

Indiana DNR Division of Forestry

High Conservation Value Forest Proposal- Hurricane Creek



Hurricane Creek HCVF at Ferdinand State Forest

Description

The proposed approximately 57 acre High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) site consists of wooded slopes, ridge tops, and ravines. The site contains a quality mix of three forest communities: dry upland forest, dry-mesic upland forest, and mesic upland forest.

The area has a history of forest use, likely including timber and grazing, but shows no signs of recent significant disturbance in the form of erosion, grazing, cutting, or non-native exotic species. Some of the overstory species noted included red oak, sugar maple, tulip poplar, and scattered white oak in mesic upland forest portions.

Shrub layer species included pawpaw, spicebush, and flowering dogwood and understory trees included sugar maple and beech. Although an exhaustive species list was not made, the herb layer was diverse with the expected mesic species and included Christmas fern, Jack-in-the-pulpit, waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum* sp.), violets, yellowroot (*Hydrastis canadensis*), American ginseng, and several different species of *Carex* (sedge) among the species noted. The southwest facing slope along the north side of the tract had more of a white oak component and was more disturbed. Part of this area had also been prescribed burned fairly recently. Ridge tops and adjacent crests consist of more dry-mesic and dry upland forest types and are intact showing little recent site disturbance with vegetation common and characteristic of the area, including chestnut oak, greenbrier, etc.

Within the Crawford Upland Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Region, there is one protected, high quality dry upland forest example in the State Nature preserve system. Similar quality protected dry-mesic upland forest and mesic upland forest are each represented in two State nature preserves.

The proposed HCVF area supports relatively natural structure and composition with diverse and expected species present, and in addition shows little evidence of recent disturbance and very few exotics present. The context of this tract is also good due to it being surrounded by additional state forest land. Much of the site could be described as mature to old second-growth with no clear signs of recent disturbance with the exception of prescribed fire treatments and a few white pine seedlings observed near or on the ridge top that doubtless escaped from decades old white pine plantings in surrounding areas. Tree sizes range from small timbers to large, with some specimen White oaks on the 30+” diameter ranges and a noted Red Oak in the range of 50” in diameter. The herbaceous layer and soils are intact.

Why HCVF?

High Conservation Value Forests are State Forest areas which due to their unique high conservation values receive added consideration of management activities in order to maintain or enhance these conservation values. These values may be of biological, ecological or cultural significance.

HCVFs are also considered as areas for potential dedication as State Natures Preserves. The Nature Preserve system provides permanent protection for significant natural areas within the state.

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Significant High Conservation Value attributes include:

Exemplary Natural Communities: The proposed area contains high quality examples of three natural communities within the Crawford Upland Section of the Shawnee Hills Natural Region, which are underrepresented in the Nature Preserve system.

