to the 50/50 ratio of open water to vegetation required for a high quality wetland.

**Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Habitat for many provincially significant animal species; Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint; Great Lakes Coastal Action Plan; Ontario Biodiversity Strategy - SAR; Fish Community Goals and Objectives; Lower Detroit Important Bird Area (Turkey Island)

## **Fighting Island**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Restoration/Rehabilitation

### **Description**

Fighting Island is a large island located in the centre of the Detroit River, opposite the Town of LaSalle. The southern three quarters of the island was used as a BASF lime disposal site until 1981, but has now been naturalized by the company.

**Size:** Island is 600 hectares, 55 hectares of which is wetland

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Aquatic; Wetland; Terrestrial

**Ownership:** The island is owned by the BASF corporation, which uses the wetlands in the northern portion of the island for waterfowl hunting and the terrestrial areas as a corporate retreat.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The potential exists to create large areas of submersed aquatic macrophytes in the extensive shallow areas surrounding the island to the north, west, and south, which will effectively create an open water wetland and also possibly create some emergent wetland, although shipping safety requirements may limit this possibility in some areas. Sturgeon spawning habitat may also be created along the island shorelines.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

The nearshore areas around the island are known historical sturgeon spawning areas. The wetland areas are designated as Provincially Significant Wetlands. The island is an established bald eagle nesting area.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

This island is across from the Detroit River wetlands, which are critical habitat areas in the river. It therefore forms part of one of the largest aquatic habitat zones in the River.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The site is currently secure from development. It is primarily used for hunting and as a corporate retreat site and these uses are likely to continue. There is heavy boat traffic around the island, which may impact aquatic habitat and spawning activities. The island is a sediment deposition zone and therefore there is a risk that the soils are contaminated. The historical use of the island as a lime disposal site may impact the terrestrial and nearshore areas.

**Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Destination Eagle Project; Fish Community Goals and Objectives; Important Bird Area; North American Bird Conservation Strategy



## **General Chemical Marshes**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Restoration/Rehabilitation

### **Description**

This area was historically used as an area of brine extraction, and therefore was dyked off in the 1980s to prevent accidental discharge of brine into the Canard River. As a result of the decommissioning of certain parts of General Chemical's operations, the wells have also been decommissioned. These marshes make up the eastern portions of the Canard River Marsh Complex.

**Size:** 44.8 hectares PSW (full site is 180 hectares)

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Wetland (salt marsh)

**Ownership:** Currently privately owned by PreStressed Incorporated (PSI)

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

By maintaining this area as a separate wetland in the Canard River Marsh Complex, the possibility of saline contamination of the Detroit and Canard Rivers would be removed, and the existing species diversity would be maintained.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

The designated provincially significant wetland includes unique salt-tolerant species.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The lower Detroit River (from Fighting Island downriver to the mouth) has been identified as a significant late fall staging and wintering area supporting an average of 8,000 Canvasbacks and 7,000 Common Mergansers.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

This area is under significant development pressure immediately outside the PSW. There may be possibilities to have the wetland portions put into conservation securement as a condition of development activities.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Action Plan; Opportunities to improve fish spawning/nursery habitat and waterfowl production; Important Bird Area; North American Bird Conservation Strategy

## **Kentucky Coffee Tree Woods**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Restoration/Rehabilitation

### **Description**

This area is one of the larger wooded areas along the Canard River and support at least 30 rare species. It includes both floodplain woods and upland woods (which are rare in the Canadian Detroit River watershed).

**Size:** 99 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, riparian)

**Ownership:** Most areas are privately owned, although some are owned by ERCA.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

This large stand of established native trees is a good upland habitat area.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This area includes a stand of five large Kentucky Coffee Trees, containing both male and female trees. This is the only stand of Kentucky Coffee Trees in Canada that contains both male and female trees and produces seed-bearing pods.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

These woods are part of a long linkage of wooded areas along the Canard River that provide an excellent wildlife corridor

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Many sites in the woods have been the focus of restoration efforts by ERCA and the ECSN. Existing and planned ECSN projects will result in a combined forest area of more than 120 hectares.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Essex Region Biodiversity Conservation Strategy; MNR Conservation Blueprint

## **LaSalle Natural Heritage Sites and LaSalle Woods**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Rehabilitation/ Restoration; Area of Interest

### **Description**

The Town of LaSalle has designated 27 sites within the Town of LaSalle, including the LaSalle Woods, as Natural Heritage Sites. These sites were identified as priorities based on criteria such as endangered species in the habitat, riparian corridors, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and significant communities.

