

Ottawa County Parks & Recreation



The mission of the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission is to enhance well-being by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

OCPR stewards:

...7,800+ acres

...40+ properties

...3 regional trails (150+ miles)

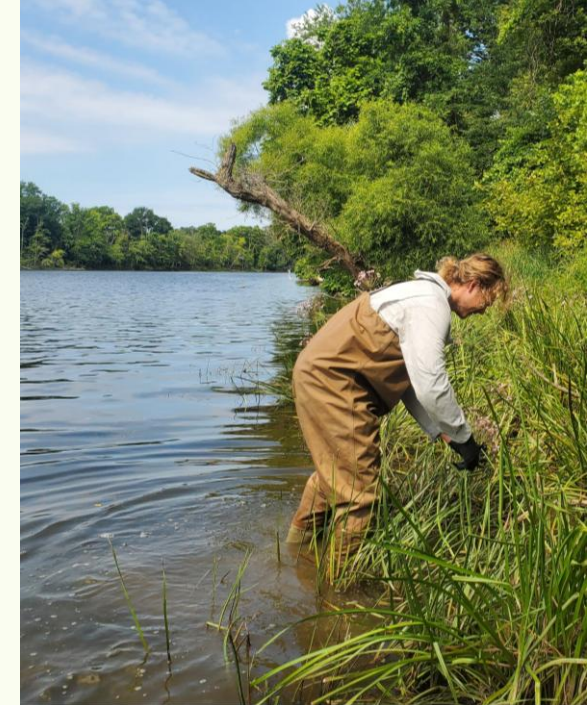


OCPR Natural Resources Management Division

The mission of the OCPR Natural Resources Management Division is to carefully, responsibly, and effectively steward the ecosystems, natural communities, and resources within the land managed by the OCPRC while providing leadership by example in the region.

Focal Areas

- Forest Health Management
- Invasive Species Management
- Restoration Projects
- Prescribed Fire
- Research and Monitoring
- Public Programming





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An Initiative of Ottawa County Parks & Recreation

Boundaries of “Nature”



