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Allegan State Game Area

Addendum to the 2006 Master Plan



MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE DIVISION

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MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR)

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For information or assistance with this publication, contact the Southwest Management Unit Supervisor, 621 N. 10th St, Plainwell, MI 49080 or contact the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Wildlife Division, PO Box 30444,, Lansing, MI, 48909-7944 USA; phone(517)-373-1263; facsimile (517) 373-9566.

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STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan has been developed to set forest management direction for the Allegan State Game Area and establish goals and objectives consistent with those identified for State Game Areas and State Wildlife Areas in the Southwest Michigan Regional Wildlife Area Management Plan. It supports goals identified in broader plans including the Michigan Wildlife Action Plan, the Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative, the American Woodcock Conservation Plan, and the Upper Great Lakes Woodcock and Young Forest Initiative.

The Allegan State Game Area (ASGA) is located in Allegan County and consists of approximately 50,600 acres (Figure 1).

When setting the desired future conditions, it is necessary to consider the purpose for which the property was acquired by the state, current land cover conditions, and future social and economic forces that could influence management strategies.

Due to its large size and proximity to the urban centers of Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Holland, ASGA is a highly used area for many people in pursuit of varying recreational activities. Some of these activities include hunting, trapping, fishing, bird watching, hiking, cross country skiing, etc. The focus of future management will maximize the opportunity for hunting and trapping recreation as well as providing habitat for Featured Species. Opportunity for other forms of recreation will be managed for and encouraged as long as they do not interfere with management for which the area is dedicated.

What follows is the strategic direction for Allegan State Game Area. This plan describes the **goals** or desired future condition for the area, the **objectives** under each goal, and the **actions** associated with each objective. For the purposes of this master plan, the following definitions will be used:

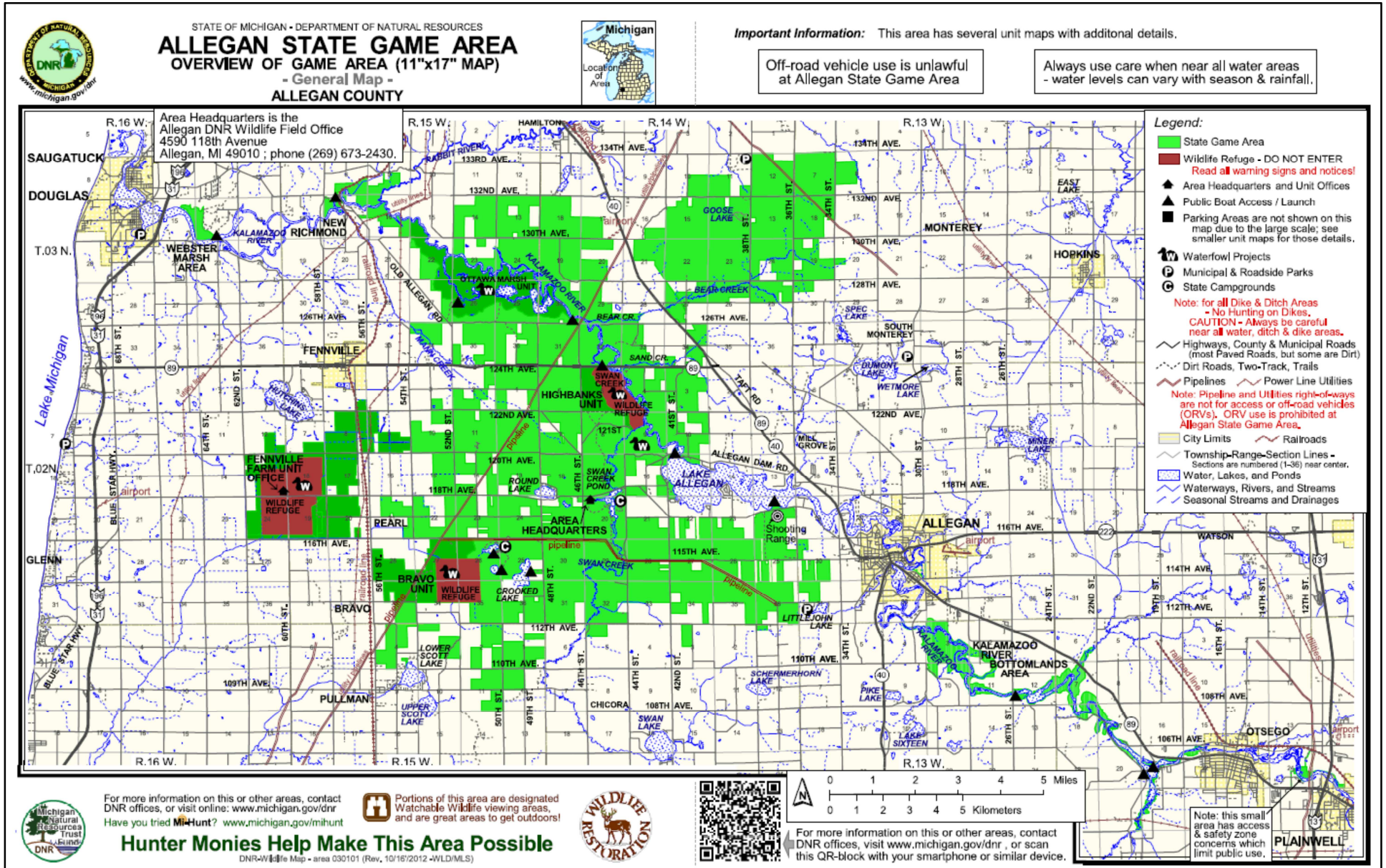
Goal – A desired future condition of the area.

