



Biological Inventory Report

Larimore Dam Watershed Rehabilitation
Grand Forks County, North Dakota

June 2025

Biological Inventory Report for the NRCS Larimore Dam Rehabilitation Project

Grand Forks County Water Resource District, North Dakota

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Attachment A: Aerial Imagery

Attachment B: NR Natural Heritage Inventory List and Map

1. Introduction

This Biological Technical Report is an evaluation of the existing biological resources that lie within the vicinity of the Larimore Dam, located in Grand Forks County, ND. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is proposing to complete a Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment document to evaluate proposed rehabilitation options for the Upper Turtle River Watershed Dam No. 9 Watershed in the City of Larimore, ND (the Project). The purpose of this biological resource summary is to describe habitats and the potential presence of special status and potential presence of invasive species. An evaluation of habitat for special status species is evaluated for presence in the study area (U-AA).

The habitats, features, and species status categories in this report include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E)
- North Dakota Game and Fish Department habitat focus areas and Species of Conservation Concern
- Invasive/troublesome species
- Migratory birds/bald eagle
- Fish and aquatic species of conservation priority

1.1 Project Location

The proposed rehabilitation area is located 1.5 miles north and 1 mile east of the City of Larimore in Grand Forks County, North Dakota and is part of the Turtle River Watershed. The study area or U-AA is south of 19th Ave NE/U.S. Highway 2, west of 35th St NE, east of 39th St NE, and north of 17th Ave NE. The U-AA is located in the following sections:

- Township 151N Range 55W, Section 01
- Township 151N Range 54W, Section 06
- Township 152N Range 54W, Sections 31, 32
- Township 152N Range 55W, Section 35, 36

The general location of the Project is latitude: 47.94317, longitude: -97.59569 (Figure 1. U-AA Location Map). The U-AA is approximately 748 acres and includes the wildlife and vegetation species and habitats discussed in this report.

The U-AA is located in a rural area surrounded by recreation areas and farmlands to the north. Recreational areas in the vicinity of the study area include Larimore Golf and Country Club in the southeast corner of the study area, Grand Forks County Larimore Dam Recreation Area and Myra

Arboretum along the southern border of the reservoir. Bellevue Cemetery also exists near the center of the study area.

