

Project 195: St. Martin's Island

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

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

Actions: Acquisition and protection of 1,243 acres on St. Martin Island, between Wisconsin's Door County Peninsula and Michigan's Garden Peninsula

Benefits: Protection of a critical feeding and resting stopover for migratory species, near shore fish spawning, emergent Great Lakes coastal wetland, and local island biodiversity

Funding: \$200,000 in natural resource damage assessment settlement funding plus matching funds and/or in-kind services for a total budget of \$1,500,000

Timing: Land acquisition completed by the Nature Conservancy in 2013 and the title was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015

Land Ownership: The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



St. Martin Island bluffs (*Photo by Frykman Gallery*)

MAIN BODY

Goal: To preserve, protect, and manage emergent wetlands, northern hardwood forest, and coastal habitat for wildlife on St. Martin Island in Lake Michigan.

Project Description:

Located between Wisconsin's Door Peninsula and Michigan's Garden Peninsula, St. Martin Island is part of the Grand Traverse chain of islands in Lake Michigan and one of the last large islands in this chain to remain predominantly undeveloped. This project contributed NRDA funds to the Nature Conservancy for the purchase of 1,243 acres on St. Martin Island (94% of the island).

The protection of St. Martin Island supports conservation efforts in the Lower Fox River and Green Bay ecosystems by providing excellent migratory stopover habitat for many birds, bats, and insects that utilize the waters and shoreline forests and wetlands of those systems. It also provides valuable feeding and breeding habitat for a variety of native fish and other aquatic species, supplementing their regional populations. A diverse collection of habitat types are protected including: bluffs, cobblestone beaches, northern hardwood swamp and forest, and boreal conifer forest.

Benefits:

More than 100 species of birds have been documented using the island during recent surveys. Many native species of fish, such as northern pike (*Esox lucius*), smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), walleye (*Sander vitreus*), and yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), use the shallow waters surrounding the island and will benefit from this project. Many important recreational fish, such as Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) can be found feeding in the near shore waters of the island. Other species that will benefit from this project include common merganser (*Mergus merganser*), red-breasted merganser (*Mergus serrator*), common loon (*Gavia immer*), American white pelican (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*), and many species of gull.



Aerial view of St. Martin Island (Photo by Mark Godfrey)

Spatial Extent of Project:

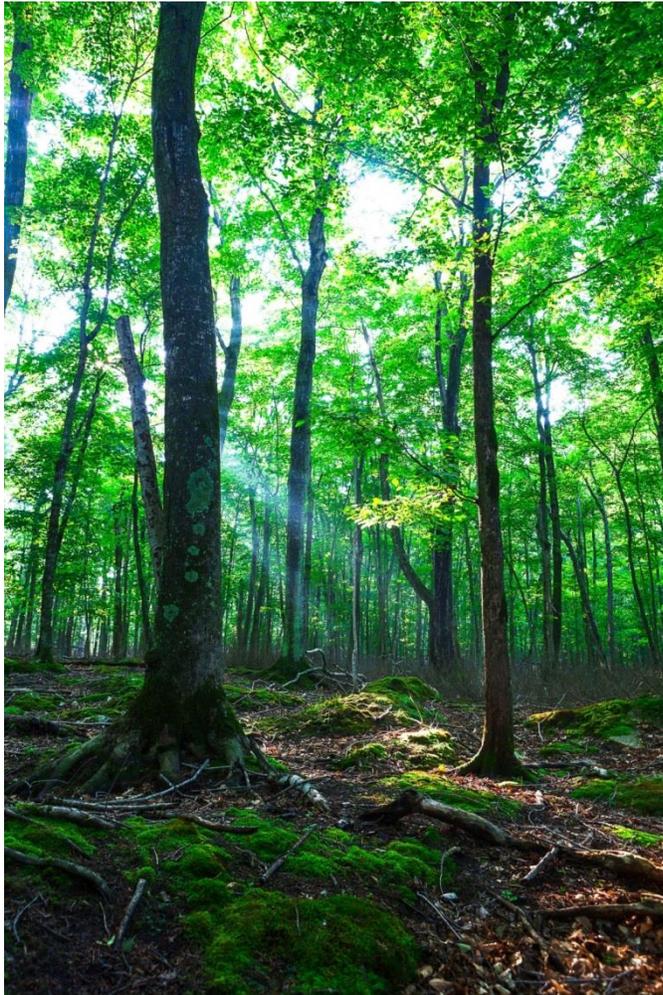
A total of 1,243 acres were preserved, including 35 acres of palustrine emergent wetlands, 1,208 acres of predominantly northern hardwood forest, and over 5 miles of Lake Michigan Shoreline. Natural resource damage assessment (NRDA) settlement funds were credited with the preservation of 165.73 acres (13.3% of the total); other funds were credited with the preservation of the remaining 1077.27 acres.

Status and Funding:

The Nature Conservancy completed the land acquisition in 2013; wildlife surveys and management activities will be ongoing. The title was transferred to the US-Fish and Wildlife Service in 2015 for long-term protection and management as part of the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The trustees directed \$200,000 in natural resource damage assessment settlement funding to this project; the balance was provided through matching funds and/or in-kind services for a total budget of \$1,500,000.

Project Accomplishments:

This project successfully acquired land that serves as an important stopover for migratory species and fish foraging and spawning. The acquisition and long-term management of the island maintains habitat integrity for a diverse range of coastal habitats, including wetlands and associated northern hardwood and boreal forests. It addresses the need for protecting islands in Lake Michigan that are threatened by development and invasive species.



Forest habitat on St. Martin Island (Photo by Frykman Gallery)

Contact Information:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,

Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge

(920) 387-2658

greenbayrefuge@fws.gov

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/green_bay/