**Size:** 293 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (various kinds of forest, prairie), Wetland

**Ownership:** Various, most privately owned

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

These areas have been assessed in great detail as part of the identification process and were found to be the highest priority habitat sites in the Town.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

These areas include some of the few remaining Detroit River watershed stands of tallgrass prairie communities. The Carolinian sandy soil is a unique growing environment represented in these areas.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Many of these sites are isolated, but some of them have been identified because of their connectivity.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

These areas have been zoned as residential holding area that require an Environmental Impact Assessment before development.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Essex Region Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Species at Risk Recovery Teams (prairie and prairie-dependent species)

## **McKee Park**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Area of Interest

### **Description**

This aquatic habitat site near the Ambassador Bridge was created as a potential sturgeon spawning area. Large islands were built to provide sheltered coves, and a variety of substrates were provided.

**Size:** 0.8 hectare cove

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Aquatic (nearshore)

**Ownership:** City of Windsor

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

This is a nearshore spawning and nursery habitat lying between the upper and lower Detroit River. However, the potential for the area is limited because of its size.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

One of the species that this area was targeted at was sturgeon. There are few sturgeon spawning areas in the river, making this site somewhat unique.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Most of the surrounding terrestrial areas are residential or University buildings. Industrial areas are a very short distance downstream.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The site is secure at the moment, although there is a possibility that a new border crossing in the area could impact the site.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Fish Community Goals and Objectives

## **Oakwood Bush**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Area of Interest

### **Description**

Oakwood Bush exhibits substantial biological diversity, including tallgrass prairie. A number of species, considered rare in both the province and county, can be found in this bush. Large areas of standing water occur here much of the year.

**Size:** 17 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, prairie)

**Ownership:** City of Windsor

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The excellent condition of the deciduous woods provides habitat for various animal species. Prairie areas are valuable because there are very few of these habitats remaining.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

The community is dominated by tallgrass prairie species and upland forest with Carolinian elements, and is considered significant in a provincial and national context. This site contains a large number of rare plant species.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

This area is abutted by a wetland habitat area and is a key component of the Oakwood Educational Centre.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Currently secure

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Oakwood Educational Centre

## **Ojibway Prairie Complex/ Spring Garden**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition (Spring Garden areas); Area of Interest

### **Description**

This area constitutes the largest protected tallgrass prairie in Ontario, and thus affords an important ecological refuge for a vegetation complex which once typified a significant portion of North America. Approximately one half of the prairie species known in Ontario occur within this prairie complex. This area also includes oak savannah, mature upland hardwood, and wetlands.

**Size:** 350 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, prairie); Wetlands

**Ownership:** Parts owned by the City of Windsor, other parts by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and some areas of the Spring Garden ANSI are privately owned.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The Ojibway Complex is a designated ANSI which includes one of the few remaining tallgrass prairies in the province, and supports at least 75 rare species, including a diversity of federal and provincial species at risk such as the Massassauga Rattler. The prairie landscape, characterized by a lack of trees (less than 2.5 trees/hectare) includes grasses and flowers that grow very tall and lush.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This area is of great interest because mesic prairie is very difficult to find, and is best represented in this location. More rare plants per hectare are found here than at any other park in Ontario.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The Ojibway Complex is a core habitat area that links many other nearby features.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Was thought to be very well protected, although there was speculation about using portions of the area for a new border crossing. The City of Windsor has an ongoing acquisition strategy for the Springarden area.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Massassauga Rattler Recovery Team; Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint; MNR Biodiversity Strategy - SAR; Tallgrass Prairie Recovery Strategy.

## Ojibway Shores

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition

### **Description**

This riparian area in the southern portion of the City of Windsor is the one of the last remaining natural shorelines areas along the Detroit River.

**Size:** 24.4 hectares

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (riparian); Wetland

**Ownership:** Owned by the Windsor Port Authority (federal agency); portions are owned by the City of Windsor.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

This area has the potential to provide river access to species in the Ojibway Complex.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This area includes the last remaining natural Detroit River shoreline on the Canadian side of the river.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Further study is required to fully assess the value of the site; in particular, the site's ability to link the Detroit River and the Ojibway Prairie Complex.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Development plans have been created for the site and the property is listed for lease.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint

## **Peche Island**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Restoration/ Rehabilitation; Area of Interest

### **Description**

Peche Island is located at the head of the Detroit River at its junction with Lake St. Clair. It was historically used as a summer home, but only ruins of buildings remain. The island is bisected by a canal, and includes large wetland areas in the middle portions. It is now a naturalized park.