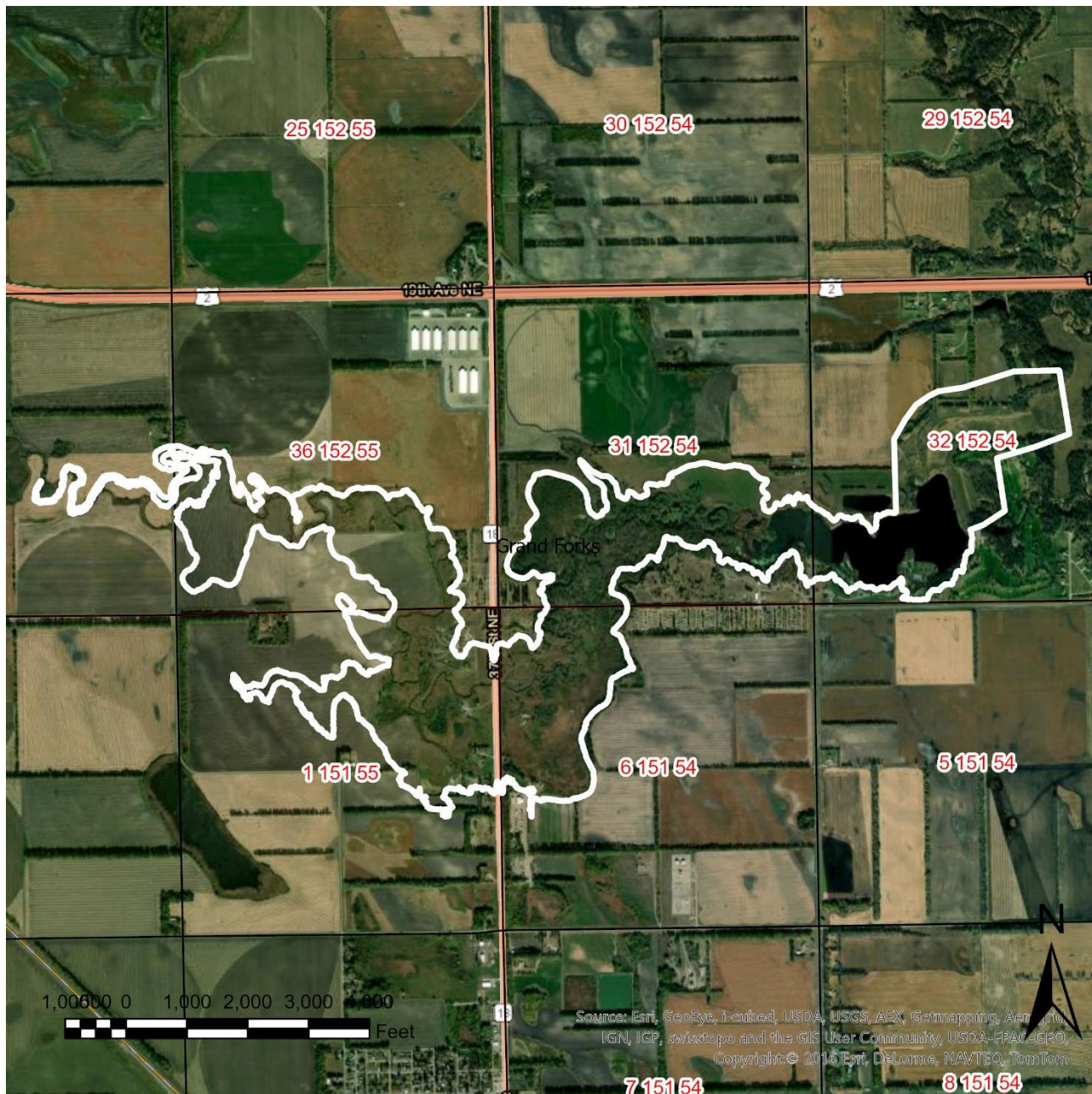


Figure 1 U-AA Location Map, Grand Forks County ND

1.2 Project Description

The Grand Forks County Water Resource District, with aid from the NRCS, is seeking to upgrade the Upper Turtle River Dam No. 9 (referred herein as Larimore Dam) to meet current NRCS and ND State Water Commission (NDSWC) dam performance, design, and safety standards. At risk from a structure failure includes a maximum population of 105 individuals, 50 structures, a state highway, multiple county/township roads, recreational facilities, historic/cultural resources, and degradation of the river, wetland, and riparian habitats. All work for the Project is conducted under the 2000 Watershed Rehabilitation Amendments to the Watershed Protection and flood Prevention Act (PL-566) through USDA-NRCS.

The preferred alternative is a structural rehabilitation of the dam to a high-hazard designation. The alternative consists of construction of an auxiliary spillway channel that is lined with articulated concrete blocks (ACB) to prevent erosion and failure of the spillway. A newly constructed principal spillway riser tower and a principal spillway conduit would be installed by boring and jacking through the existing dam. A rock-lined plunge pool would be constructed for energy dissipation at the new conduit outlet. The existing principal spillway riser tower would be removed, and the existing principal spillway conduit would be abandoned by grouting it closed. The downstream embankment slope would be flattened, and the addition of a new chimney filter and foundation drain would be implemented to address seepage concerns.

2. Methods

2.1 Literature and Resource Review

HDR conducted a desktop review of available sources to identify T&E and species of conservation concern that have the potential to occur in the study area. Information about wildlife presence and species was provided using NDGFD species and habitat data. Noxious weeds and invasive plant species were identified using several state department online resources, including North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) and North Dakota State University documentation of invasive vegetation in the state. Ecoregion and ecosystem types were identified through searching online databases and reviewing maps (US EPA, 2025). History of the dam and recreational information were found on state department websites such as North Dakota Department of Health (NDDH), currently known as the ND Department of Environmental Quality.

Land resource data was collected via visual observation, aerial photography, and ArcGIS United States Geological Survey data collection.

Online resources were utilized in June 2025 for current information. USFWS IPac online consulting was re-initiated on June 13, 2025. ND Game and Fish Department *Draft* 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan (NDGF SWAP, 2025) was reviewed to look for additional species of concern compared with the

2015 Wildlife Action Plan (NDGF et al., 2015). The most current NDGF Fish Survey and Stocking Reports were reviewed (ND Game and Fish Dept, 2025).

The ND Parks and Recreation Department was consulted in regard to any surveys, investigations they have that would apply to Section 12 of PL-566 in June 2025.

2.2 Field Inventory

Vegetation information and overall habitat observations were collected during the field delineation and windshield visits. The wetland delineation was conducted for the Larimore Dam watershed area and took place over the course of several days including June 8 – 11th and June 15-18, 2021. The delineation was conducted by two Western Plains Consulting Inc. staff. Additional wetland inventory was completed in 2022; the Aquatic Resources Report includes the 2022 inventory as an Addendum to Appendix D-9 of the plan/EA. GPS points were collected as part of both wetland delineations. Field checks of upland vegetation were completed in October 2024.

Most of the wetlands were generally undisturbed. Based on aerial photography and on-site visualization, encroachment of trees and shrubs have apparently increased in some of the wetlands during the wetter years since 1993. Five wetlands meeting fen criteria were identified with a combination of on-site data and offsite photography. The river and reservoir were described as Other Waters in Appendix D-9.