Hemlock Crossing County Park



Rosy Mound Natural Area



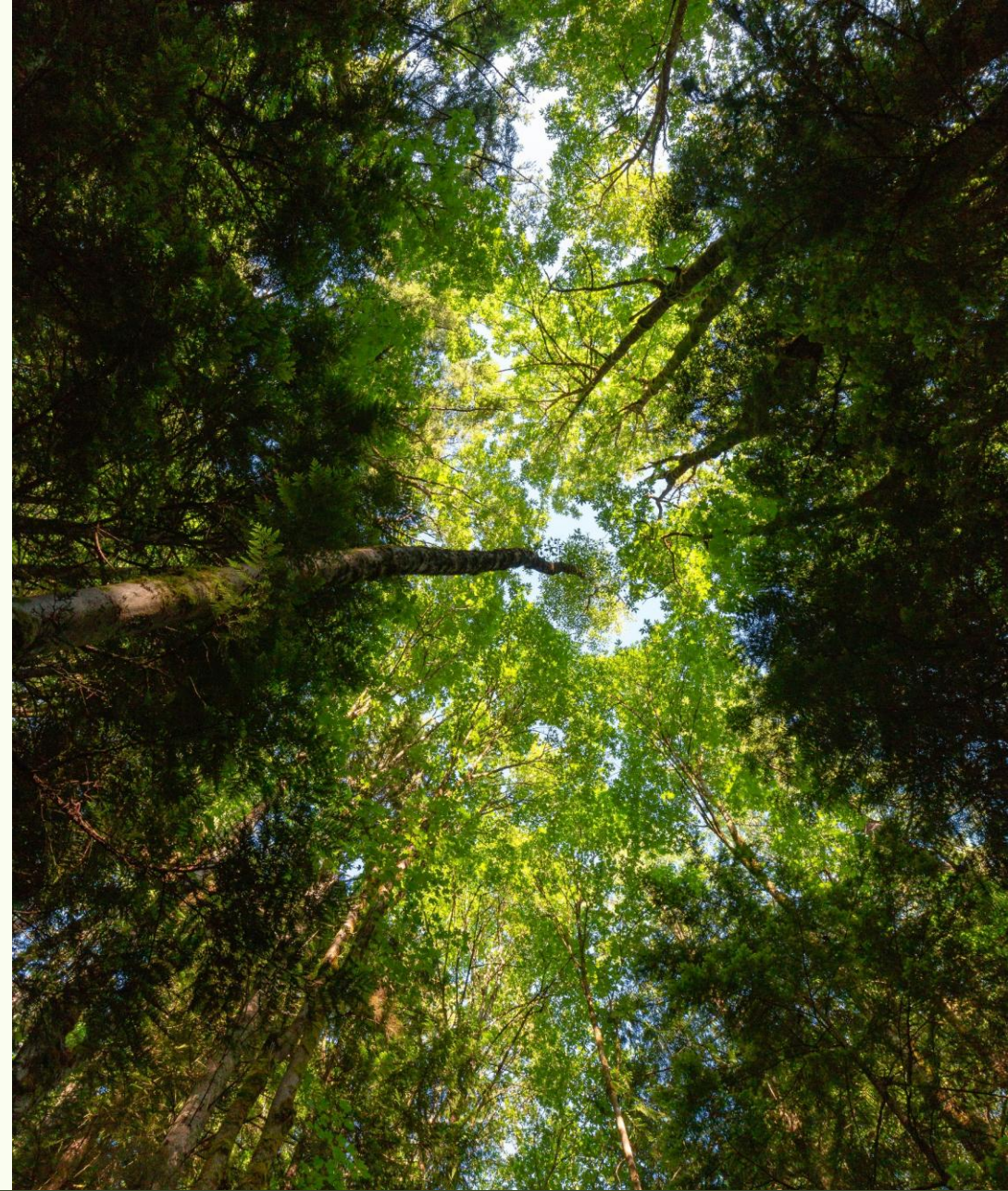
Stearns Bayou



Grand River County Park

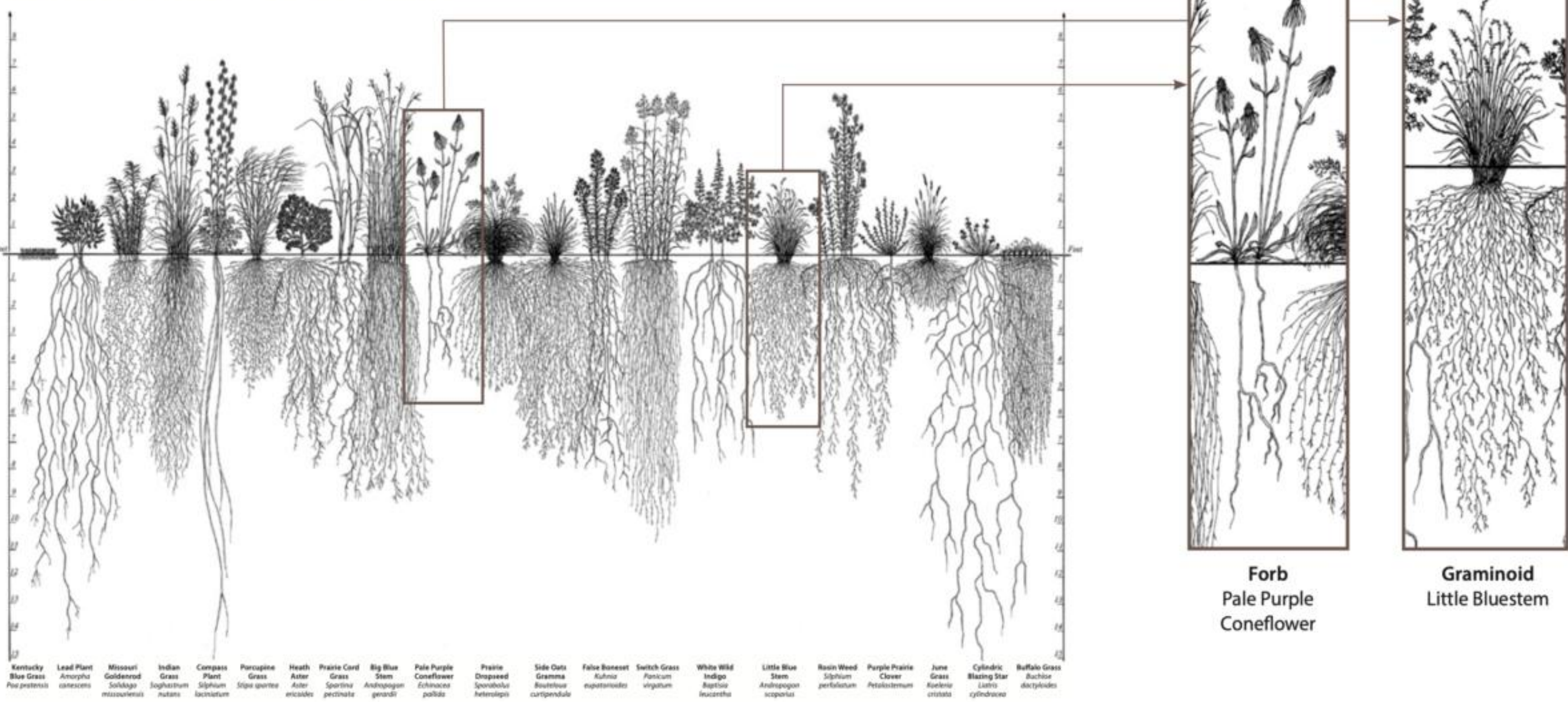
Ecosystem Services

- Air Purification
- Water Regulation & Purification
- Biodiversity Support
- Pollination Services
- Temperature Regulation
- Carbon Sequestration
- Soil Stabilization
- Nutrient Cycling
- Physical & Mental Health



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ROOT SYSTEM OF PRAIRIE PLANTS



Copyright: Heidi Natura and Living Habitats, Root Systems of Prairie Plants, 1995