Objective – A management approach or strategy that the best science suggests can be used to move the area toward the goal. An objective is a quantifiable input to be completed within a defined timeframe that contributes towards accomplishing the goal.

Action – An operational means to accomplish an objective. An action is a step needed to complete an objective and is described in sufficient detail to inform planning. An action is a quantifiable input to be completed within a defined timeframe that contributes towards accomplishing the objective.

It is expected to take approximately ten years to complete all the objectives.

Figure 1: Map of Allegan State Game Area



Desired Future Conditions

Goal I is stable, abundant populations of white-tailed deer and wild turkeys.

Rationale: 1) white-tailed deer and wild turkeys are Featured Species and also popular game species; 2) white-tailed deer and wild turkey management is supported locally by multiple sporting groups; 3) white-tailed deer and wild turkeys are valued by non-hunters for viewing purposes; and 4) multiple other Featured Species depend on habitats desired for deer and turkey (ex. Ruffed grouse and aspen management).

Assessment: Discussions with hunters and observations of white-tailed deer and wild turkeys.

Objective A is to establish and maintain a diverse forest that provides adequate hard and soft mast production, as well as suitable roosting, displaying, nesting and brood rearing cover for wild turkeys.

Action 1. Allow designated lowland hardwood stands to develop and mature.

Action 2. Maintain and expand existing wildlife openings.

Action 3. Maintain designated oak savanna.

Action 4. Continue to selectively harvest stands in the designated early/mid-successional forest.

Objective B is to maintain a diverse forest that provides adequate forage, hard mast production, and bedding cover for white-tailed deer.

Action 1. Maintain and expand existing wildlife openings.

Action 2. Continue to selectively harvest stands in the designated early/mid-successional forest.

Action 3. Continue to expand the aspen component of the forest by renewing and expanding aging aspen stands (which will also benefit ruffed grouse – another Featured species).

Action 4. Continue to identify and preserve healthy, mast-producing oak stands.

Goal II is a stable population of Karner Blue Butterflies.

Rationale: 1) Karner Blue Butterflies are a Featured Species and listed by the Federal Government as Endangered; 2) quality habitat for these species currently exists on Allegan State Game Area; 3) habitat projects associated with this goal will also benefit other populations of Featured Species, especially white-tailed deer, wild turkey, and red-headed woodpeckers.

Assessment: Population surveys conducted during the second flight of Karner Blue Butterflies each summer.

Objective A is to maintain and restore oak savanna habitats in 3 designated areas (approximately 7,850 acres)

Action 1. Use prescribed fire, when possible, to restore grasses and forbs and control woody vegetation.

Action 2. Use mechanical clearing and herbicide treatment, where and when appropriate, to control the invasion and establishment of woody vegetation.

Goal III is to provide adequate wetland and upland habitats for Featured waterfowl species: Canada geese, mallards, and wood ducks.

Rationale: 1) these are Featured Species and a desirable game species; 2) quality waterfowl habitat currently exists and can be improved with strategic management; 3) waterfowl hunting has played a large part in the history of the Game Area and has continued to be an important use of the area; 4) habitat projects associated with this goal will also benefit many other wildlife species and associated recreation.

Assessment: Observations of waterfowl use and weekly surveys during waterfowl seasons.

Objective A is the continued management of the Fennville Farm Unit for nesting, brood rearing, feeding, and overwintering.

