

Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act

FINAL Project Report Template

Project Title: Completing the Protected Lands Layer for the Great Lakes

Project Sponsor: Frank Lopez, OH Division of Wildlife

FWS Agreement Number: F11AP00109

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Study Objectives:

The objectives of this project were to: 1) Digitize additional conservation easements and fee lands in the Great Lake states, 2) Assimilate a diverse set of datasets to develop a comprehensive protected lands layer for the Great Lakes, 3) Report and distribute the protection layer to organizations performing conservation planning and delivery efforts.

Description of Tasks:

Objective 1: Digitize additional conservation easements and fee lands in the Great Lake states.

Completed. We digitized over 600 easements throughout the project area.

Objective 2: Assimilate a diverse set of datasets to develop a comprehensive protected lands layer for the Great Lakes. **Completed.** Acquired data from 20 new land trusts, and assimilated data collected from the National Conservation Easement Database, Conservation Almanac, and USGS PAD-US database.

Objective 3: Report and distribute the protection layer to organizations performing conservation planning and delivery efforts. **Completed.** The CARL database was updated on the Ducks Unlimited CARL web site as well as being published on the Conservation Almanac and National Conservation Easement Database web sites. The layer was discussed at the Land Trust Alliance's Rally conference in September 2013.

Major findings and accomplishments:

This project added 13,680 protected lands to the CARL layer (see Final Report for tables and figures). The decrease in acreage by 217,173 was attributed to correcting the spatial data mostly from the federal side due to the inclusion of acquisition areas instead of actual ownership in the original CARL layer. Many attributes and spatial placements were also adjusted in the update process. Of the 836 unknown protected lands in the original CARL layer, 519 were identified and labeled.

Management implications of your work:

Determining the location and extent of protected habitats is the first step in developing conservation plans for the Great Lakes and prioritizing additional habitat for protection. All

current Great Lakes habitat management plans include protection goals. However, there is no comprehensive database that can display and analyze habitats that are currently protected within the Great Lakes Basin. A comprehensive GIS database of protected lands in the Great Lakes will be utilized by conservation organizations for conservation planning, public accountability and project collaboration. This layer will enable organizations to work more efficiently and collaborate with other organizations that could potentially leverage additional funding from a variety of sources including, but not limited to: GLFWRA, GLRI, NAWCA, FWS GLCP, and private foundations. DU and TPL have been developing protected lands layers (both fee and easement) for over 10 years through the development of a Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL), Conservation Almanac, and National Conservation Easement Database. This database is vitally important so that conservation planning efforts can target the most critical habitats to protect in the most cost effective and efficient means possible. In addition, coupling this data with landcover data such as the National Wetlands Inventory will provide information regarding the distribution, extent and protection level of various habitat classes.

Additional restoration work needed and/or areas for future research:

This was not a restoration project, so no additional restoration is necessary. However, every year additional lands are being put into the conservation estate. To keep the CARL layer current, additional work will be needed to update the layer with new conservation land acquisitions.

List of presentations delivered and outreach activities:

The outreach activities include posting the data and its derivatives on the CARL, Conservation Almanac, and National Conservation Easement Database web sites. A newsletter email was sent out to over 2,000 recipients for the updates on the National Conservation Easement Database. The CARL, NCED, and Conservation Almanac were discussed in a presentation by TPL at the Land Trust Alliance Rally Conference in September 2013. Additional outreach will be done as needed in the future as DU and TPL continue to work on the protected lands databases.

***Include relevant pictures or images associated with the project:**

Please see the Final Report documentation for the resulting maps and tables associated with this project.

Geographic region project occurred in or effects:

The states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

***List of reports and peer-reviewed papers completed or in-progress:**

A Final Report document was prepared in addition to this final report that lists specifics on the project as well as resulting maps and tables. No peer-reviewed papers are anticipated at this time.