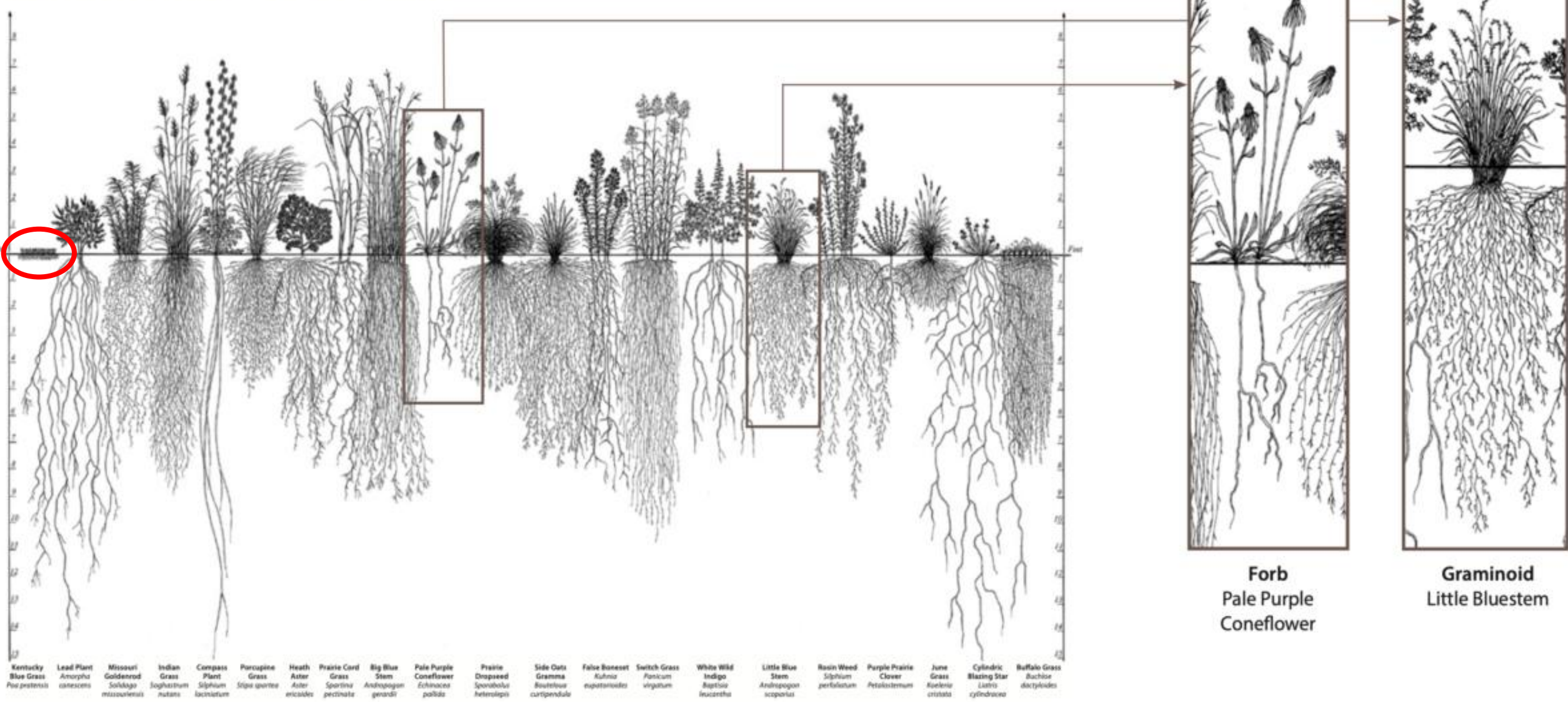


<https://tallgrassprairiecenter.org/resources/prairie-roots>



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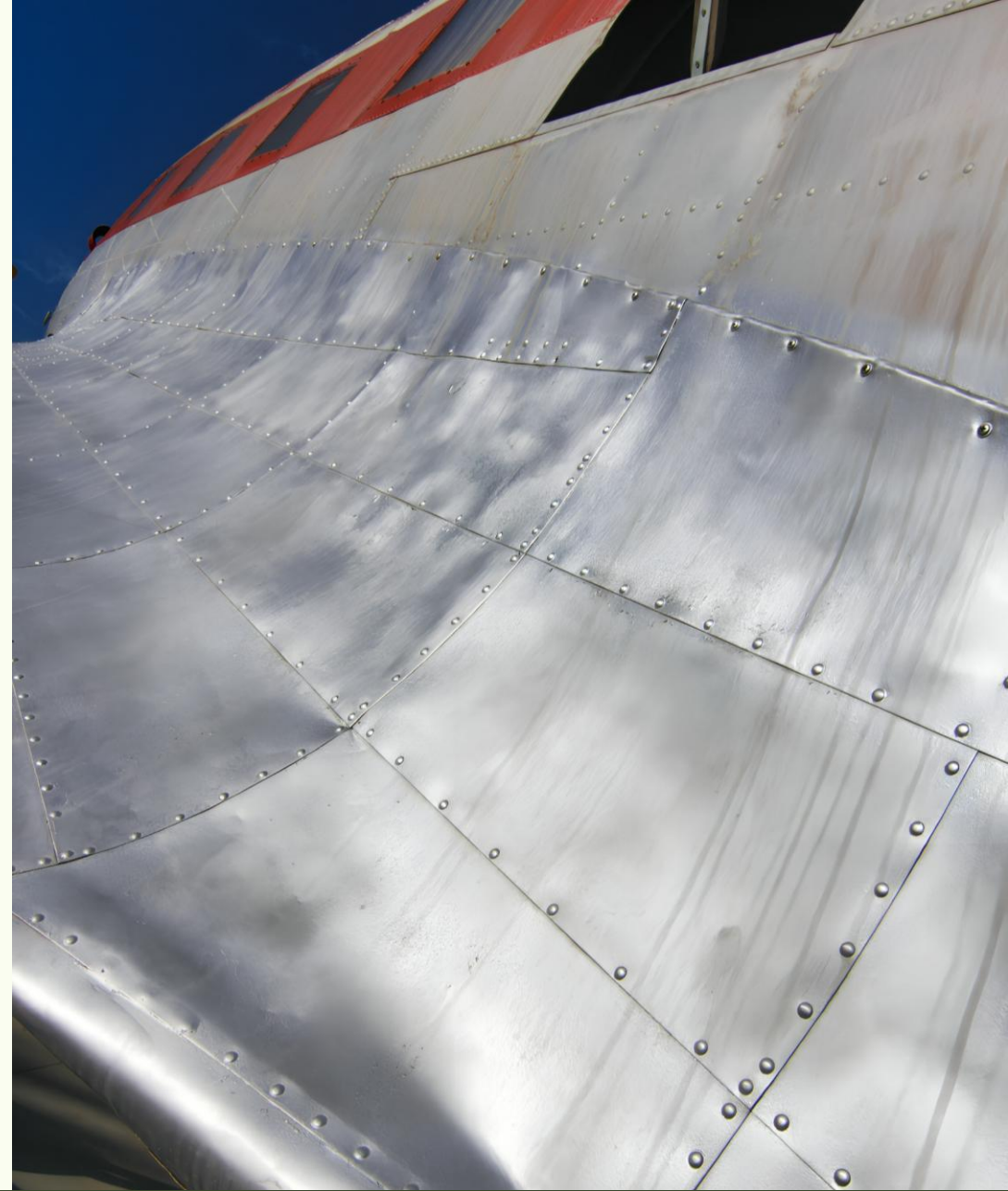
Impacts of Non-Native Landscapes

- Rapid loss of native habitat and ecosystem services
- Overuse of water resources
- Increases in
 - Monocultures
 - Impervious landforms
 - Chemical fertilizer and pesticide use
- Aggressive non-native species



Stability

- Each species and area lost weakens the system
- High environmental and ecological stress placed upon remaining areas and species
- Far less resilient to disturbance and more vulnerable to human impacts
- Redundancy provides stability and resiliency



