



Example of successful oak savanna restoration on the Huron-Manistee National Forest, Michigan that is providing high quality habitat for rare native species.  
Photo Credit: U.S. Forest Service

## Oak Savannas Restoration and Connectivity

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and more than 34 partner organizations are working to restore and improve connectivity within oak savannas and barrens habitats in the Huron-Manistee National Forest in Michigan to benefit pollinator species and rare savanna species. In 2020, USFS staff continued treatments including removal of trees and shrubs, prescribed burning, mechanical site preparation, seeding and planting native herbs and grasses, and other activities necessary to maintain 2,300 acres of oak savanna. Oak savannas are now estimated to cover less than 1% of their historic extent, and plants and animals dependent on these habitats have decreased in numbers. Restorations have led to increased observations of the federally endangered Karner blue butterfly, federally threatened eastern massasauga rattlesnake and other at-risk species.

### Share your thoughts on the Great Lakes and consider the following questions.

- 1** What Great Lakes recreational opportunities and experiences have negatively changed in your lifetime due to loss or change of Great Lakes habitats?
- 2** What Great Lakes habitats do you spend most of your time recreating in and enjoying?
- 3** What improvement have you seen in your region due to habitat protection, enhancement and restoration?
- 4** Are there some habitats in the Great Lakes that you view as the most important? If so, which ones?

# Resilient Habitats

## Overview

The Great Lakes — the largest group of freshwater lakes on Earth — are true wonders of the world. An important part of the physical landscape and cultural heritage of North America, the Great Lakes contain more than 10,000 miles of magnificent coastline and 30,000 islands. The region's four-season climate allows for boating, fishing, swimming, beach enjoyment and other forms of recreation that support the region's proud outdoor heritage. The environment of the Great Lakes region is blessed with wide swaths of forest and wilderness areas, hundreds of tributaries, thousands of smaller lakes, sand dunes, coastal marshes, rocky shorelines, lakeplain prairies, savannas, forests, fens, wetlands and other landscapes that contain features that are globally unique. These habitats provide drinking water, transportation, power and a wide array of recreational opportunities. Yet, these habitats have been significantly lost or impacted by pollution, development, resource extraction and invasive species.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) continues to make a significant contribution to efforts to stop or reverse these habitat losses and prepare the local partners to implement projects that will make these places more resilient to future challenges. Forest ecosystems and associated plant communities continue to be prioritized for restoration to make these habitats more resilient to future climate change. Watersheds predicted to retain cold-water habitat necessary for native fish communities may be identified by federal, State, Tribal and local partners, and GLRI resources may be prioritized for removing remaining connectivity barriers such as dams and failing road culverts. GLRI federal agencies may continue to map and characterize coastal resources and shorelines. GLRI projects may provide States, Tribes and local communities technical assistance to implement resilience measures and manage and protect these coastal habitats as dynamic lake levels and future storms impact the coasts.



For more information visit,  
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