Field windshield visits were conducted in September of 2020 and 2024 to get an overview of habitat present within the study area. Photos were taken by HDR in upstream areas of the Larimore Dam watershed which illustrate the different habitat types observed and documented in Section 5. Biological Community Characteristics.

3. General Field Observations

Land cover data in the U-AA (Figure 2) included cultivated cropland (31%), grass/hayland (21%), forest/shrub land (17%), woody wetlands (15%), open water (11%), emergent herbaceous wetlands (4%), and smaller amounts of developed land (USDA NASS, 2023). It was noted during the field visits that some of the cropland in the study area was irrigated, with the dominant irrigated crops being corn and potatoes. Overall, field observations generally coincided with the mapped land cover data. The interspersed and extent of these habitats and the diversity within these habitat types renders the U-AA as potential habitat for several species of concern found in northeastern North Dakota and identified in Section 6. Species and Habitats of Conservation Concern. The reservoir area is popular for campers, boaters, and fisherman through the area. The reservoir receives water from the South Branch Turtle River which enters the U-AA from the west.

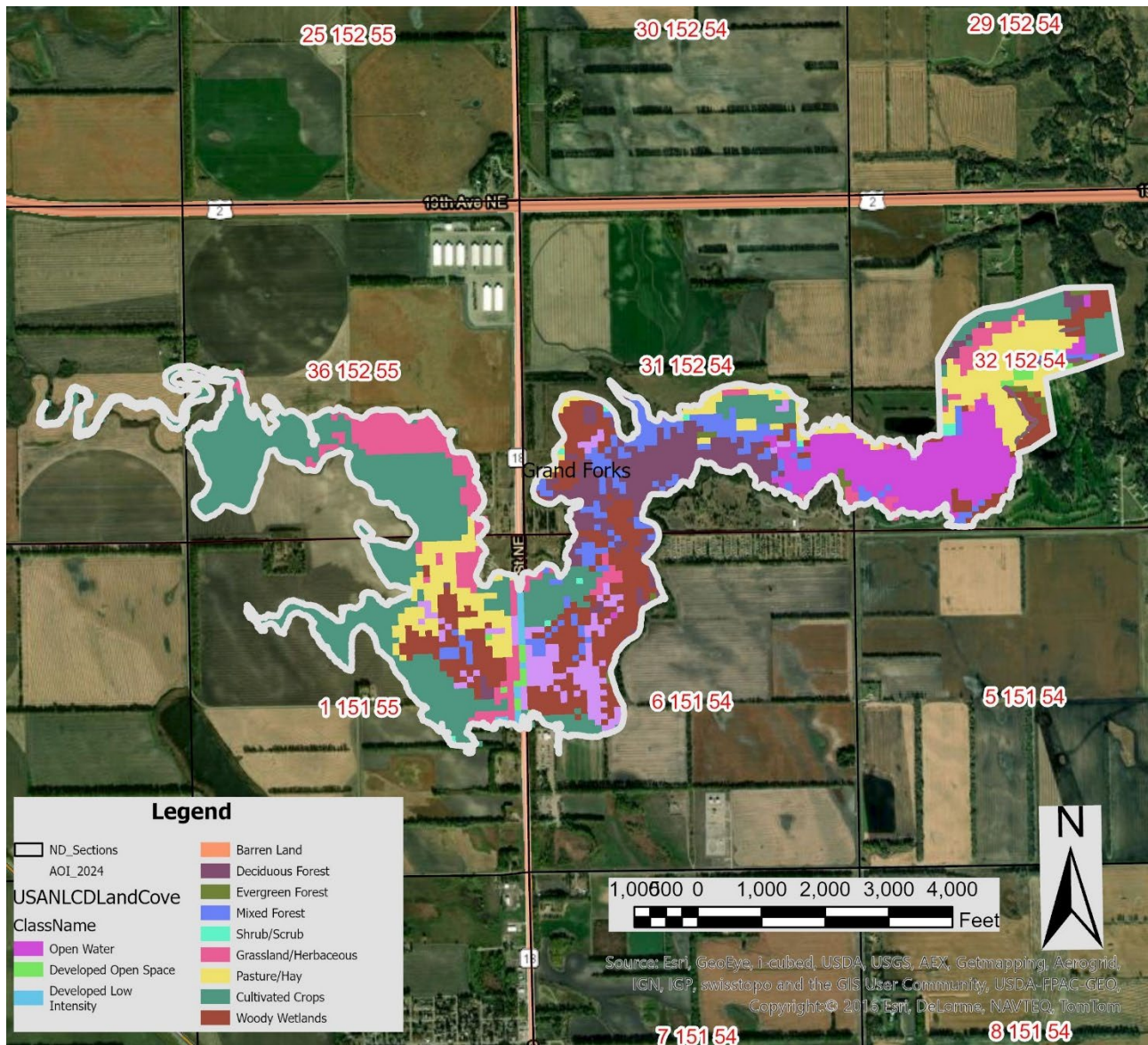


Figure 2 Land Cover within the U-AA (depicted as AOI)