Action 1. Maintain current levels of rowcrop production, especially within the Farm Unit Refuge (slightly reducing the level is acceptable if the ground is outside of the refuge and converted to grassland).

Action 2. Continue to maintain and expand grassland nesting habitat by planting or restoring grasslands.

Action 3. Complete the moist soil management unit in Zone 8 in cooperation with Ducks Unlimited by summer 2014. Evaluate this project and the possibility of expanding this habitat management type in the future.

Objective B is the continued maintenance of 975 acres of managed wetlands on the Area for use as nesting, brood rearing, feeding, and roosting habitat (Highbanks Unit, Bravo Unit, Ely Lake Flooding, Farm Unit wetlands, and Pine Creek Impoundment).

Action 1. Repair damaged dikes and catwalks at the Highbanks Unit, Zone 7 impoundment on the Farm, and repair other deficiencies at other managed wetlands as they develop.

Action 2. Maintain dikes by mowing and herbicide treatments.

Action 3. Manipulate water levels to encourage the growth of desirable vegetation, such as beggar's tick and smartweed.

Action 4. Maintain pools to provide for roosting during the local waterfowl seasons, especially at the Highbanks and Bravo wildlife refuges.

Objective C is to manage for mature lowland forests in designated areas along the Kalamazoo River, its tributaries, and the Crooked Lake complex for wood duck habitat.

Action 1. Identify high-quality lowland forests that will be managed to provide necessary habitat for wood ducks with an emphasis on flooded feeding areas providing natural cavities for nesting.

Objective D is to continue to monitor and remove invasive species from the wetlands located on Allegan State Game Area.

Action 1. Use the loosestrife beetle to control purple loosestrife with particular focus on the Ottawa Marsh and Highbanks Units.

Action 2. Identify and treat invasive phragmites patches.

Action 3. Allow access to other agencies/universities/volunteer groups willing to monitor and control invasive species.

Action 4. Explore spatterdock management techniques in order to find an effective control. Reduce spatterdock distribution by 25% in the Highbanks Unit.

Goal IV is a sustainable, abundant population of ring-necked pheasants.

Rationale: 1) pheasants are a Featured Species and a highly desirable game species; 2) The Michigan Pheasant Restoration Initiative calls for doubling the current pheasant population in Michigan; 3) the Fennville Farm Unit of Allegan State Game Area was identified as an area to increase habitat management for pheasants; 4) there is a local stakeholder group that actively advocates for and funds pheasant management; and 5) numerous other Featured Species depend on habitat suitable for pheasants and are currently present at the Farm Unit (bobolink, eastern bluebird, eastern cottontail, eastern meadowlark, mallard, and upland sandpiper).

Assessment: crowing surveys and hunter satisfaction; observation of pheasants and pheasant sign.

Objective A is to maintain existing cool season and warm season grasslands.

Action 1. Continue existing sharecropping and mowing activities on 300 acres of cool season grasses.

Action 2. Continue existing management of 300 acres of warm season grasses with burning and plant 50 more acres.

Action 3. Continue existing foodplot planting of 35 acres.

Action 4. Control invasive species, especially spotted knapweed, in the existing grasslands.

In order to achieve the Master Plan goals the Allegan State Game Area was subdivided into areas where a general habitat type will be maintained or enhanced. These habitat types are: wetlands, managed wetlands, mature forested uplands, mature forested lowlands, savanna, early/mid-successional forest, and grasslands/crops. The distribution of these management types is detailed in Figure 1 and Table 1.

