

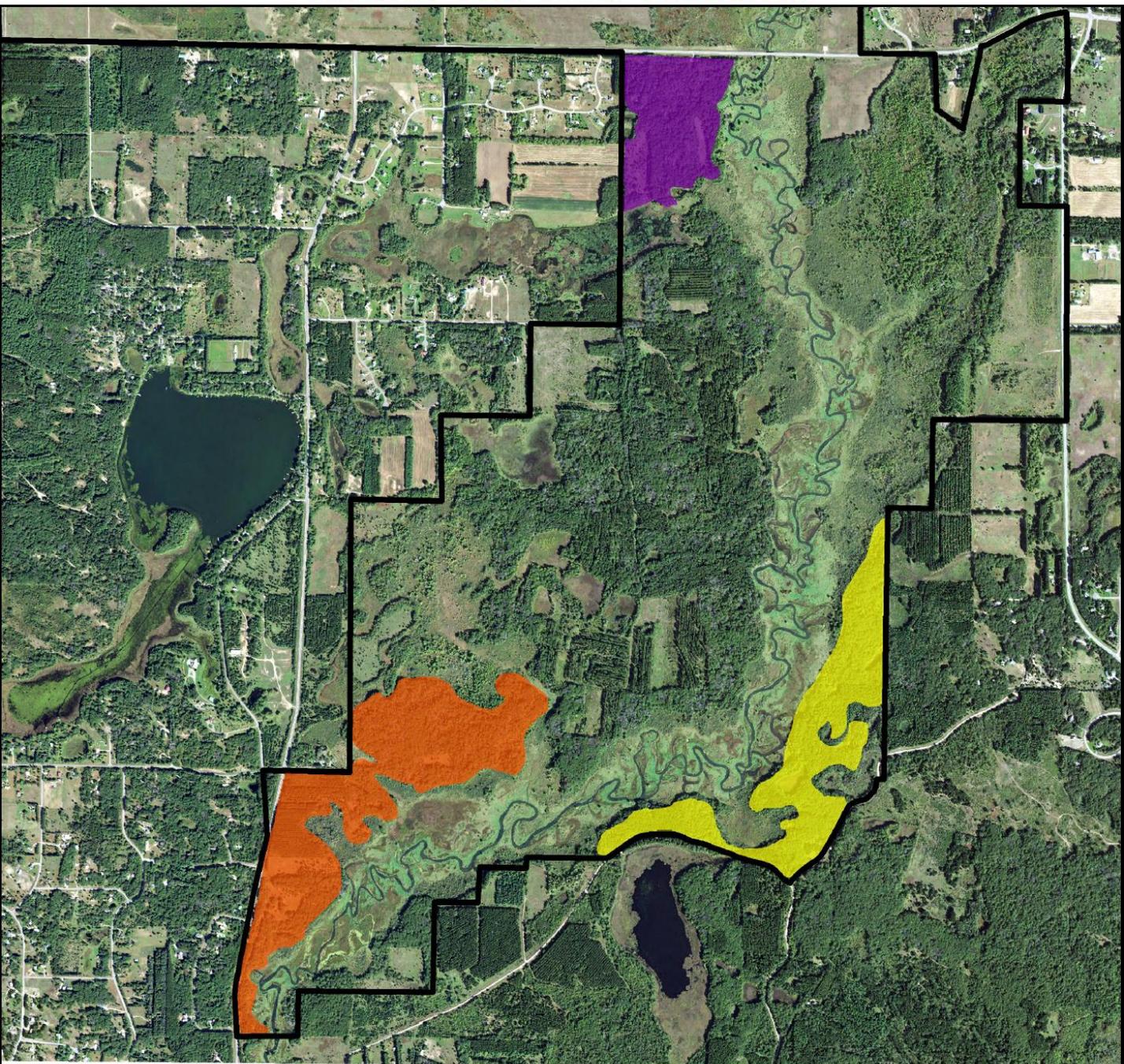
Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Continues Habitat Restoration

In October, Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge in partnership with Great River Greening, and with the support of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, will continue an important Conservation Partners Legacy grant project to restore approximately 986 acres of pine stands and forested land back to its pre-European settlement conditions. To date, 500 acres of refuge land located south of County Road 4, called the "South Spur" unit, has begun the initial stages of restoration by having timber harvested to restore natural tree composition, invasive species controlled, native grasses seeded, and fire breaks established. The next step will be the continuation of harvesting pine plantations and oak woodlands that have become overgrown due to the lack of fire and native grazers, such as bison and elk, which historically maintained the area. This step will be followed by a prescribed fire and a seeding of native wildflowers in the spring of 2017. This project fulfills habitat goals outlined in Sherburne NWR's Comprehensive Conservation Plan, which was developed in 2005 and went through a rigorous process of internal and public review.

What is an oak savanna and why is this restoration notable? Oak savanna is a fire-dependent ecosystem distinguished by widely spaced, spreading trees with a unique group of plants growing below. Prior to Europeans settling in Sherburne County, the main upland habitat found here was oak savanna. Once widespread, oak savanna spanned nearly 50% of the Midwest's landscape, but due to lack of fire, loss of large grazers, encroachment of invasive species and increased human development the oak savanna habitat has since diminished to an estimated .02% of what existed historically. The last estimates indicate that there are only around 30,000 acres remaining world-wide, making oak savannas one of the rarest habitats in the world.

The restoration will continue this October and will run throughout the winter months. Accomplishment of restoration activities during the winter season reduces impacts on the soil, lessens the spread of disease, and mitigates for negative impacts to migratory birds and bats that may utilize the area during summer months. The Sherburne NWR staff plans to have completed this restoration project by the summer of 2017 and will continue to conserve this beautiful area in perpetuity. This will allow native plant and trees species to thrive and provide suitable habitat for a variety of species included Red-Headed Woodpeckers, state-threatened Blanding's Turtles, Whitetail Deer, Wild Turkey, Le Conte's Sparrow, Sedge Wren, and Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Yellow Rail, and many more. Sherburne NWR envisions a restored landscape where future generations will not only have the opportunity to witness rare native plants and animals but also be a part of a community with sustaining natural resources (water, air, and soil) that will otherwise diminish by changing habitat.

Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge Timber Harvest Timeline



Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge- NAIP.15



boundary



October-November 2016



November- December 2016



December 2016- January 2017

0.8

Miles

N