4. Ecological Setting and General Area Description

4.1 Ecoregions

The geological region in which the U-AA is present is the Red River Valley, specifically, the Turtle sub-basin of the Red River basin. The watershed is located entirely within the Level III EPA designated ecoregion of the Lake Agassiz Plain. The Lake Agassiz Plain is composed of thick lacustrine sediments underlain by glacial till. The historic tallgrass prairie has been replaced by intensive agriculture (US EPA, 2025).

The U-AA is within two EPA Level IV sub-ecoregions - Beach Ridges and Sand Deltas to the west and Glacial Lake Agassiz Basin to the east (Figure 3). The Beach Ridge and Sand Deltas are described as follows “the varying relief interrupts the extremely flat and intensively farmed land of the lake Agassiz Plain. The beach ridges appear as parallel lines of sand and gravel formed by wave action on the varying shoreline of glacial Lake Agassiz”. The Glacial Lake Agassiz Basin “is an extremely flat patchwork of cultivated farmland.... Valley streams meander within narrow buffer strips of cottonwood, elm, ash and willow” (US EPA, 2025).

The watershed is a major drainage area consisting of 67.72 square miles. Prairie potholes located within the study area provide natural water management because of their ability to absorb rainfall and snow melt runoff. The watershed is generally characterized by moderate slopes in the west (Nelson County), with slopes flattening in the east (Grand Forks County).