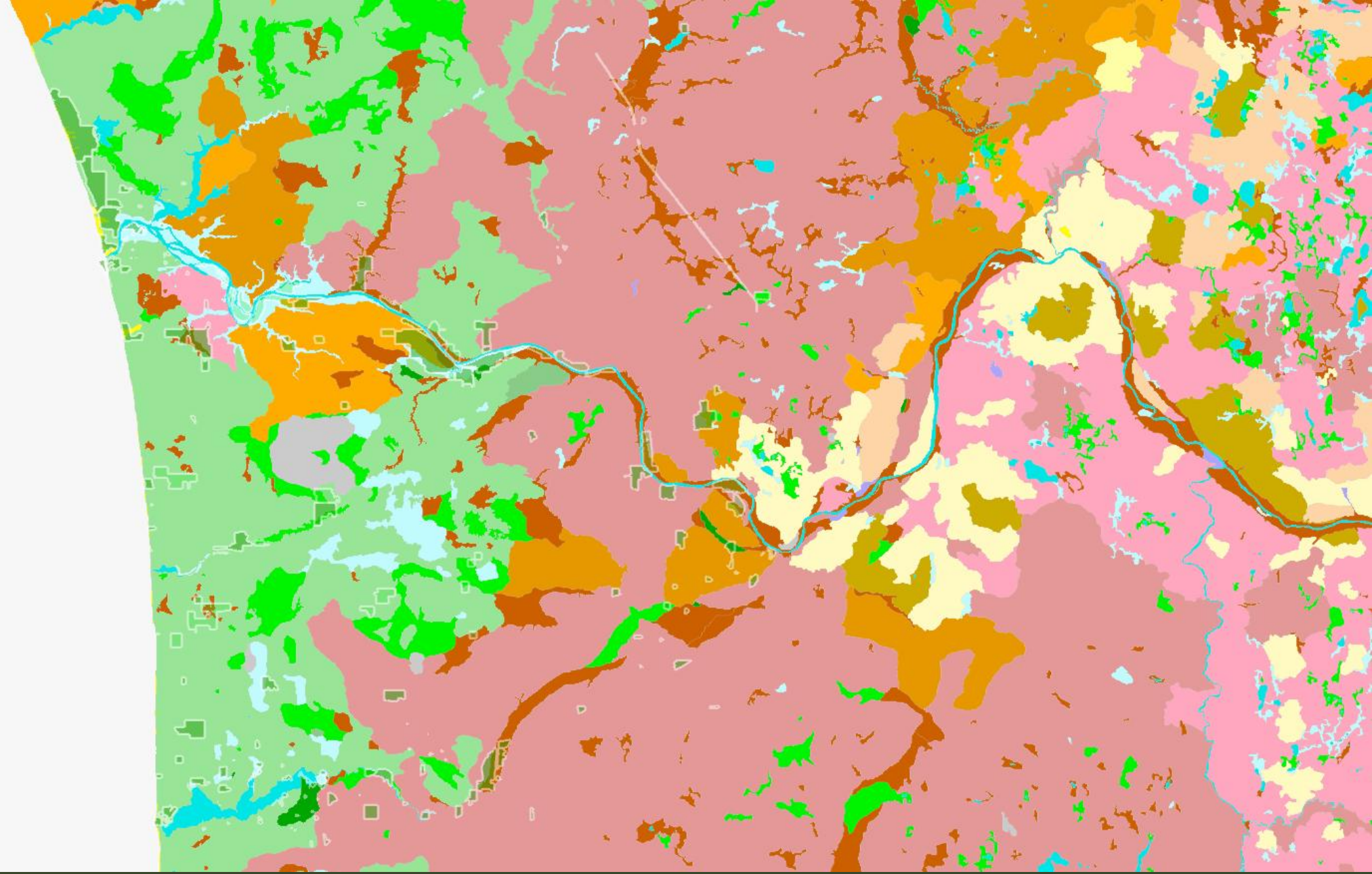
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Michigan Vegetation c1800

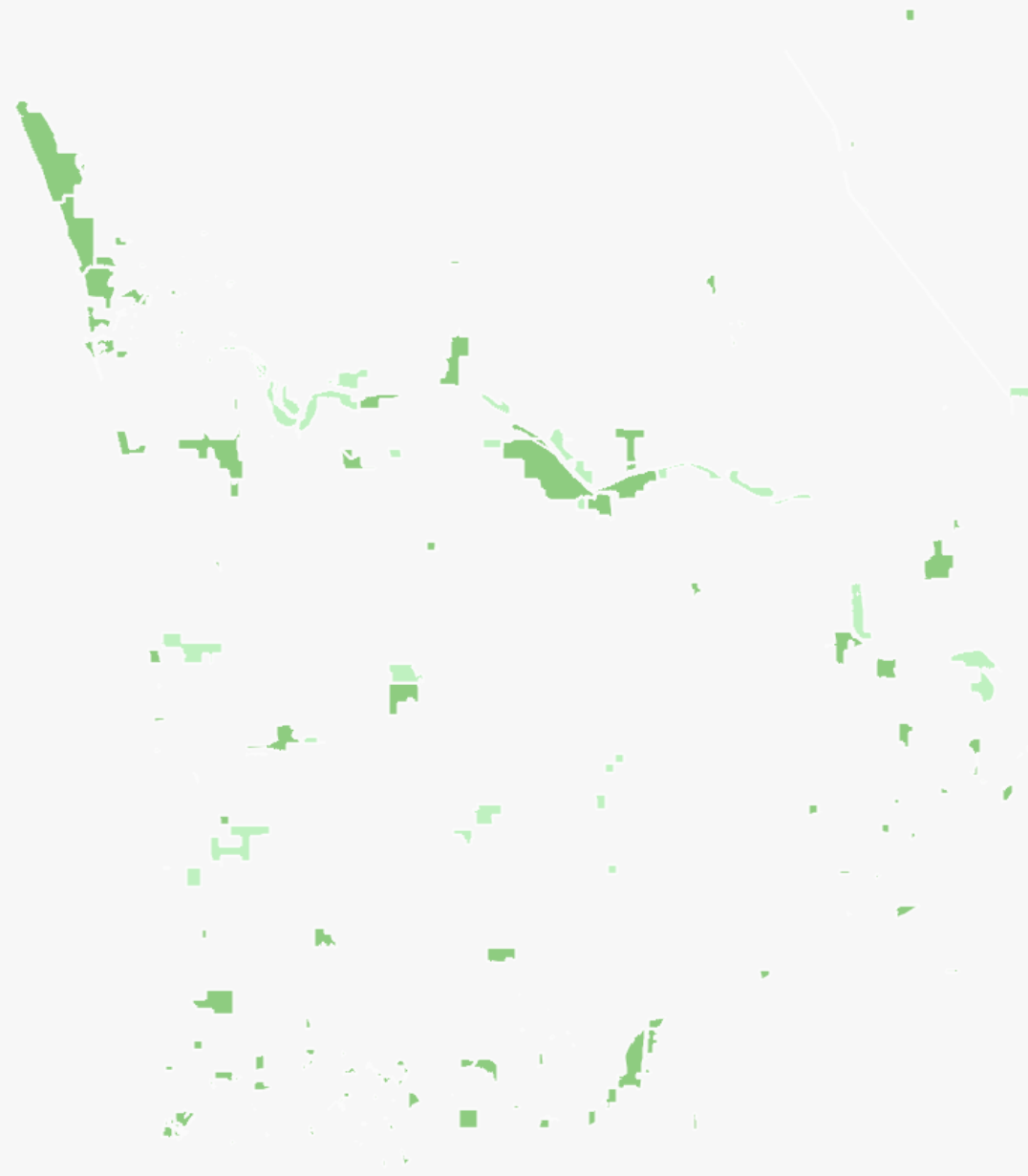
- ASPEN-BIRCH FOREST
- BEECH-SUGAR MAPLE FOREST
- BEECH-SUGAR MAPLE-HEMLOCK FOREST
- BLACK ASH SWAMP
- BLACK OAK BARREN
- CEDAR SWAMP
- EXPOSED BEDROCK
- GRASSLAND
- HEMLOCK-WHITE PINE FOREST
- HEMLOCK-YELLOW BIRCH FOREST
- JACK PINE-RED PINE FOREST
- LAKE/ RIVER
- MIXED CONIFER SWAMP
- MIXED HARDWOOD SWAMP
- MIXED OAK FOREST
- MIXED OAK SAVANNA
- MIXED PINE-OAK FOREST
- MUSKEG/ BOG
- OAK-HICKORY FOREST
- OAK/ PINE BARRENS
- PINE BARRENS
- SAND DUNE
- SHRUB SWAMP/ EMERGENT MARSH
- SPRUCE-FIR-CEDAR FOREST
- SUGAR MAPLE-BASSWOOD FOREST
- SUGAR MAPLE-HEMLOCK FOREST
- SUGAR MAPLE-YELLOW BIRCH FOREST
- WET PRAIRIE
- WHITE PINE-RED PINE FOREST
- WHITE PINE-MIXED HARDWOOD FOREST
- WHITE PINE-WHITE OAK FOREST