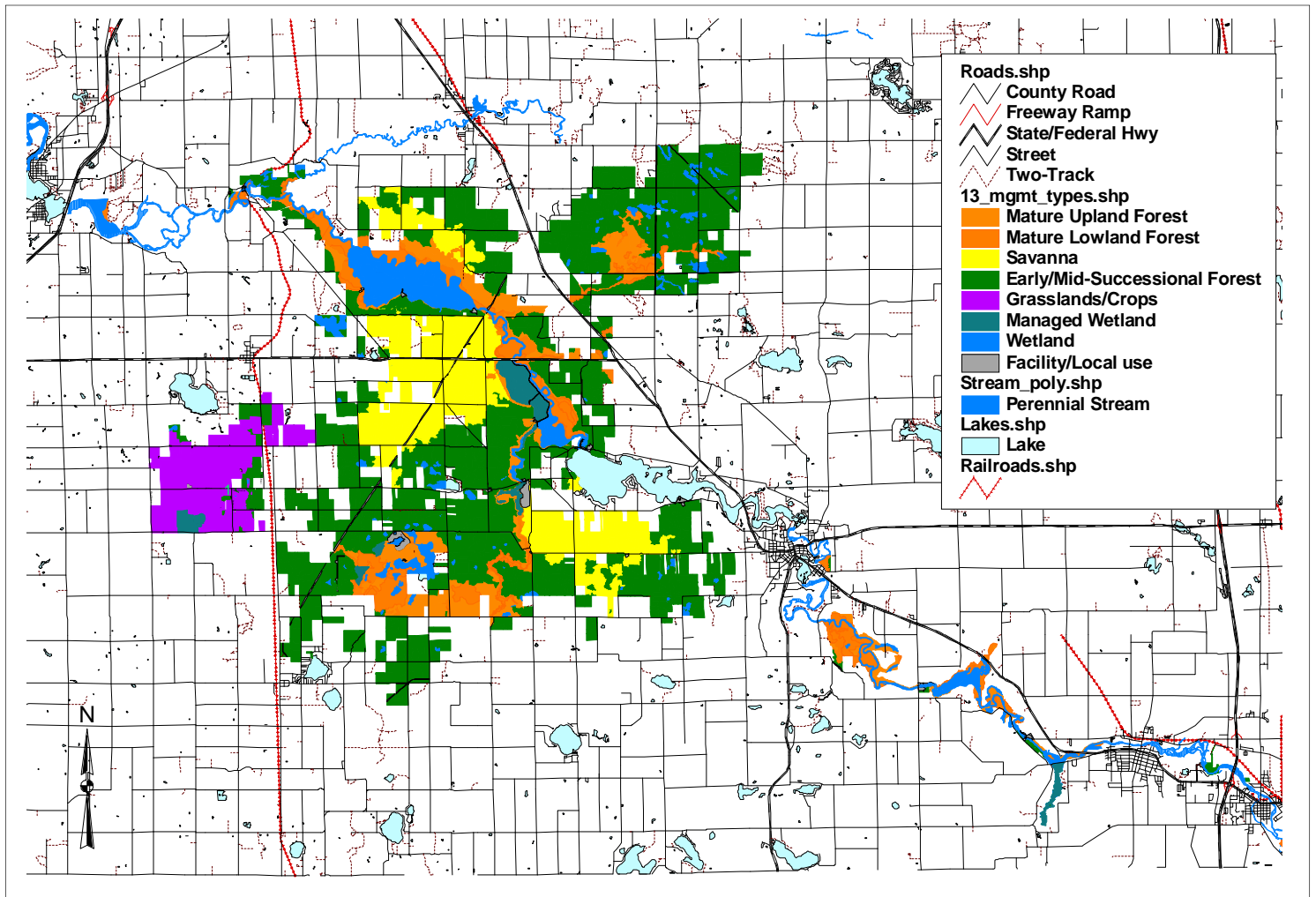


Figure 1. Map of the desired habitat type for regions within Allegan State Game Area.

Management Type	Acres
Early-Mid Successional (general forest)	26135
Mature Upland Forest	3580.2
Mature Lowland Forest	4038.1
Savanna	7852.1
Wetland	4049.4
Managed Wetland	977.1
Grasslands/Crops	3368.9
Facility/Local Use	529.1
TOTAL	50529.9

Table 1. Acreages for each different habitat management type pictured in Figure 1.

Recreational and Commercial Uses

Recreational and commercial uses on the area that are not incidental to our management for the purposes described above are generally not allowed. These uses can be allowed, however, under the following circumstances:

1. The uses must not interfere or conflict with the wildlife conservation purposes of the area described above.
2. The DNR has no obligations to determine if requested uses would conflict or interfere; the burden of determining must remain with those requesting the uses.
3. The requested uses cannot be exclusive of other allowable uses and must not result in the DNR losing management control of any portion of the area.
4. A lack of a specific prohibition in rules and regulations for the area does not constitute approval of the activity.
5. The DNR always reserves the ability to disallow activities previously allowed as wildlife conservation needs dictate.

Additionally, the DNR will continue to monitor any existing commercial and recreational uses for interference with the intended purposes of the area as described in this plan.

Public Input

This plan is considered an addendum to the 2006 Allegan State Game Area Master Plan for which final approval was granted in 2012. This addendum updates the 2006 plan to establish a connection between the Habitat Management Goals and Objectives outlined therein and the current Featured Species management philosophy that has been in place since 2011.