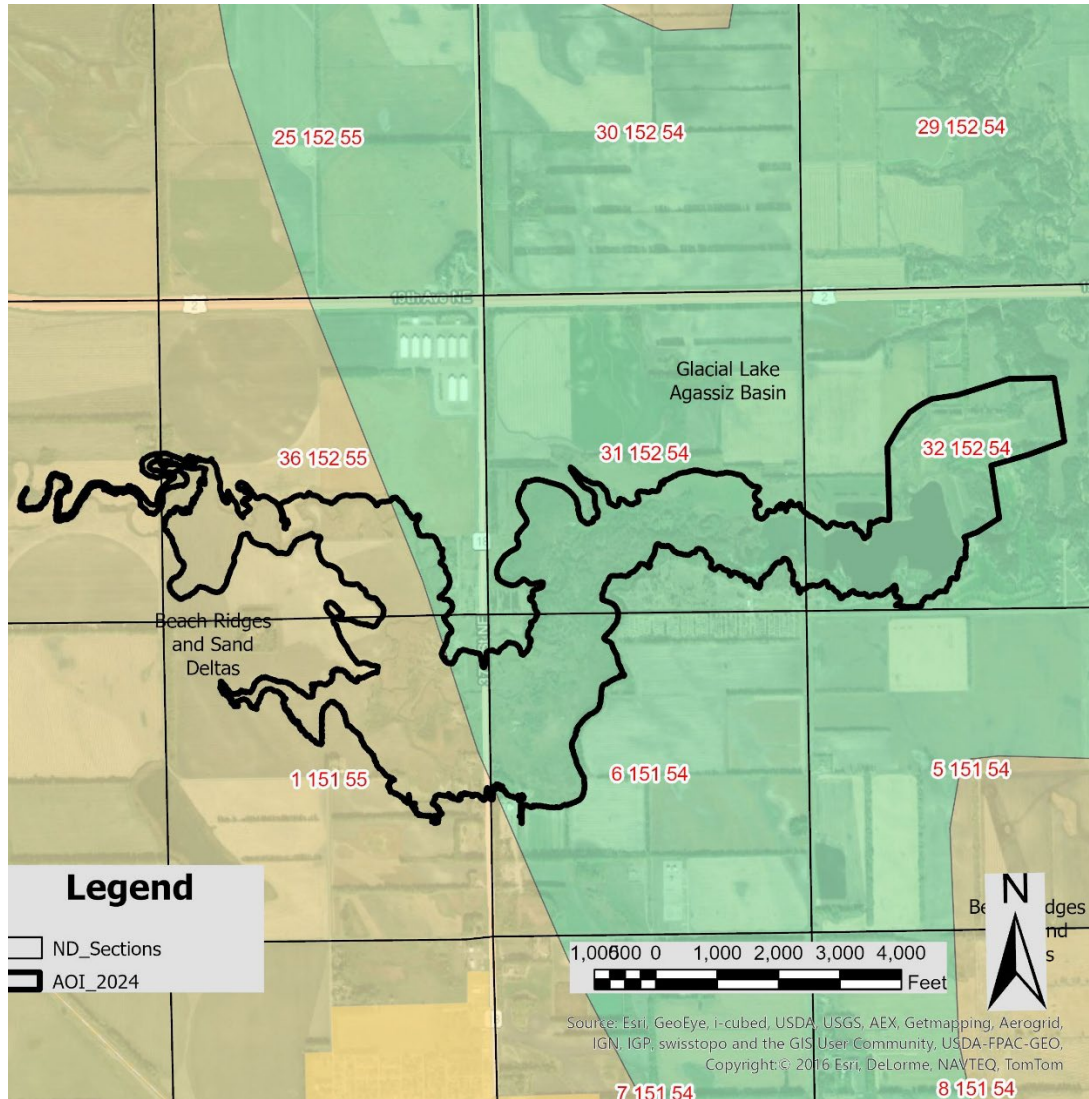


Figure 3 Level IV EPA Sub-Ecoregions

4.2 Climatic Conditions

The climate of the watershed is a cool, temperate, subhumid, continental climate. Summers are pleasantly warm, and although winters are long and cold, there are usually a few mild periods when temperatures move above freezing. About 85 percent of the precipitation falls during the warm-season period, April through October. Mean seasonal snowfall is about 41 inches. The average length of the freeze-free period is about 120 days. The average annual precipitation is 19 inches.

5. Biological Community Characteristics

The following sections describe general habitat types recorded within the U-AA. These habitat categories have corresponding plant community groups that may contain T&E, noxious weeds, and invasive or troublesome species. Wildlife habitat evaluated by use of ArcGIS showed no National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas, or Waterfowl Protection Areas in the U-AA.

5.1 Prairie Habitat and Tame Grassland

Approximately 20% or 150 acres of the U-AA is classified as herbaceous grassland or pasture/hayland. About one half of which is the tamegrass that was seeded on the dam faces and auxiliary spillway. Species on the dam are primarily cool-season introduced grasses such as smooth brome (Bromus inermis) and Kentucky bluegrass (Poa pratensis) (Figure 4). These grasslands and land surrounding the Larimore Dam reservoir are managed by mowing or haying (Figures 5 and 6). The remaining grasslands consist mostly of upland riparian areas that do not appear to be grazed, however which were likely grazed at some point in the recent past. These areas also had strong populations of invasive cool seasons along with some native species including: big bluestem (Andropogon gerardii) and little bluestem (Syzachyrium scoparium), and forbs such as silver-leaf cinquefoil (Potentilla argentea) and white sagewort (Artemisia ludoviciana). Little bluestem and big bluestem are some of the warm season native grasses found in this community. Silver-leaf cinquefoil is a non-native species and white sagewort is both invasive and native.

Much of the study area was presumably cropped and grazed decades ago as indicated by historic aerial photos (Attachment A) and the presence of old fences as well during the field visit.



Figure 4 Tame grassland on auxiliary spillway



Figure 5 Tame grassland on upland area.



Figure 6 Tame grassland in U-AA

5.2 Wetlands and Lakes

Approximately 19% of the U-AA meets wetland criteria, the majority of which is wooded wetlands (15%); the remainder with emergent vegetation (4%). Open water (reservoir) makes up 11% of the U-AA. Wetlands are described in detail in Appendix D-9 Aquatic Resources with Addendum. The wooded wetlands (shrub-scrub) are dominated by *Salix interior* (sandbar willow), *Symphoricarpos* sp. (snowberry), and *Cornus alba* (red osier dogwood). These wetlands typically met fen criteria with organic soil and high-water tables. Herbaceous vegetation commonly found in wetland areas in the study area included narrow-leaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*), hybrid cattail (*Typha glauca*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and many sedge species (*Carex* sp.) (Figure 7).



Figure 7 Emergent Wetland Vegetation in U-AA (cattails and reed canary grass).

Larimore Dam has been classified by the NDDEQ as a Class 2 cool-water fishery capable of supporting natural reproduction and growth of cool-water fishes (such as walleye and northern pike) and associated aquatic biota (ND DEQ, 2020). The fishery that was initially established within the reservoir in 1979 and was stocked by the ND Game and Fish Dept with rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), followed by walleye (*Sander vitreus*) in 1981 and bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) in 1982. The dam is currently managed for a variety of fish species. Recent fish stockings have included northern pike (*Esox lucius*), muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*), and walleye. Fish surveys are conducted annually by the ND Game and Fish Department. Surveys from 2020-2025 commonly find black bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*), black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), and northern pike in abundance. Other species commonly found in lesser extents include walleye, white sucker (*Catostomus commersonii*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*) and largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) (ND Game and Fish Dept, 2025).

