

Point Creek Conservation Area Management Plan

One Ecological Unit

Point Creek Conservation Area is part of the Manitowoc County Park System, located in the Town of Centerville in the southeastern portion of Manitowoc County on County Road LS and 1/2 mile south of County Road F. Manitowoc County took ownership of the property in June, 2002 and has a conservation easement with the Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Funds for the purchase price of \$1.9 million were provided by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, Wisconsin Coastal Management Grant, and other generous private donations. The purpose of the conservation easement is to preserve the area's natural and scenic attributes and provide access for public use. The intent of the conservation easement is to actively manage the area to become One Ecological Unit with the mature Northern Hardwood Forest on the south side of the creek, which is owned by University of Wisconsin Green Bay (UWGB) and is known as Kingfisher Farm Natural Area. (Aerial map page 4).

Description:

The Property consists of 39 acres of a 50 year old pine plantation, estuary, wetlands and coastal bluffs 40–65 ft. high, with approximately 2,800 feet of Lake Michigan shoreline. Point Creek defines the southern boundary of the Property, which has over 1,000 feet of riparian corridor. Remnant sand dunes from an interglacial period exist on the south end near the mouth of the creek and westward into private property, which has been mined for sand since the 1920's. The Property was cleared of most of its trees and farmed from the 1880's until early 1960's. During this period the owner allowed the area near the creek to be used as a park with a baseball field located on the riparian zone. Remnant roads servicing this area near the creek can still be seen. As a result of the clearing and farming, most of the top soil was lost due to wind erosion, leaving a clay soil on the north end and a sandy soil on the south end. The land was purchased in the early 1960's and the owner planted a pine plantation there in the mid-1960's. A cottage was constructed overlooking the mouth of the creek and all that remains is its concrete pad. (Aerial map page 4 and 5).

Current tree vegetation include: 50 year old plantings of White pine (*Pinus strobus*), Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), Norway pine (*Pinus resinosa*), Norway spruce (*Picea abies*), White cedar *Thuja occidentalis*, several European tamarack (*Larix decidua*), and a localized planted grove of Black walnut (*Juglans nigra*). Natural propagation by seeds established Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), Ash (*Fraxinus* spp.), and Boxelder (*Acer negundo*) intermittently amid the pines, and Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) which has been removed.

Understory vegetation chiefly includes Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*), dogwood (*Cornus* spp.), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Canada Goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), Dames Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), Reed Canary Grass, (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and field grasses. (This is not a complete list).

Objective:

A restorative management plan is needed because the Property is geographically and botanically isolated from a source of desired vegetation for natural succession to a mixed Northern Hardwood Forest. The goal is to gradually convert the pine plantation of Point Creek Conservation Area to be similar to the Kingfisher Forest and private land on the south side of Point Creek, and become **One Ecological Unit**. (Aerial map page 4). The Kingfisher Forest and the private land are a mature Northern Mesic Hardwood Forest, and include spring ephemerals, forbs, and vegetation of the riparian and bluff areas. The Point Creek Conservation Area will ultimately be restored to its pre-1800's condition similar to the LTC Old Growth Forest, (Natural Area No. 643) at Lakeshore Technical College several miles away. The LTC Old Growth Forest and Kingfisher Forest will be used as a guide for vegetative species introduction. This transition will include a strategy that will minimize and prevent invasive species from colonizing.

Collective Goals for Community Engagement:

- 1) Maintaining trails for public access
- 2) Create Informational Bulletin Board at parking lot area. (Only signage in park to create a wilderness experience free of civilization's artifacts.)
 - a) Brief history of geology, man's involvement, ecology, and invasive plants of this area.
 - b) Explain logging restorative measures taken to achieve a hardwood forest. (The Objective.)
- 3) Contact information on bulletin board (a website) for
 - a) Organizing volunteers for work days, and alternate work days.
 - b) Procedures for volunteers and orientation for unsupervised work at the time they desire.
 - c) Conducting educational walks.
- 4) Collect litter in park, beach areas and address any other new matters on an as needed basis.

