



Conservation of Big River Forests in Southern Wisconsin

Mississippi River Basin



BACKGROUND

This project's focal areas - the Lower Chippewa River, Lower Wisconsin River, and Leopold Reserve-Pine Island support some of the largest forested blocks in southern Wisconsin, including extensive tracts of floodplain forest, southern mesic and dry-mesic forest, and oak woodland. All three sites have been identified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) for breeding, migration, and wintering, and are considered critical for the conservation of breeding southern forest interior birds.

LOCATION

Lower reaches of the Baraboo, Wisconsin, and Chippewa Rivers flowing through 10 Wisconsin counties. State, federal, and private lands.

ISSUES BEING ADDRESSED

These big-river sites figure prominently in various large-scale prioritization and planning documents. However, these plans lack prioritization, site-specific detail, or strategies for implementing recommended actions. More focused, on-the-ground strategies are essential to effectively step down and implement conservation actions.

RESULTS

Data is being compiled, the project should be completed by August of 2009.

OUTCOMES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Improved capacity to plan and evaluate management at each site. Improved conservation of forested habitats and associated bird species at each site.
- Improved coordination of management across land ownerships at each site.
- Improved knowledge, consideration of species, habitat needs in master plans, forest management plans.

PARTNERS

- The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Aldo Leopold Foundation
- Sand County Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Dunn County

FUTURE PLANS

The process described here of developing action strategies through partnerships for ecologically defined priority sites can be applied proactively, particularly to sites that contain a mix

of ownerships, lack landscape-scale conservation planning, are scheduled for master planning, or whose management regimes will be altered or intensified.

CONTACTS

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GRANT AMOUNT

\$41,000

The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation have partnered to initiate the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The Foundation grants projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.