5.3 Rivers, Streams, and Riparian Habitat

The U-AA is dissected by the South Branch of the Turtle River. The river flows from the west into the reservoir. The dam outlets into at a point shortly before the confluence with the North Branch of the Turtle River. The Upper Turtle River Watershed flows west to east across Grand Forks County, which then enters the Red River of the North near Oslo, Minnesota. The majority of the U-AA is considered riparian based on slope and proximity to the river (Figures 8 - 12).

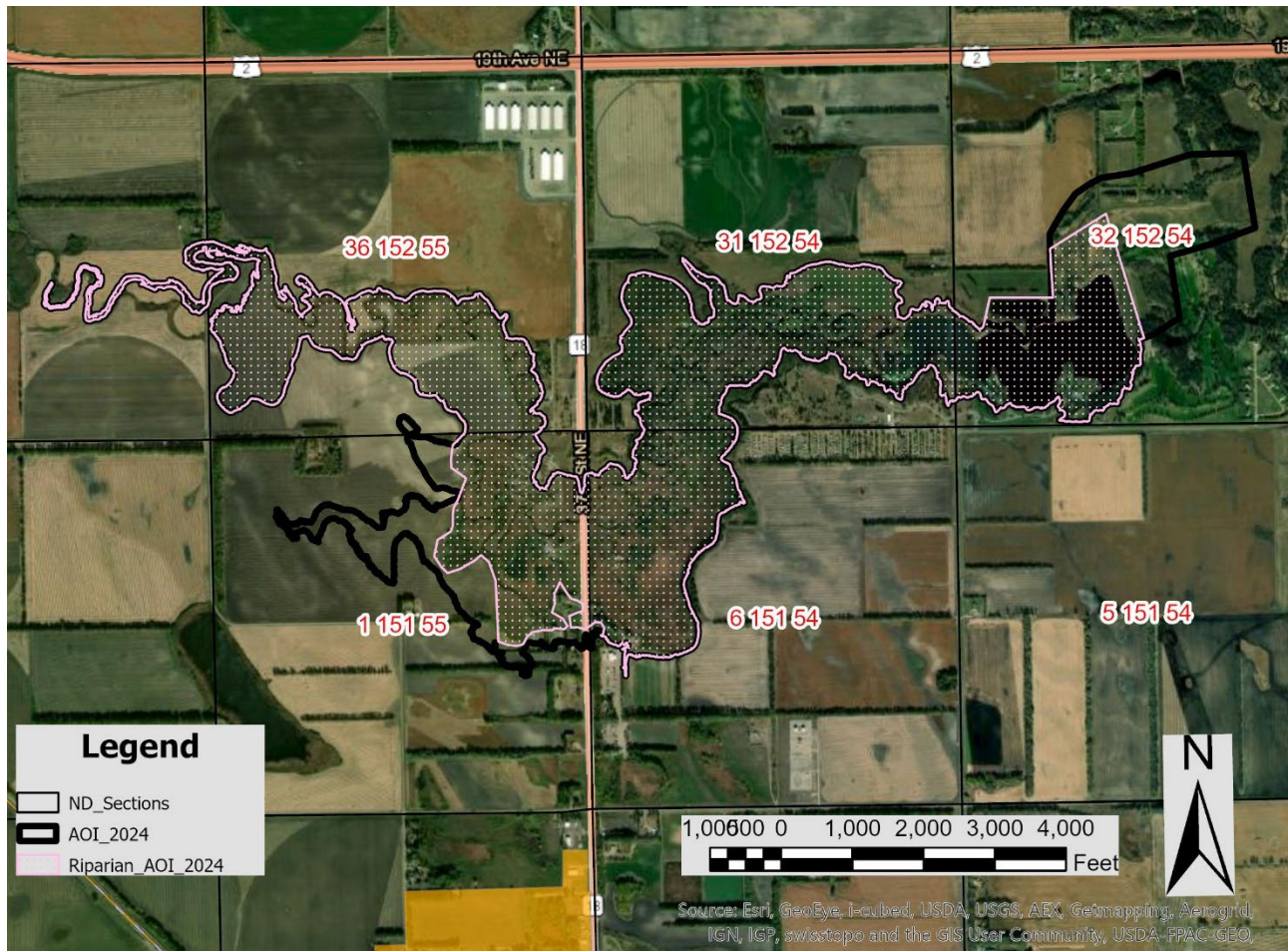


Figure 8 Riparian Areas in the U-AA

Riparian habitat areas in North Dakota are unique habitats in the state and found along rivers and streams. These habitats are known to have frequent flooding and fluctuating water tables (NDGF et al., 2015). Trees and shrubs observed within this habitat and the U-AA include cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), American elm (*Ulmus americana*), green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*), burr oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), basswood (*Tilia americana*), peachleaf willow (*Salix amygdaloides*), choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*), downy hawthorn (*Crataegus mollis*), Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Missouri gooseberry (*Ribes missouriense*), quacking aspen (*Populus termuloides*), chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*), woods rose (*Rosa woodsia*), virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*) and buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*).