**Size:** 41 hectares land, 98 hectare waterlot

**Zone:** Coastal

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest, riparian); Aquatic; Wetland

**Ownership:** Peche Island is owned by the City of Windsor, and maintained as a natural municipal park. It is protected from development, and therefore offers a protected habitat site.

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

Peche Island is an historic lake sturgeon spawning area and is also a major spawning habitat for other fish species. It has the potential to be designated as a PSW. There is a low level of traffic on the island, which increases the site's attractiveness as a location for habitat restoration activities.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This site is a known nesting area for bald eagles. For a time, it was the only bald eagle nesting site located within an urban area.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

This is one of the few publicly-owned islands in the Detroit River.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

Efforts could be focused on measures to decrease siltation, creating calm water areas where new vegetation could become established, opening up stagnant channels to allow flow for spawning, ensuring that the diversity of plant life on the island is protected, and enhancing fish habitat. Concerns are fairly heavy boat use, ice scouring due to ice jams; excessive siltation in many areas of the island, including the inner canals; and potential erosion issues due to the island's location at the head of the River and the high rate of river flow in the area. Invasive populations of Norway and Japanese maples have taken over most of the eastern portions of Peche Island. These trees are very large, and are therefore being used as habitat despite the fact that they are not native to the region.



**Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Destination Eagle Project; Wetland improvement would support EHJV initiatives and Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Action Plan; Fish Community Goals and Objectives; Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint

## **Reaume Prairie**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Acquisition; Rehabilitation/ Restoration; Area of Interest

### **Description**

This open, sandy area is characterized by areas of grassland, scrubland, reed-grass marsh, and forest. The most significant portion of this ESA is an area of remnant prairie located in the northwest corner of the site.

**Size:** 13 hectares; the most significant northwest corner is 0.6 hectares

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (prairie, forest)

**Ownership:** Partly owned by the Town of LaSalle, parts in private ownership

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

The location provides a protected area for the growth of rare prairie species.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This designated ESA, although small, contains an extremely high diversity of rare plants, mostly prairie species, some of which occur nowhere else in Canada

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

Most of the surrounding area is residential, although there is some connection to other nearby candidate natural heritage sites.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The Town of LaSalle has an acquisition strategy for the area, and is making efforts to secure parts of the prairie. A management plan is required to determine the most effective way to address invasive phragmites in the area.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

MNR Biodiversity Strategy - SAR; Tallgrass Prairie Recovery Strategy

## **Windsor Airport Woodlots**

**Habitat Needs Designation:** Restoration/Rehabilitation

### **Description**

This land near the Windsor Airport was recently acquired by the City of Windsor from the Town of Tecumseh. The area is significant because it contains three large forested parcels, which although isolated from one another, are relatively undisturbed. The City is currently planning the future use of the lands. Priorities should be to connect the forest parcels with a significant corridor and to ensure that a large riparian buffer strip is maintained along the banks of the Little River. This would also help to address the storm water management problems present in the area.

**Size:** 47 hectares (total area of all three woodlots)

**Zone:** Upland

**Type of Habitat:** Terrestrial (forest); isolated Wetlands

**Ownership:** Parts owned by the airport, other parts federally-owned, some private

### **Habitat Quality/ Value/ Potential**

Some restoration work is required, primarily to connect the existing forested patches. There are three woodlots that could quite easily be connected to form a large upland forest.

### **Significance/ Uniqueness**

This is the only remaining interior forest in the Little River sub-watershed.

### **Surrounding Land Use/ Connectivity of Site to Other Important Areas**

The area around the woodlots includes airport lands, agricultural lands, and roads. There is a strong potential for a large upland forest if the three sites are connected.

### **Degree of Threat to Site/ Challenges to Rehabilitation Activities**

The City of Windsor has recently developed a policy for these lands. The new policy calls for the preservation of all three woodlots, and has also eliminated a planned road extension which would have run between two of the woodlots.

### **Benefit to Other Initiatives**

Little River Enhancement Group (increased forest cover in watershed)