- *Dry Upland Forest*
- *Dry-Mesic Upland Forest*
- *Mesic Upland Forest*

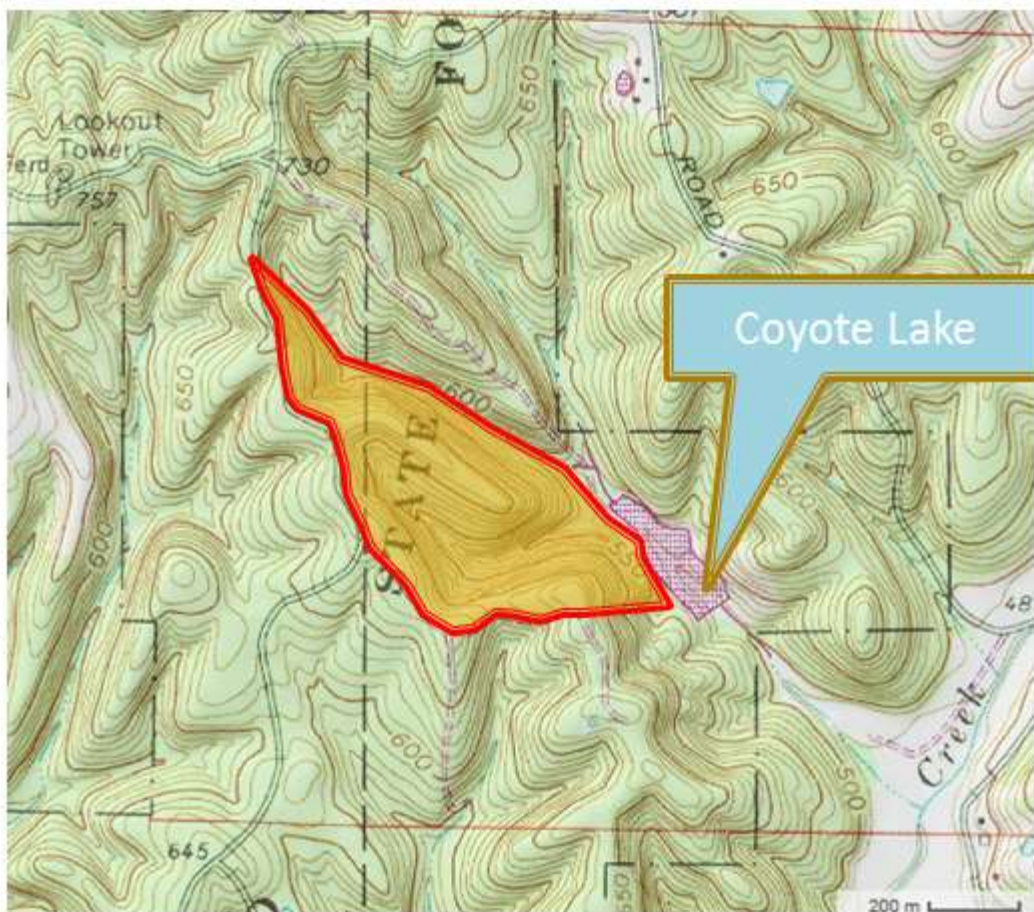


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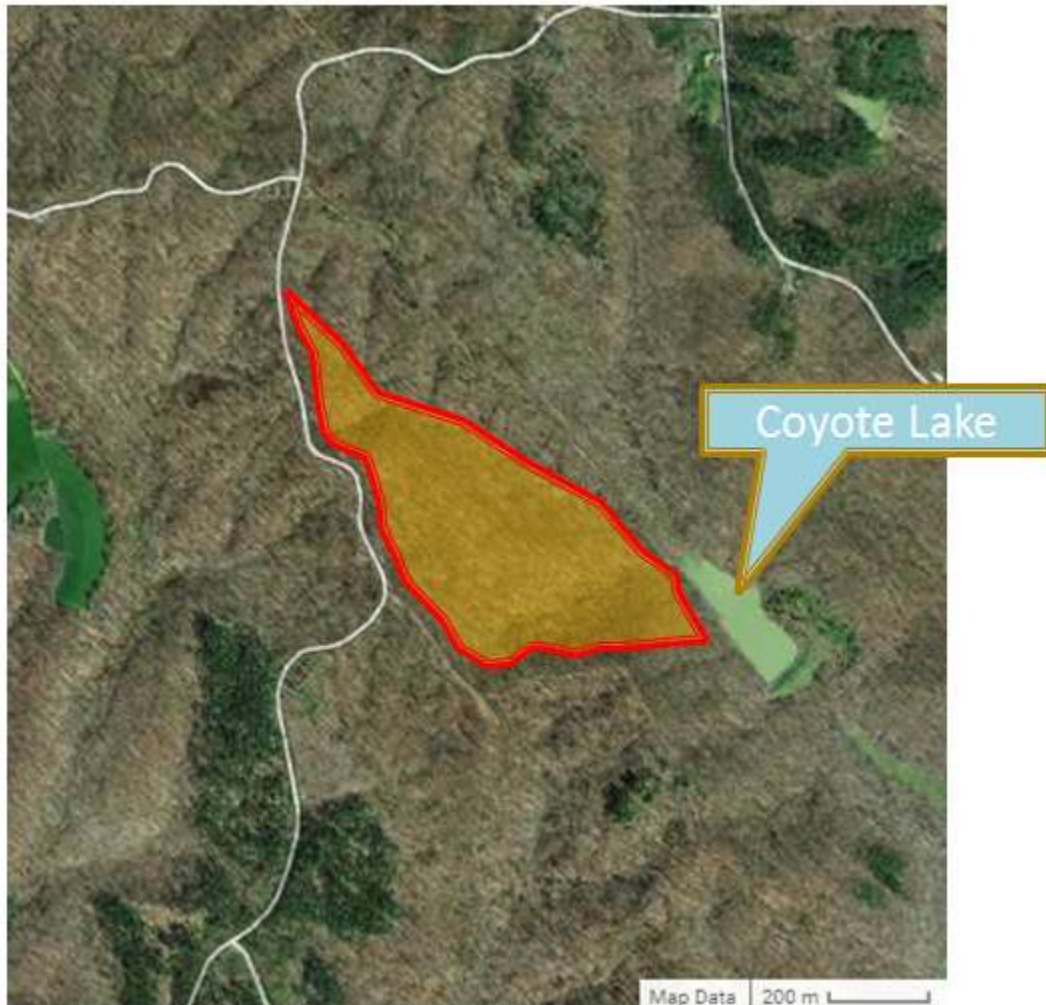
Management Considerations and Strategy

- Design HCVF to include high quality sample areas of dry upland forest, dry-mesic upland forest, and mesic upland forest, including the areas with the noted larger diameter Red and White Oaks.
- Intense focus on controlling invasive species, especially those encroaching on the proposed HCVF.
- Provide for recreation trail corridor(s) in a manner that will not conflict with the noted primary high conservation values of the area.
- Manage to retain and restore quality examples of dry, dry-mesic, and mesic upland forest communities.
- Provide a comparative area reference point to areas managed more extensively for timber production, with adjusted silvicultural and harvest practices managing more specifically for large diameter older forest conditions consistent with the health and sustainability of the three represented native forest communities.



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