Figure 9 Riparian area displaying stream, river and riparian habitat along the bank



Figure 10 Different stream location within the watershed displaying stream, river and riparian habitat



Figure 11. Upper riparian deciduous forest habitat



Figure 12. Upland deciduous forest and herbaceous habitat in study area

5.5 Invasive Species Evaluations

5.5.1 Presence of Listed Invasive Plant Species

Eight invasive and troublesome weeds listed in the state identification document (NDSU Extension, 2023) were observed during the wetland delineation. One county-listed noxious weed species - kochia (*Bassia scoparia*) and three state-listed (NDDA, 2025) noxious weeds - absinth wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) and Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) are present in the U-AA. Other invasive plants found in the U-AA include Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), smooth brome grass (*Bromus inermis*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus*

angustifolia) and common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*). Noxious, invasive and troublesome species are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Noxious, Invasive and Troublesome Plant Species in the U-AA

Common Name	Scientific Name	Noxious Weed List	Habitat Description
Kochia ¹	<i>Bassia scoparia</i>	County	Found in cropland, roadsides, waste areas, overgrazed pasture
Common Milkweed ²	<i>Asclepias syrica</i>		Orchards, waste places, roadsides, some cropland
Absinth wormwood ²	<i>Artemisia absinthium</i>	State	Pasture, rangeland, herb gardens
Field bindweed ²	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>		Dryland farming areas of Great Plains and Western states, cropland, pasture and rangeland
Leafy spurge ²	<i>Euphorbia esula</i>	State	Pasture, rangeland, fallow land, cropland
Poison ivy ²	<i>Toxiodendron rydbergii</i>		Wooded or brushy areas, along streams or lakes
Perennial Sowthistle ²	<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>		Roadside and waste areas, gardens and cultivated fields
Bull thistle ²	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>		Singularly or in small patches in northern and eastern areas of ND in pasture and rangeland
Canada thistle ²	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	State	Infests cropland wildlands; most widespread invasive weed in ND
Smooth Bromegrass	<i>Bromus inermis</i>		Infests prairie and wildlands
Kentucky Bluegrass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>		Infests prairie and wildlands
Reed Canary grass	<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>		Infests riparian areas.
Common Buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>		Infests woodlands
Russian Olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>		Infests grasslands

¹County and City listed noxious weeds (NDDA, 2025)

²ID and Control of Invasive and Troublesome Weeds in ND (NDSU Extension, 2023)

5.5.2 Presence of Invasive Aquatic Species

The ND Game and Fish Department and USGS track and monitor water bodies for Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) (NDGF, 2025). One ANS – Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), is commonly found in the Larimore Dam reservoir during annual fish surveys. Another aquatic species recorded near the study area is the zebra mussel. Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) are known to occur in the Red River and were first discovered there in 2015 (ND Game and Fish Dept, 2025). Although the Red River is further downstream and east of the reservoir, NDGFD sampling efforts noted that zebra mussels were found at the Red River testing location within Grand Forks and thus may have potential to be present in the tributaries feeding or leaving Larimore Reservoir. There were no invasive aquatic species observed during the survey.

6. Species and Habitats of Conservation Concern

The following sections will describe the plant and wildlife special-status species, and likelihood of their presence based on types of habitat present within the study area.

6.1 Threatened and Endangered Species

The results from the USFWS online Information Planning and Conservation System (IPaC) consultation review (USFWS, 2025) found one listed Endangered species – the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and three proposed listed species: Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*) and Western Regal Fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*) proposed Threatened and Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) proposed Endangered. There is proposed critical habitat for the Monarch butterfly. No critical habitat has been designated for the NLEB or the other species. Table 2 includes these species and whether habitat is likely found within the study area.

Table 2 Threatened and Endangered Species Listed for the Study Area According to USFWS IPaC (6/2025)

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Status	Habitat Description	Species or Suitable Habitat within Study Area	Critical Habitat within or near the Study Area	Habitat Condition
Northern Long-Eared Bat (NLEB)	<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	Endangered	When not in hibernation in caves or mines (Oct-April), NLEB roosts typically are in trees (cavities, crevices, or under exfoliating bark).	Yes, Habitat	No	Dead trees and snags present in study area
Monarch butterfly	<i>Danaus Plexippus</i>	Proposed Threatened	Milkweed is the primary host plant of the butterfly, which can typically be	Yes, Habitat	Proposed habitat	Some milkweed identified in the field

			found in North America wherever suitable feeding habitat exists.			near wetlands
Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee	<i>Bombus suckleyi</i>	Proposed Endangered	Meadows and grassland ecosystems. Nest in underground cavities.	Yes, Habitat	No	Grassland lacks flowering species
Western Regal Fritillary	<i>Argynnis idalia occidentalis</i>	Proposed Threatened	Terrestrial – open grassy. Needs large numbers of violet plants – sole larval foodplants	Yes, U-AA included in the current Range Map	Yes	No presence of violets noted.

