

AN ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE NE-AH-TA-WANTA RESORT
ASSOCIATION PROPERTY IN SECTIONS 19 & 20, T. 29 N., R. 10 W., PENINSULA
TOWNSHIP, GRAND TRAVERSE COUNTY, MICHIGAN: DOCUMENTATION FOR A
CONSERVATION EASEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The following inventory of the physical and ecological features of the Ne-ah-ta-wanta Resort Association property described here was undertaken for the Old Mission Conservancy at the request of Ted Bagley, and with the help and permission of the owners. The purpose of the inventory is for use in the preparation of a Conservation Easement documentation report. The field work for this report was conducted on two occasions; the first observations on 13 August, 1990 were very preliminary, and were done in the company of several Old Mission Conservancy Board Members, and representatives of at least two families of the owners; the second, and more detailed observation was carried out on 22 August, 1990 in the company of Howard Ecker, and Pat Shaffer, representatives of the owners. On each of these occasions plants were identified by sight, and specimens of difficult species were taken for more detailed identification. It should be noted that at the time this assessment was commissioned in late summer, many flowering plants had finished blooming. Consequently, some identifications of such species were based on vegetative parts, seeds, and in some cases the author's prior knowledge of this property in the spring. The assessment of wildlife present on the property is based upon the actual evidence observed on the site, and the author's considerable prior experience and knowledge of this area of the Old Mission Peninsula. The author has had previous experience at this site a year ago in the documentation of the Marckwald Property Conservation Easement, which is contiguous to portions of this tract.

The undeveloped portions of this property can be divided into three habitat zones. The first of these consists of the beach and shoreline which meet West Grand Traverse Bay. It is partially bare, and partially vegetated with a plant association typical of stabilized dunes. The second zone occupies the first terrace inland from the beach and was once the shoreline of the ancient glacial Lake Nipissing. It is vegetated by a transitional grouping of both forest tree species, stunted by the wind, and remnant dune and beach vegetation which persists on the sandy lacustrine deposits. The third zone is comprised of the second terrace away from the beach, and will be referred to as the mature Maple-Beech forest.

Identification of the property's vegetation and preparation of this report was completed with the aid of the several standard field guides, and the nomenclature followed adheres to these sources. The names of trees follow *Michigan Trees* by Barnes and Wagner (1989). Names of flowering plants are from *Michigan Wildflowers* by Smith (1966). Names of ferns follow *Ferns of Michigan* by Billington (1952). Names of shrubs follow *Shrubs of Michigan*, Also by Billington (1949).

FINDINGS

THE BEACH AND SHORELINE

WILDLIFE: The proximity of this point of land to Marion Island, and the low dune and shoreland makes this area of utmost importance for migrating waterfowl, shorebirds, and passerines. Nearly any undeveloped point of beach in this region is significant as a migration focal point. Birds common in this area in fall and spring are loons, two species of mergansers, most species of diving ducks found moving through the area, all of the sandpipers collectively known as peeps, and in the trees and shrubs, migrating warblers, other songbirds. These properties along Lake Michigan are an important part or link in the chain of staging areas which add up to the spectacular passages of birds in the area. Various mammals from deer to raccoons may utilize the shore for drinking water in the night.

FLOWERING PLANTS:

Beach Pea, *Lathyrus japonicus*
 Starry Solomon's Seal, *Smilacina stellata*
 Poison Ivy, *Rhus radicans*
 Sea Rocket, *Cakile edetula*
 Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*
 Wormwood, *Artemisia cndata*
 White Champion, *Lychnis alba*
 Bladder Champion, *Silene cucubalis*
 Jewel Weed, *Impatiens capensis*
 Salsify, *Tragopogon porrifolius*
 Smooth Aster, *Aster laevis*

Wild Rye, *Elymus canadensis*
 Dune Grass, *Amophila breviligulata*

SHRUBS:

Sand Cherry, *Prunus pumila*
 Red Osier Dogwood, *Cornus stolonifera*
 Poison Ivy, *Rhus radicans*
 Creeping Juniper, *Juniperus horizontalis*
 Upright Juniper, *Juniperus communis*
 Prairie Rose, *Rosa blanda*
 Sand Bar Willow, *Salix nigra*
 Wild Grape, *Vitis riparia*

TREES:

Red Oak, *Quercus rubra*
 White Oak, *Quercus alba*
 White Pine, *Pinus strobus*
 Red Pine, *Pinus resinosa*
 Balsam Fir, *Aibes balsamea*
 White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*
 Red Maple, *Acer rubrum*
 White Birch, *Betula papyrifera*
 Cottonwood, *Populus deltoides*
 Basswood, *Tilia americana*

WOODS OF THE FIRST TERRACE (NIPPISSING SHORE)

WILDLIFE: Evidence of several species of mammals and birds were observed in this zone. Small mammals like chipmunks, gray squirrels, and the nocturnal species such as the Short-tailed Shrew and Deer Mouse are found here. The presence of clumps of Canada Yew (*Taxus canadensis*) constitute a source of browse for deer, but the buffer of tall woods, and the tendency for deer to be uncommon on the Old Mission Peninsula makes this zone more unusual because of its absence of deer rather than for their presence. Migrating warblers undoubtedly use these trees, and there was evidence of Pileated Woodpeckers due to their characteristic square holes in a few of the trees.