Habitat Enhancement Goals:

A) Invasives:

Prior to a natural restoration of the pine plantation, with broad-leafed trees, ephemerals, and forbs, invasives need to be under control. This is to avoid the continued spread in areas where they already exist, and into areas that hasn't been affected. Failure to do so would greatly hamper any restorative attempts. When invasives are under control then it's recommended that a tree harvest be done. Most prominent of invasive species are:

- 1) Honeysuckle (*Lonicera x bella*) that has formed dense populations throughout the property.
- 2) Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) that is scattered sporadically in the understory.
- 3) Dames Rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*). Riparian area has been completely taken over and is spreading to the forested pine plantation area.
- 4) Others such as *Phragmites australis*, Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) etc. will be dealt with to prevent colonization.

Honeysuckle and Autumn Olive: Removal by cutting woody stems with chainsaws or loppers and treating stumps with appropriate herbicide in summer, fall and winter.

Dames Rocket: The goal for Dames Rocket management is to stop its continued spread into wooded areas and eliminate it by preventing any seed production. Dames Rocket is more destructive than Garlic Mustard. In late spring and early fall herbicides should be used in non-sensitive areas since manually pulling is not effective. **(See Appendix for "Invasive Control")**

5) Riparian Area: In the riparian zone, Reed Canary Grass and Dames Rocket are predominant, have taken over, and Garlic Mustard has become a problem in the last several years. In the future the riparian zone will need attention and a target-specific management plan. In the last four years on the south side of Point Creek the riparian zone has been treated to eliminate Reed Canary Grass, Phragmites, Garlic Mustard and Dames Rocket with success. Restorative seeding will be only done with monocots such as Sedges, Grasses, Cattails, Blue Iris, etc. Point Creek floods every spring and deposits seeds of broad leaf invasives like Dames Rocket and Garlic Mustard from sources upstream. These broad leaf invasives will be easily identified and eliminated. Future plans are to identify upstream sources and obtain permission from landowners to eliminate offending plants.

B) Timber Harvest Plan:

Expand and clear present openings, create new ones with irregular patterns and continue to thin some of the dense rows of pine on the northern 5/8 of the pine woods. The southern 3/8 of the woods would be cleared on the North/South trail down the middle of the plantation in specified areas in east and west directions creating 100 ft. irregular openings. The dense rows of pine would also be thinned. The dense pine areas on the peripheries of the pine plantation would be left alone, and act as shade barrier for the foreseeable future preventing invasives from becoming established from surrounding land.

The pine plantation when selectively harvested will allow sufficient light for selected broad leafed trees to grow when planted, enrich the soil and produce seeds for succession to a mixed Northern Hardwood Forest. The first tree thinning in 2003 left some logs to decompose. This should be done again to provide soil enrichment for ephemerals and herbs, provide a matrix for seeds to germinate, and provide a habitat for an assortment of insects, fungi, salamanders, birds, etc. Aesthetics are important and should be taken into account when selecting areas for openings. The future of how often timber harvests and tree planting take place is dependent on funds and volunteers being available, the success of the first clearing and tree planting, and overall invasive control. **(See Appendix for Timber Harvest Specifics)**

