

**FOUR-TOWNSHIP WATER RESOURCES  
COUNCIL: NATURAL FEATURES  
INVENTORY PHASE II**

**PRAIRIEVILLE, BARRY, ROSS AND  
RICHLAND TOWNSHIPS**

**PRESENTED  
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## **NATURAL FEATURES INVENTORY OF PRAIRIEVILLE, BARRY, ROSS AND RICHLAND TOWNSHIPS**

The four townships of Prairieville, Barry, Ross, and Richland are centrally located between the cities of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek. Over the next several decades both of these communities are expected to grow as economic development goals attract new businesses to the area. As properties are developed, natural areas are impacted. These four townships are rich in natural features, and many local citizens value the diversity of ecosystems that make this area unique and ecologically noteworthy. The large natural areas are also important for local plants and animals. Wildlife corridors and areas with less disturbed, core wildlife habitat help maintain biodiversity and sources of genetic diversity. Through managed community growth, the natural character of the four-township area may be better conserved by directing development away from land in excellent ecological condition. The goal of the Natural Features Inventory reports is to promote more well-informed decisions when property of high ecological value is being considered for development.

As reported in the 27 January 2003 Four-Township Water Resources Council, Inc. Project Update publication *Natural Features Inventory to Protect Environmental Quality in Ross, Richland, Barry and Prairieville Townships*, the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) of Michigan State University Extension identified 20 areas as high priority Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs) within the four townships. The priority rating of each PCA was determined by many factors, including size, core area, association with

streams, connection with nearby PCAs and natural areas, the restorability of adjacent properties, and the incidence of plants or animals of special concern. The identification of these 20 high priority PCAs concluded Phase I of the Natural Features Inventory.

Phase II of the inventory, based on field surveys of representative portions of each PCA, rated each of these 20 high priority PCAs in terms of conservation priority. Sites were rated as excellent, very good, or good in terms of their floristic quality, wildlife habitat, and degree of human encroachment. All 20 PCAs are worthy of conservation priority, but the quality of natural features at some sites was higher than at others. These ratings should be used as a general guide in conjunction with the species lists and habitat descriptions for each PCA when evaluating development proposals in or near these PCAs.

A summary of the report on each PCA within a township is available at your township office. Although PCAs are grouped by township, each township can be considered part of the larger four-township area. Cooperative conservation efforts across the broader four-township area are encouraged. Ecosystems are "open systems" and, to the extent possible, should be managed across jurisdictional boundaries. The Four-Township Water Resources Council has published the complete Natural Features Inventory reports for all four townships as a single unit, which is available under publications on FTWRC web page ([www.ftwrc.org](http://www.ftwrc.org)).