

Project 181: Door County Land Preservation

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

Restoration Category: Aquatic, Nearshore, and Riparian Habitat Quality Improvement

Actions: Preservation of habitat within the Town of Gibraltar, Door County, Wisconsin

Benefits: Protection of critical and contiguous forest and wetland habitat for native wildlife and protecting the quality of the surface and groundwater recharging into the Green Bay.

Funding: \$95,200 in natural resource damage assessment settlement funding allocated for acquisitions plus matching funds and/or in-kind services for a total budget of \$498,682

Timing: Acquisitions completed in 2014 and 2015; monitoring and maintenance are ongoing

Land Ownership: Door County Land Trust



Chambers Island view of Lake MacKaysee (*Photo by Julie Schartner, Door County Land Trust*)

MAIN BODY

Goal: To acquire and protect important habitat in Door County.

Project Description:

Door County contains important natural habitat areas that are threatened by increasing development pressure. For this project the Door County Land Trust (DCLT) focused on acquiring and preserving habitats that lie within the Chambers Island Habitat Area and the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp State Natural Area (SNA). Protection of these lands will help maintain critical and contiguous forest and wetland habitat for a host of migratory birds and rare plant and animal species that use these protected areas, as well as to protect the water quality of surface and groundwater recharging into Green Bay and its fisheries.

As of January 2015 the DCLT has protected 3 different parcels on Chambers Island totaling approximately 112 acres, and approximately 12 acres in the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp. Wetlands found on one of the properties drain into Ephraim Swamp towards Hidden Springs Creek and the Ephraim Creek, which ultimately drain into the bay of Green Bay. Maintaining and protecting the surface and groundwater flow to these creeks and wetlands is essential for protection of the water quality of Green Bay and the rare species found in the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp SNA.

Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and suckers are known to spawn in the creeks and associated wetlands in the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp project area. Acquisition of lands within this project area will help protect Green Bay fisheries from degradation associated with high-density development, coastal wetland destruction and habitat fragmentation.

Benefits:

This project benefits many rare species which utilize the island; six 'species of greatest conservation need (SGCN)' breed on Chambers Island, including: wood thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), red-headed woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), least flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*), and American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*). 27 bird species identified as 'SGCN', including the endangered peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) and Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*) and the threatened red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) and great egret (*Ardea alba*), are known to use the island for resting and foraging. A total of 163 bird species have been recorded on Chambers Island, including nesting bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) communities.

Acquisition in the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp will help protect a host of federally endangered species by supporting habitat for the federally endangered Hine's emerald dragonfly (*Somatochlora hineana*), federally threatened dwarf lake iris (*Iris lacustris*), Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), Yellow-bellied flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*) and possibly state endangered/threatened land snails associated with the Niagara escarpment.

Spatial Extent of Project:

The 112 acres acquired in Chambers Island Habitat Area contain 4700 feet of undeveloped Lake Mackaysee shoreline, 22 acres of wet forest and cedar swamp, and 90 acres of northern mesic and wet-mesic forest. 12 acres of northern wet forest dominated by white cedar also lies in the Gibraltar-Ephraim Swamp SNA. Natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) settlement funds were credited with the preservation of 23.67 acres (19.1% of the total); other funds were credited with the preservation of the remaining 100.33 acres.

**Status and Funding:**

The project received \$95,200 in NRDA settlement funding and attracted matching funds and/or in-kind services for a total budget of \$498,682.

Project Accomplishments:

This project successfully protects ecologically significant lands from future development in an area with strong development pressure. The acquired parcels increase the amount of contiguous land protected and preserved for habitat, wildlife, water quality, and ecology in the region. The DCLT plans to conduct a biological inventory of the sites and perform annual maintenance.

Contact Information:

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Wetlands that drain into Ephraim Swamp (Photo by Terrie Cooper, Door County Land Trust)