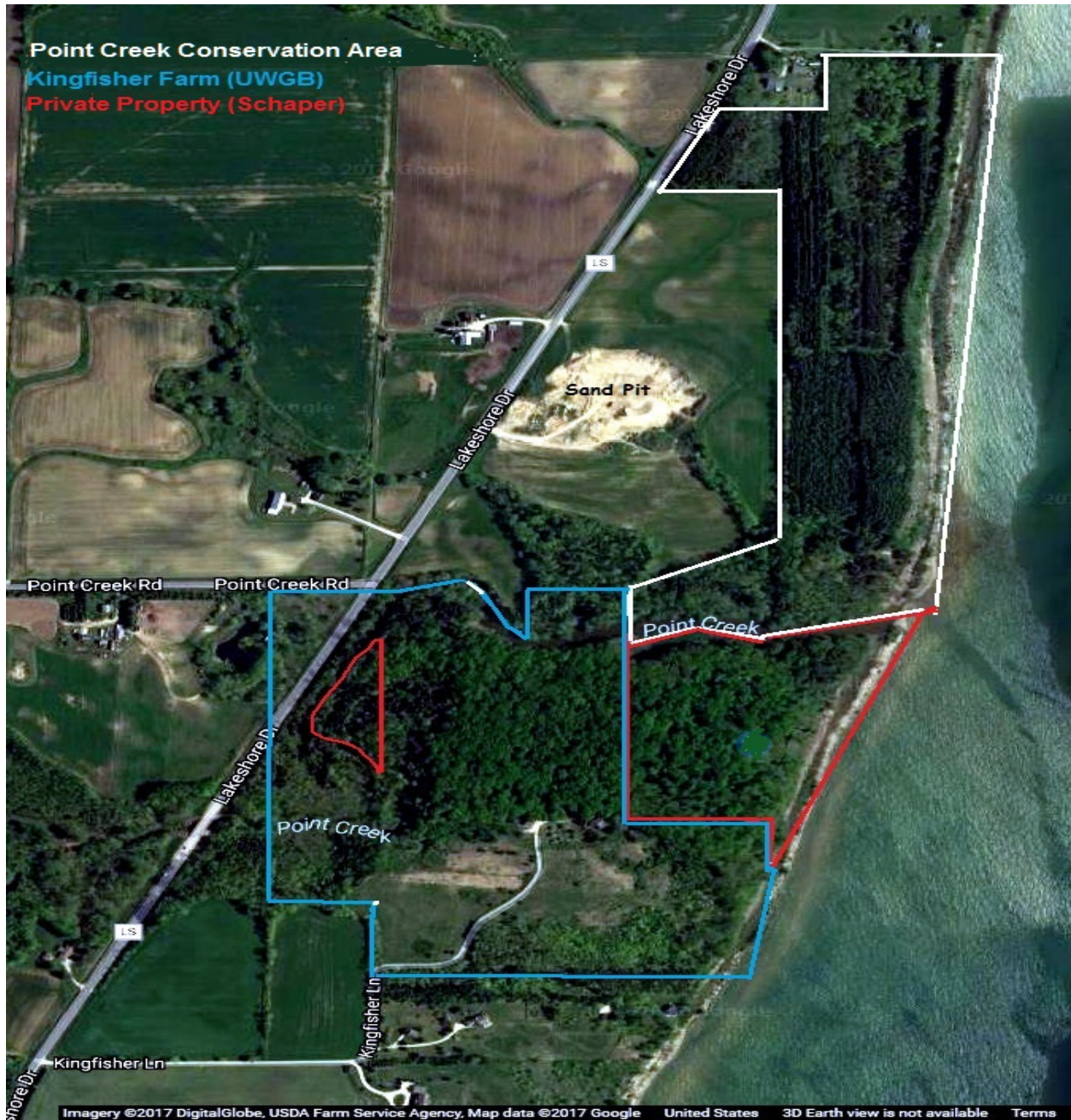
C) Restorative Preparations and Plantings

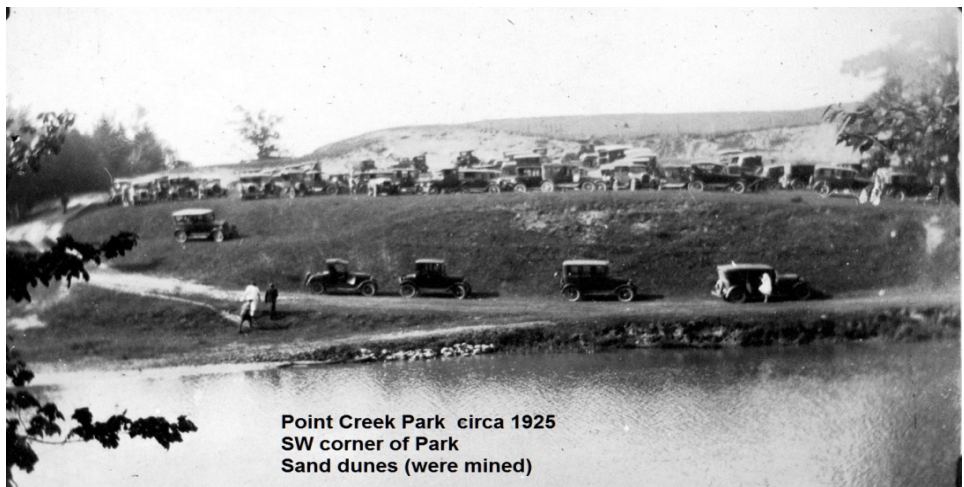
- 1) Rid clear and wooded areas of invasives and prepare for tree plantings.
- 2) Remove undesirable, non-native pine seedlings, cutting or grinding up (heavy duty mower).
- 3) Plant several large trees (15 ft. plus), many seedlings and seeds for each opening. Tree species focus on White Birch and Sugar Maple. Include Red Oak, Basswood, Yellow Birch, Beech, Black Cherry etc. to reduce risk of some species failures.
- 4) Protect large trees with fencing preventing possible deer damage. Manage vegetation around plantings. Deer browsing doesn't exist at this time allowing planting of seedlings.
- 5) Plant clumps of ephemerals and herbs in desired locations.