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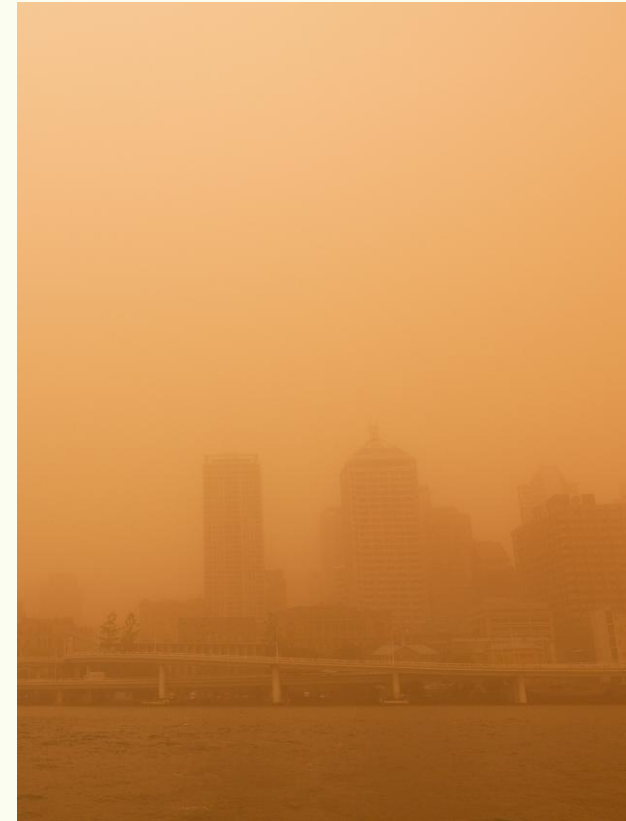
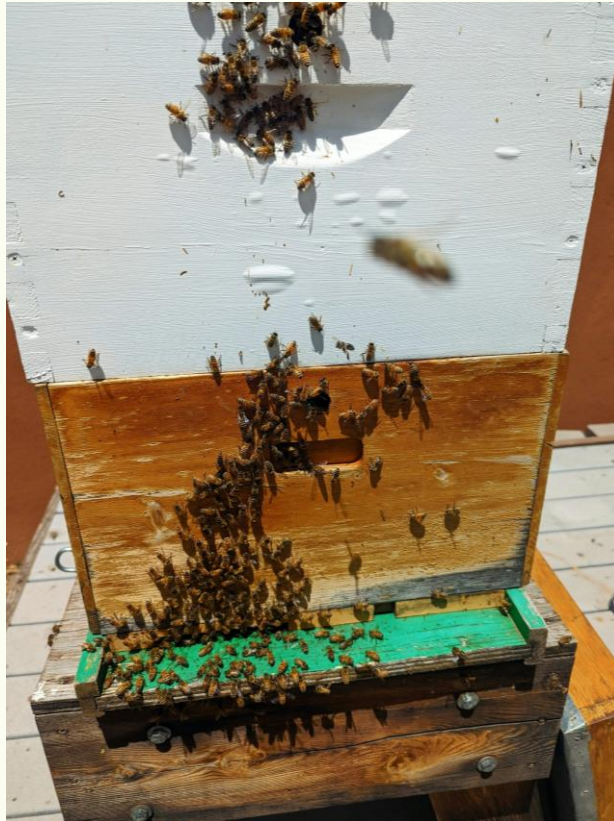
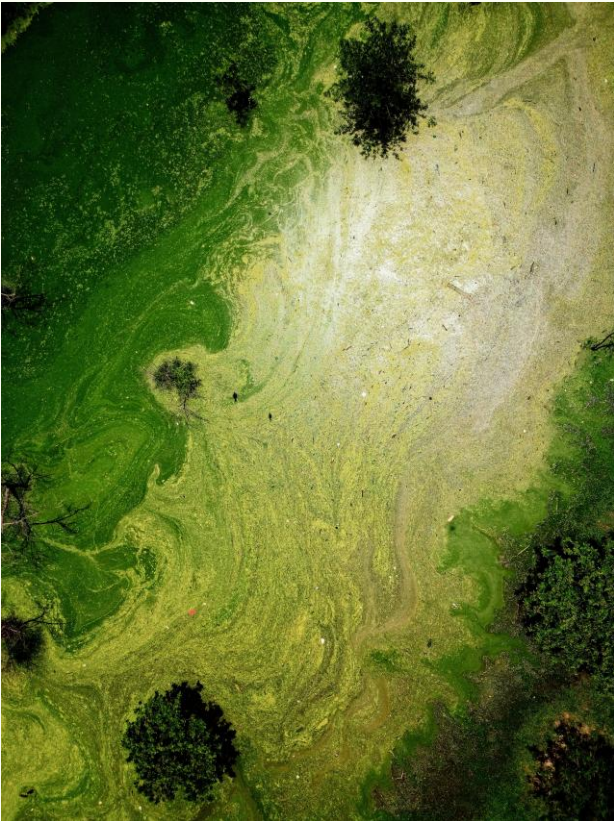


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Tipping Point



Boundaries of “Nature”