FLOWERING PLANTS AND FERNS:

Trillium, *Trillium grandiflorum*Star Flower, *Trientalis borealis*Canada Mayflower, *Mianthemum canadensis*Pipsisewa, *Chimaphilia umbellata*Partridge Berry, *Mitchella repens*Wild Sarsparilla, *Aralia nudicaulis*Bracken Fern, *Pteridium gletisch*

SHRUBS:

Canada Yew, *Taxus canadensis*Maple-leaf Viburnum, *Viburnum acerifolium*Upright Juniper, *Juniperus communis*Choke Cherry, *Prunus virginiana*Blueberry, *Vaccinium angustifolium*Sessile Honeysuckle, *Lonicera dioica*Bush honeysuckle, *Diervilla lonicera*

TREES:

Red Oak, *Quercus rubra*Beech, *Fagus grandifolia*Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*White Cedar, *Thuja occidentalis*Yellow Birch, *Betula lutea*

MATURE BEECH-MAPLE WOODS OF THE SECOND TERRACE

WILDLIFE: This area typically has few of the wildlife species sought by hunters, but nonetheless is reich in certain bird species such as chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, thrushes, and flycatchers, such as the Wood Pewee. Certain warblers, such as the Black-throated Green Warbler, and Ovenbird nest in this type of woods. As noted previously, the lack of food

the last zone can also be found here feeding on tree seeds and invetebrates. We found a porcupine den tree in this zone.

FLOWERING PLANTS:

Sweet Cicely, *Osmorhiza claytoni*
Solomon's Seal, *Polygonatum biflorum*
False Solomon's Seal, *Smilacina racemosa*
Spring Beauty, *Claytonia virginica*
Tooth Wort, *Dentaria diphylla*
Squirrel Corn, *Dicentra canadensis*
Trout Lily, *Erythronium americana*
Hepatica, both *Hepatica rotundifolia* and *acutiloba*
Smooth Yellow Violet, *Viola pennsylvanica*
Leafy Northern Green Rein Orchid, *Habenaria hyperborea*
Long-bracted Green Rein Orchid, *Habenaria viridis*
Jewel weed, *Impatiens capensis*
Pokeweed, *Phytolacca americana*
Spinulose wood fern, *Dryopteris spinulosa*
Lopseed, *Phyrma leptostachya*
Sweet scented bed straw, *Galium triflorum*
Wild licorice, *Galium lanceolatum*
Northern Bedstraw, *Galium boreale*

SHRUBS:

Red Elderberry, *Sambucus racemosa*
Gooseberry, *Ribes cynosbatti*
Maple-leaf Viburnum, *Viburnum acerifolium*
Bush Honeysuckle, *Diervilla lonicera*

TREES:

Beech, *Fagus grandifolia* (Several measuring over 30 inches DBH)
Sugar Maple, *Acer saccharum* (A few over 30 inches DBH)
Basswood, *Tilia americana*
Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*
Black Cherry, *Prunus serotina*

Red Maple, *Acer rubra*
Red Oak, *Quercus rubrum*
White Oak, *Quercus alba*
Ironwood, *Ostrya virginiana*

DISCUSSION

The Ne-ah-ta-wanta Association property, as described in this report and the accompanying map, represents a significant remnant of nearly pristine beach, beach ridge, and mature Beech-Maple forest which was once more common in this region. The value to the Old Mission Conservancy is to keep it in a similar condition to the present vegetation and landforms. The responsibility for this would fall to the monitoring committee reporting to the Board of Directors. The monitoring of this parcel could pose a much greater problem than that of the adjoining Marckwald property for several reasons. One of these is the irregular boundaries, and the proximity of the wild land to nearby residences from which human encroachment is limited now, but inevitable as the community grows in population, or adds new residences on property not in the proposed conservation easement. Associated with this is the present newly constructed ORV (off road vehicle) trail which leads from one of the private residences through the pristine woods causing erosion, death of the vegetation, and fractionation of the parcel. This must be stopped. Hopefully, this will be done prior to land transfer, and thereby save the monitoring committee the trouble of legal actions against the offender. Another reason for possible problems in the monitoring is the irregular, and seemingly unregulated parking spaces for beach use. The number and location of parking (present and anticipated) must be delineated to help in the future monitoring of the land.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the visits upon which this inventory is made are of limited duration, and during a season of the year which may mask additional natural features. Visits should be made in spring and early summer for further evaluation.