



The Driftless Area is a unique unglaciated landscape. The land in this part of the state is ancient compared with 10,000 years of ice-free land in the rest of the state. Rare species are numerous owing to the diversity and quality of habitats.

Driftless Area Important Natural Features—
 Large River Systems, Southern Forests, Prairie and Savanna, Springs, Cliffs and Talus Slopes, Relict Conifers, Bog Relicts, and Dendritic Landforms.



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Ecology & Significance

Wisconsin Responsibility – High
 Irreplaceable Features – Moderate
 Diversity of Natural Features – Moderate
 Rare Species – Several
 Conservation Concern Species – Mod High
 Vulnerability to a Warming Climate – Mod Low
 Conservation Status – Some

This site has promising conservation opportunities.

Situated on rolling topography, Otter Creek Oak Barrens contains an undisturbed oak barrens dominated by scattered large black and Hill's oaks with groves of smaller bur, black, and white oak. Jack pine and trembling aspen are also present. The large black oaks are at least 140 years old, and may be over 200 years old. The smaller oaks, 8 to 20 inches in diameter, are 70- to 110 years old.

The State-owned land forms the core of larger landscape area. Private landowners abutting the core area could either thin their woods and apply prescribed fire or rotational thin their forest providing a shifting mosaic of barrens. With help this could be the largest oak barrens anywhere in the state.



Photo courtesy Wisconsin DNR

Flora and Fauna

The shrub layer contains American hazelnut, New Jersey tea, and dogwoods. The groundlayer is quite diverse with a rich assemblage of prairie grasses and forbs including prairie larkspur. Other species are June grass, little blue-stem, leadplant, puccoon, field wormwood, flowering spurge, bastard-toadflax, false Solomon's seal, bird's-foot violet, prairie coreopsis, and wood betony. Pocket gophers are abundant and six-lined race runners are also present.



Photo courtesy Missouri Dept. of Conservation

Otter Creek Barrens offers a unique opportunity—restoring a model oak barrens habitat. The state needs to restore its portion, then work with the private adjacent owners to demonstrate the values of a large oak barrens. The primary reason for owning the land is to have a place to hunt white-tailed deer. Restoration of the barrens will not only improve the habitat for deer, but also provide for outstanding hunting and viewing of other wildlife such as wild turkey and fox squirrel. The deep sands provide the structure needed by pocket gophers, whose burrows are the sole locate to find at least 27 invertebrate species.