Hemlock Crossing County Park



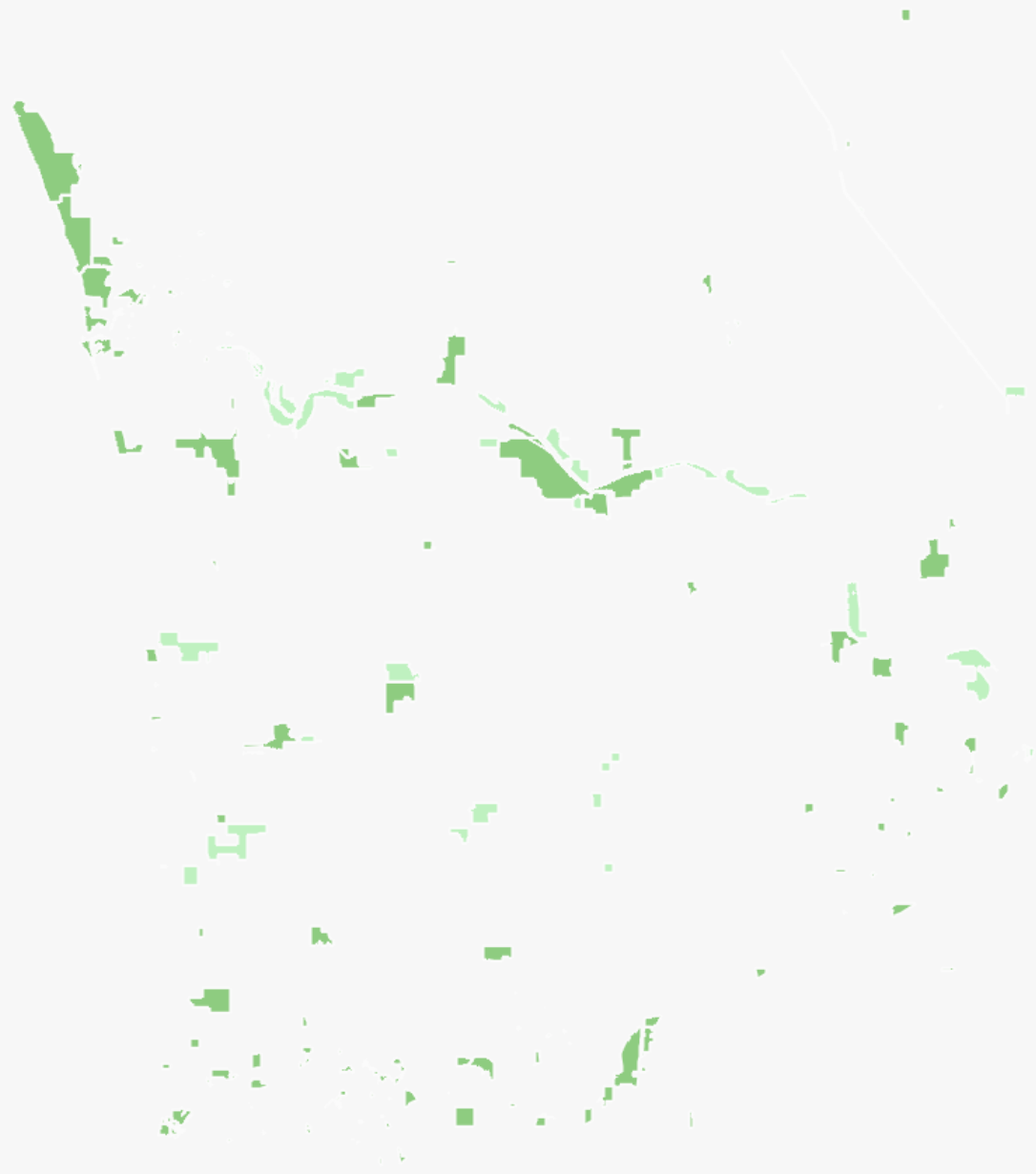
Rosy Mound Natural Area



Stearns Bayou



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Redefining “Nature”

- Remove boundaries of conservation
- Homes as vital parts of ecosystems – “mini nature preserves”
- Restore area, connectivity and resilience through “corridors”



Size of Area	Collective Size
1' x 1'	~ 7 acres
5' x 5'	~ 172 acres
10' x 10'	~ 689 acres
25' x 25'	~ 4,304 acres
50' x 50'	~ 17,218 acres



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Barriers to Native Landscapes

- Lack of awareness
- Lack of skills and technical knowledge
- Perceived complexity
- Local codes and ordinances
- Financial cost and commercial availability
- Social barriers and cultural norms





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Transformation



Stewardship



Growth



Union



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Mission

To inspire and empower individuals to take simple steps that heal local landscapes and connect people and nature in a shared mission of restoration.

Vision

A future where people and nature thrive together – clean air, clean water, and vibrant ecosystems sustained by communities for generations.



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Goals

- **Restore and improve environmental health** by promoting native plants and removing invasive species.
- **Expand native habitats** and connect fragmented natural areas through wildlife corridors across private lands and neighborhoods.
- **Empower communities** with knowledge, training, and resources for environmental stewardship.
- **Foster lasting connections** between people and nature by cultivating a community of environmental stewards.
- **Transform individual actions** into powerful impacts through collective stewardship.

Key Components

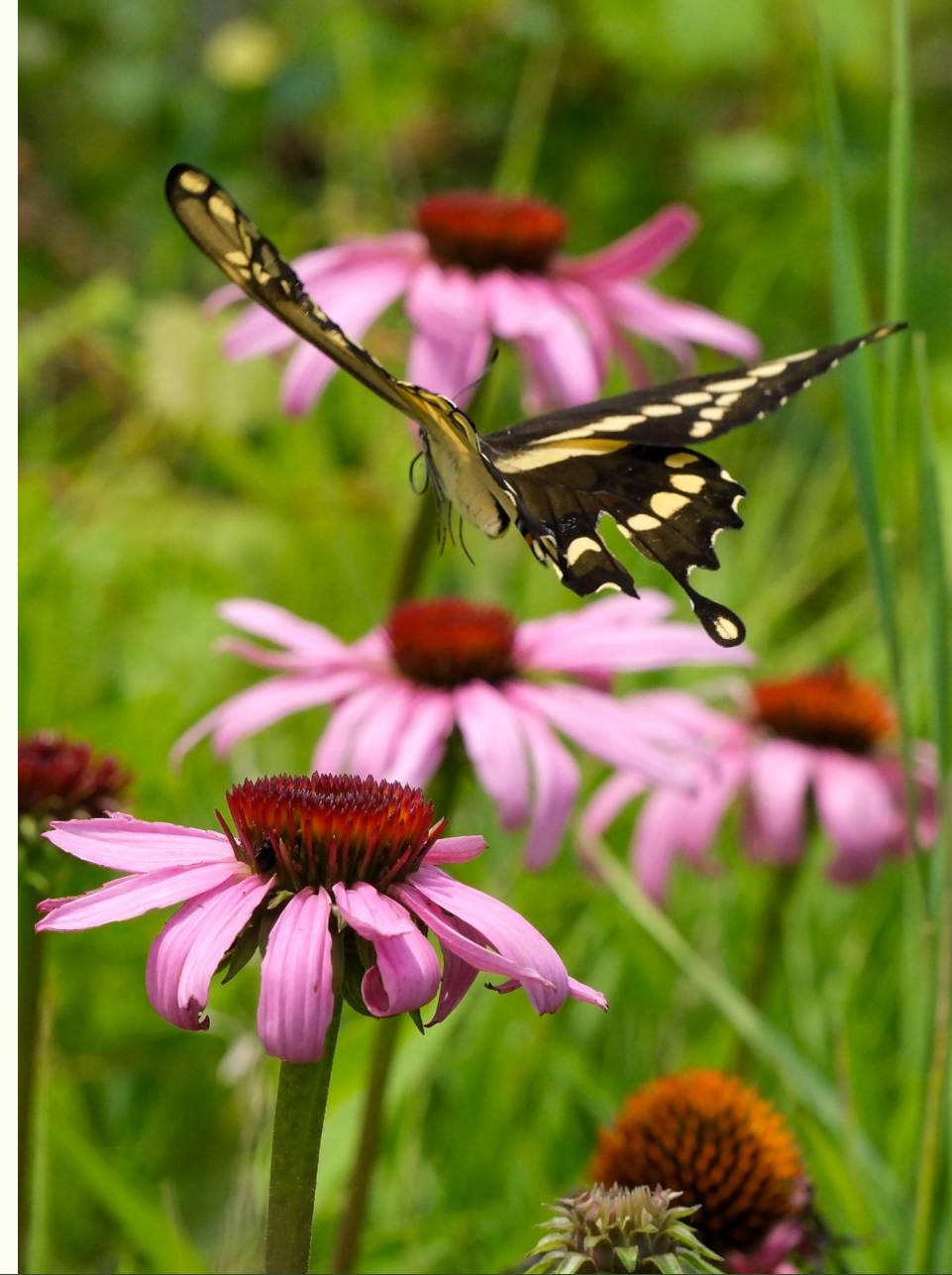
- Education & Training
- Resource Access
- Community Engagement
- Barrier Removal
- Collective Impact