D) Park Expansion:

The parcel of land that lies directly west of the park and east of Cty. Road LS would be a natural addition to the park. It is presently farmed and has an active sand pit. An attempt was made to acquire it after the park was formed but was unsuccessful. The plan would be to pursue a purchase or obtain some type of conservation easement.

Prepared by Ron Schaper, adjacent property owner, and greatly appreciated input from Dale Folz (manager of Kingfisher Farm), Jim Kettler (LNRP), and Rob Pragalz.





Appendix:

Invasive Control

Honeysuckle and Autumn Olive: Removal by cutting woody stems with chainsaws or loppers and treating stumps with appropriate herbicide in summer, fall and winter.

Dames Rocket: The goal for Dames Rocket management is to stop its continued spreading into wooded areas and eliminate it by preventing any seed production. Dames Rocket is more destructive than Garlic Mustard and has no known vegetation competition in this area. It thrives in full sun as well as in deep shade of a mature forest. There is a difference between control and elimination. In late spring and early fall herbicides may be used in non-sensitive areas since manually pulling is not effective. Roots break off to sprout and some produce seeds later in summer undetected, as do “weed whacked” plants. These plants are exceptionally invasive in this area and there are thousands of individual plants, some in very difficult areas to reach. Being in the mustard family and a supposed biennial, they may live as long as 4-5 years, produce copious amounts of seeds and have a viable seed bank up to 10-15 years. It crowds out other vegetation, such as ephemerals, forbs, and some tree seedlings. UWGB has realized Dames Rocket’s virulence and has stated “they’re out of control on their campus”. On the south side of the creek the seventh year of eradication of Dames Rocket is becoming successful in many areas. Failing to address the above invasive issues would greatly hamper any restoration efforts. Constant vigilance is required during the growing season for success.

Timber Harvest Specifics: (Fall 2018-Winter 2019)

Suggestions for a tree harvest, from two onsite walks with Foresters, Ron Jones of Jones Forestry and Bill Ruff DNR Forester of Manitowoc County. Bill Ruff is going to be our forester and mark the trees in December 2017. A Fecon (brush grinder) is planned to clear brush (invasives) in non-tree areas for the preparation of tree planting. Manual removal of invasives will continue. Edited Nov. 2017

1) Northern 5/8 of Woods Areas:

- a) Dense rows of Pines and Cedars (rows to be harvested)
- b) Mixture of Pines, Black Walnut, Ash. (most to be harvested)
Black Walnut killing pines, Ash trees’ demise inevitable.
- c) Dense row of Pines NE area second row in from East (most to be harvested)
- d) Black Walnut grove (no action at this time)
- e) Clear spaces/Non-Pine (Fecon) (keep specific trees if marked) (all others to be harvested)

2) Southern 3/8 of Woods Areas:

- a) Dense rows of Pines (in several rows from east & west sides) (rows to be harvested)
- b) Selected areas either side of center path (several areas to be harvested)
- c) Thin a few White Pines in SW area of plantation (selective harvest)
Allowing space for larger Pines for growth and spreading boughs.