

Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area is one of the largest prairies remaining in the state and one of the largest coastal wetlands in Southeastern Wisconsin. Resulting from varying stages of the post glacial lakes that historically occupied the Lake Michigan basin, Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area is part of a ridge and swale landform that extends south of the state line. The micro-topographical heterogeneity and proximity to Lake Michigan makes this State Natural Area a mosaic of communities including mesic prairie, dry-mesic prairie, wet-mesic prairie, wet prairie, fen, sedge meadow, shallow marsh, and oak savanna. Special concern, threatened, and endangered plants are present throughout the site. In addition, Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area provides habitat for multiple critical animal species as well as many species of grassland and wetland breeding birds. Parcels within the natural area are owned by the Department of Natural Resources and private landowners.

The natural area is surrounded by agriculture and residential development including the community of Carol Beach. A railroad corridor lines the entire western boundary of the natural area where several large culverts passing under the railroad drain runoff inputs of silt, sediment, and nutrients from the infrastructure to the west. As a result, populations of invasive giant reed grass (*Phragmites australis subsp. australis*) and hybrid cattail (*Typha x glauca*) are present within the complex. Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area is managed by the Department of Natural Resources and the citizen-based Chiwaukee Prairie Friends Group who perform herbicide applications, girdling of exotic trees, and cycled fire regimes within the natural area. However, funding limitations as well as privately owned parcels restrict the interval and area in which prescribed fire is utilized and thus, encroachment of glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), is also a management concern. Continued acquisition of the private parcels by the Department of Natural Resources or management cooperation by private landowners would be ideal.

Learn more here:
sewrpc.org/Regional-Planning/Natural-Areas



Southeastern
Wisconsin
Regional
Planning
Commission

Planning Report No. 42, 2nd
Amendment to the Natural Areas &
Critical Species Management &
Protection Plan for the Southeastern
Wisconsin Region (Dec 2025)

Regional Natural Areas



Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area

T01 R23 Sec. 18, 19, 30, 31 & 32
Kenosha County

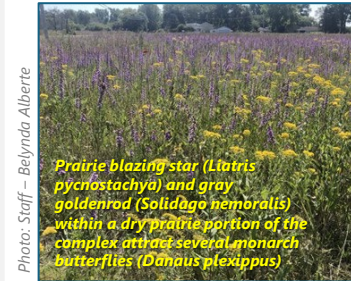


Photo: Staff – Belynda Alberte

Prairie blazing star (*Liatris pycnostachya*) and gray goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*) within a dry prairie portion of the complex attract several monarch butterflies (*Danais plexippus*)