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Education & Training

- Expanded education and programming
- Monthly newsletter and covering seasonally appropriate topics
- Comprehensive workshop series
- Program webpage with resource library



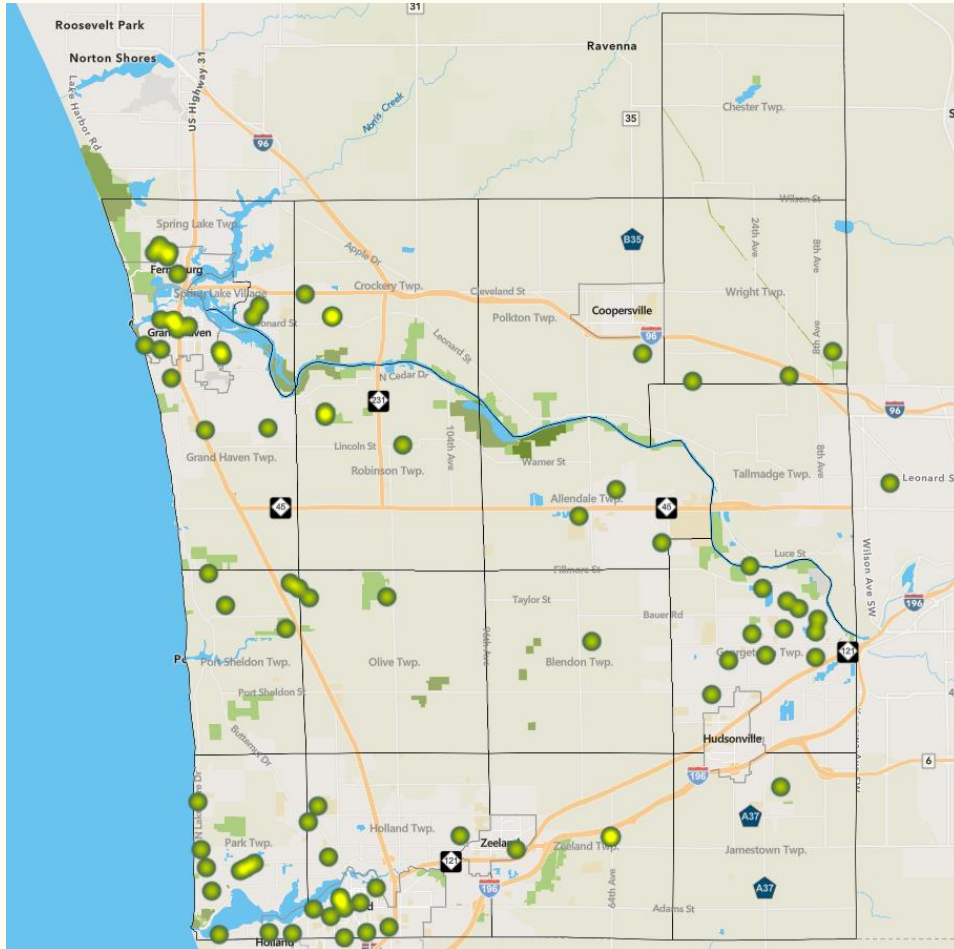
Community Engagement

- “Certified Habitat” yard sign program
- Ambassador gardens
- Connected County Park dashboard
 - 1 sq ft minimum



Certified Habitat Yard Sign

Connected County Park Dashboard



Launched data collection in early April

108 Properties

56+ acres native habitat



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On the Horizon

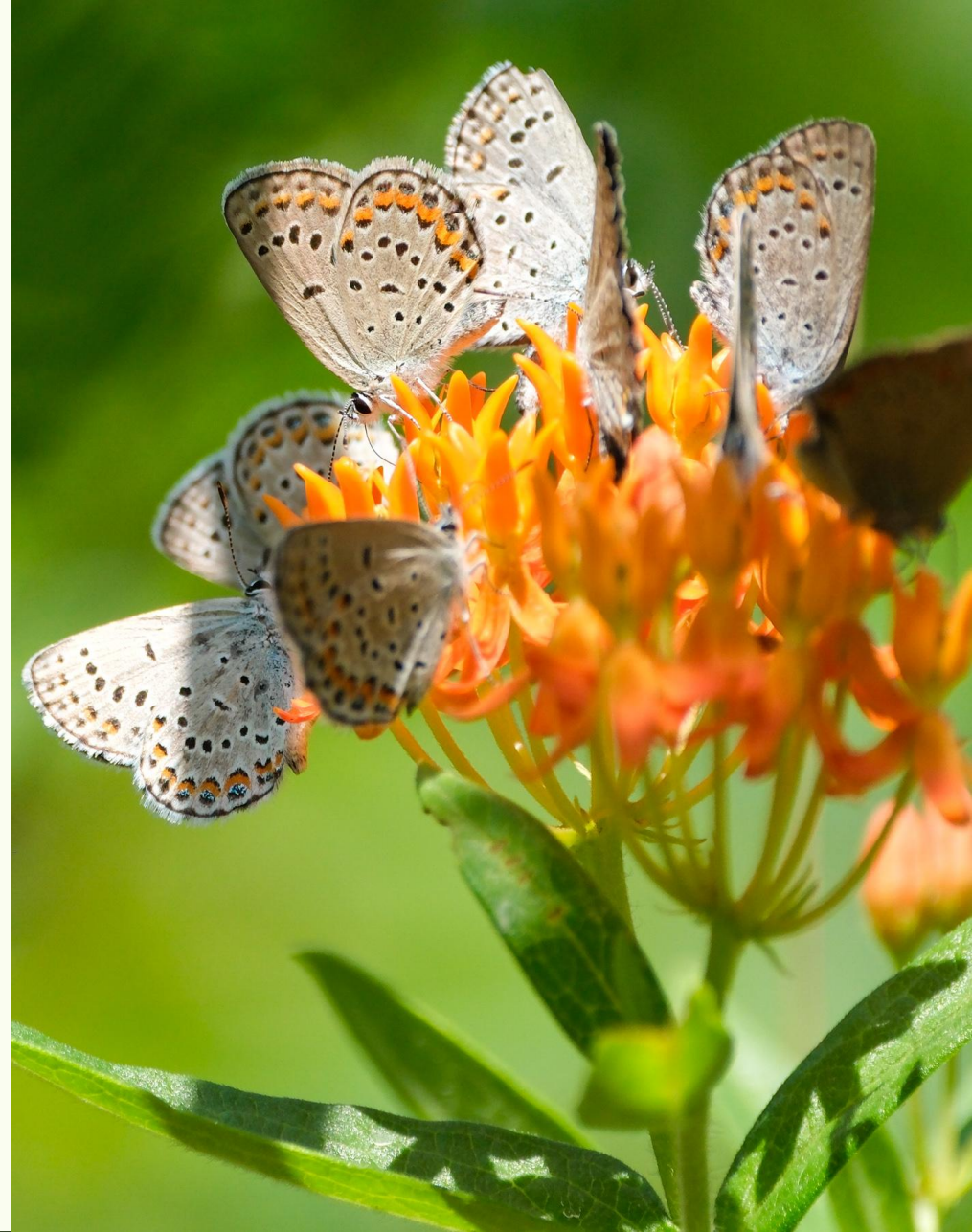
- “Seeds for Stewards” native seed distribution program
- Expanding native plant supply
- “Restoration Station” equipment caches
- Volunteer planting installation and maintenance team
- ..and more!



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Lessons Learned

- Strong sense of community and shared purpose
- Importance of face-to-face interaction and hands on experience
- Under-estimated current levels of awareness and impact
- People are underconnected with existing resources
- Momentum is growing rapidly



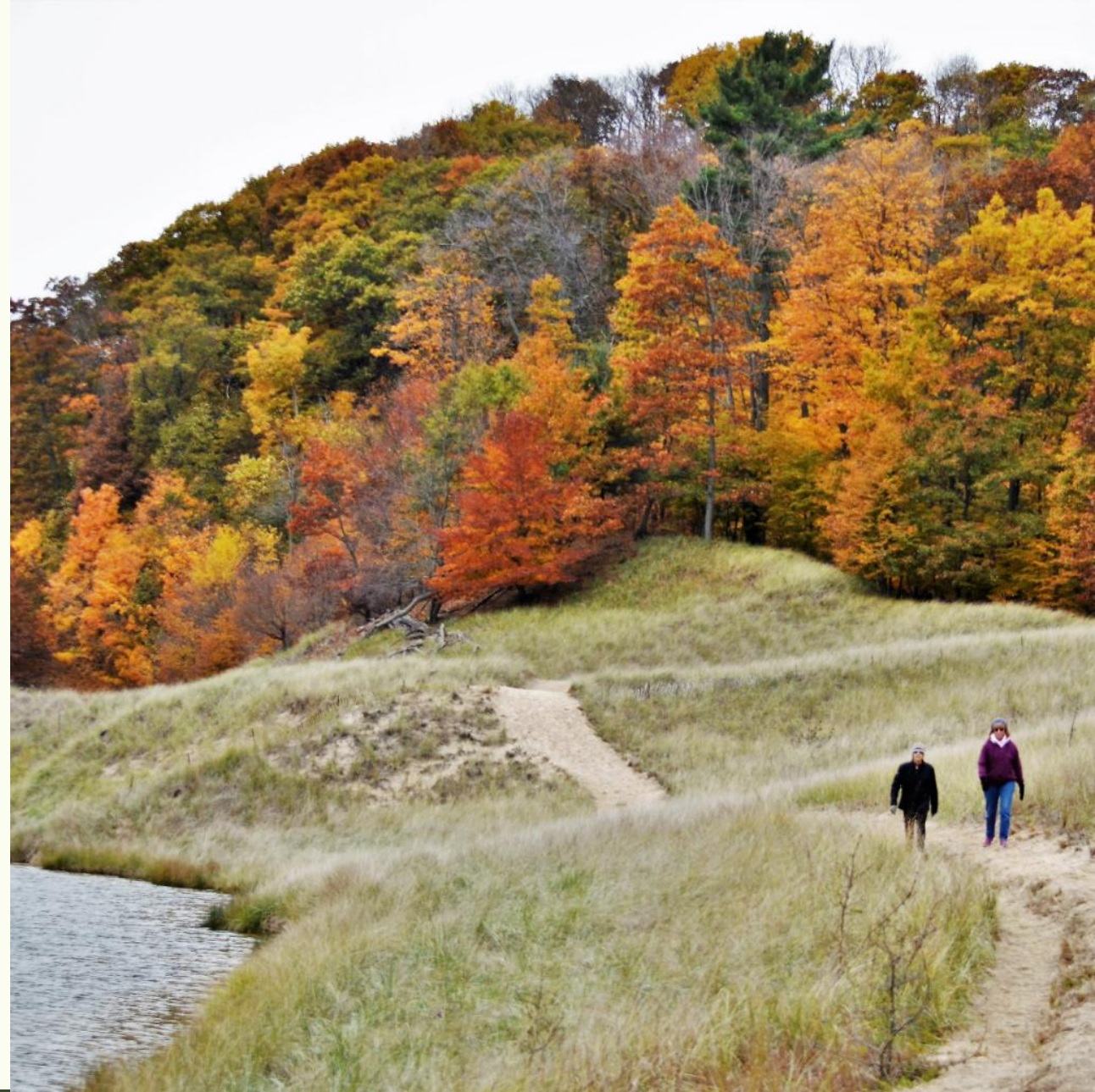
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Boundaries of “Nature”



Planting Seeds

- How have natural spaces supported your well-being?
- What can “giving back to nature” look like in your daily life?
- What impacts does your home have on the surrounding ecosystem?
- What barriers are holding you back?



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Plant a Garden. Grow the Future.