Natural Areas Rank

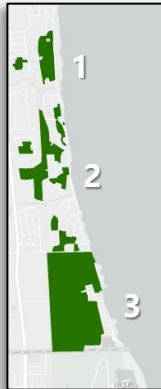
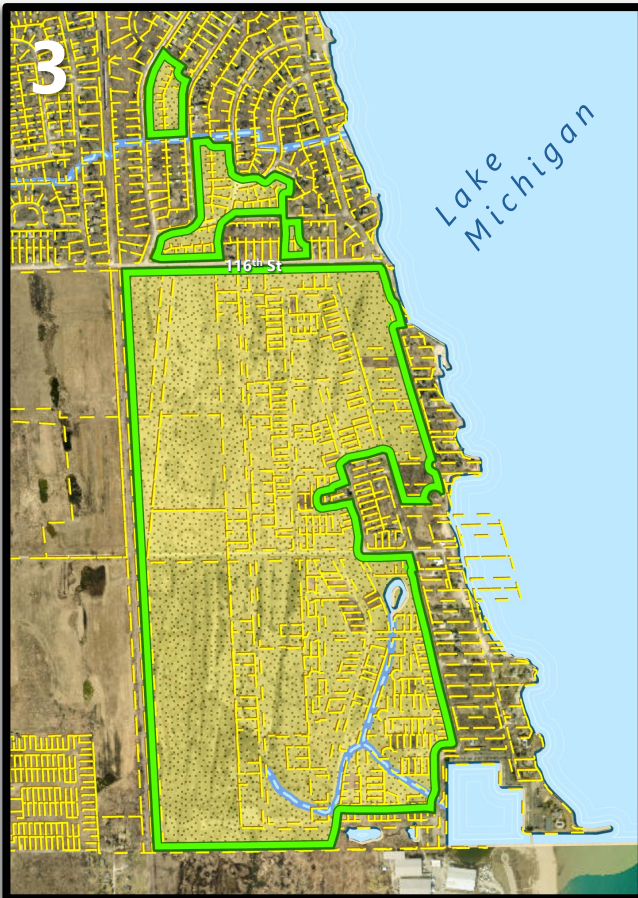
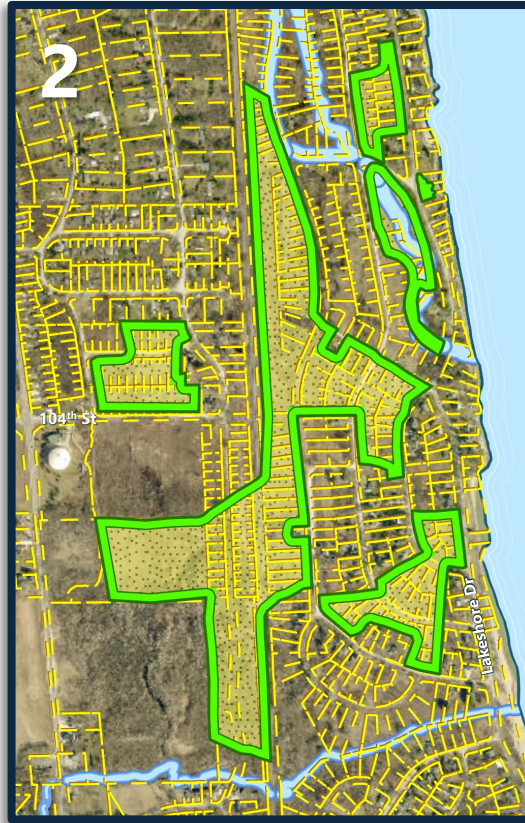
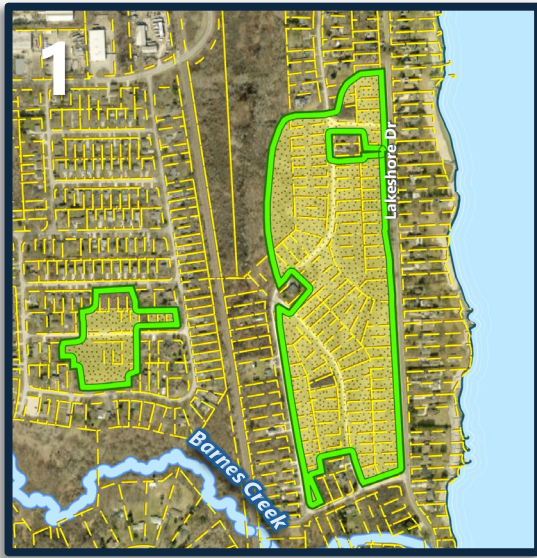


Natural Area of
Statewide Significance

Level of Protection	Medium (Partial Conservation Ownership w/Site Mgmt Plan)
Level of Threat	Medium (Surrounding Development, Invasive Species)
Size	484 acres
Ownership	DNR, Private
Site Management Plan	Yes
Number of Native Plant Species	442
Endangered, Threatened, or Special Concern Species	Yes, Plant & Animal

The preparation of this natural areas site profile was funded in part by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management under the Coastal Zone Management Act, Grant # NA18NOS4190091, NA20NOS4190092, & NA22NOS4190085





Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area 484 acres



The lands within the boundaries and/or yellow highlighted area are not open to the public (for any purpose) unless otherwise noted onsite.

Regional Natural Areas

Chiwaukee Prairie State Natural Area

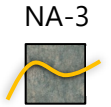
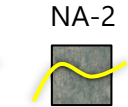
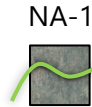
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Photo: Staff – Belynda Alberte

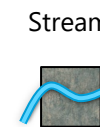


A view of mesic to wet-mesic prairie with portions of the resident oak savanna in the background

Natural Area
Boundaries



Surface
Water



Parcel
Boundaries

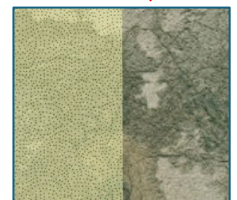


Protected
Highlighted
Yellow

Not
Protected

Protected Lands

Lands owned by Federal, State, County, and local units of government or via conservation easements



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