6.1.1 Northern Long-Eared Bat

The northern long-eared bat was upgraded to an Endangered Listing Status by the USFWS in 2022. The most serious threat to NLEB is white nose syndrome, numbers have declined by 97-100 percent across the species range since 2006 (USFWS, 2025). Other threats include human impacts such as habitat destruction and wind energy-related mortality.

Northern long-eared bats prefer wooded habitat, typically roosting in trees under loose bark in the summer, portions of the fall and spring, and hibernating within caves and mine shafts during cold months. Less common habitat includes structures like barns or sheds.

Habitat for the NLEB is present within the U-AA. Trees exceeding 3" in diameter are present. Dead trees and snags were observed during the wetland delineation. These habitats were found within wetlands, streams, riparian and upland deciduous forest communities. These different community types provide habitat for the different stages of the bat's lifecycle. Upland forest trees with loose bark are used for pup rearing and roosting during summer, and wetlands and waterways for foraging.

Due to the potential for tree removal to exceed 0.5 acres, NRCS received a determination of "May Effect" in June 2025 for the preferred project alternative that involved adjustments on the auxiliary spillway and outlet. Further consultation with USFWS is required to avoid or minimize potential impacts to the NLEB and its habitat.

Management action by USFWS and NDGFD has been taken to protect the species. Recommendations include protecting and restoring riparian habitat, maintaining snags, improving seeps and other wet areas as water sources, protecting nursery and hibernation sites, providing roosting sites in disturbed areas, reducing pesticide use where bats forage, and educating the public about the misconceptions about bats. The USFWS recommends any removal of trees larger than 3" diameter breast height be done during winter months.

6.1.2 Monarch Butterfly

The USFWS proposed to list the monarch butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*) as a Threatened species and to designate critical habitat in the federal register in December of 2024. In March of 2025, the USFWS re-opened the comment period for the proposed rule. There are a number of factors that may be contributing to the decline in monarch numbers, however milkweed habitat on summer grounds is the primary concern (NDGF, 2025). The NDGFD has developed the North Dakota Monarch and Native Pollinator Strategy which takes action to increase monarch populations and strengthen pollinator conservation (NDGF, et al, 2018). However, the plant species remains listed as an invasive and troublesome weed in North Dakota (NDSU Extension, 2023).

Milkweed was present within the study area, although it was not a dominant species. Common milkweed prefers tame grassland, which can be found within the study area. Thus, the monarch butterfly has the potential to be present within the study area in grassland areas containing milkweed.

6.1.3 Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee

The USFWS proposed to list the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) as an Endangered species in the federal register in December of 2024. In March of 2025, the USFWS re-opened the comment period for the proposed rule. This bee is an indicator species for the health of native pollinators. This bee is a social parasite and thus plays a unique role in regulating bumblebee populations. The largest threat to this bee is the decline in host species (bumblebees); other threats listed include loss of habitat and connectivity, and thermal suitability. This bee requires diverse native floral resources (pollen and nectar) for nutrition. The U-AA is lacking in diverse native floral resources and does not appear to be prime habitat for the Suckley bee.

6.1.4 Western Regal Fritillary

The USFWS proposed to list the western regal fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*) as Threatened species in the federal register in August of 2024. The regal fritillary is a large, nonmigratory butterfly found in grassland habitats – including in ND. This species needs large contiguous blocks of native grasslands and violets to support larvae, warm season bunch grasses for shelter, and nectar sources for adults. The largest threat to this fritillary is grassland conversion to agriculture; other threats listed include broad application of herbicides, invasive and woody plant encroachment, and periodic disturbances (fire, haying, and mowing). The U-AA is largely included within the USFWS current range map; however the desired vegetation (native bunch grasses and violet species) seems to be lacking.

6.2 NDGFD Landscape Components and Focus Areas

The NDGFD has identified several landscape components and focus areas for the state in their State Wildlife Action Plan (NDGF et al., 2015). Two landscape components are relevant to the U-AA: 1) Tallgrass Prairie in the Red River Valley and 2) Rivers, Streams and Riparian Areas. The entire U-AA is located within the tallgrass prairie grassland landscape. Two NDGFD focus areas are relevant to the U-AA: the Sand Deltas and Beach Ridges area and the Turtle River as one of several Red River tributaries (Figure 13).

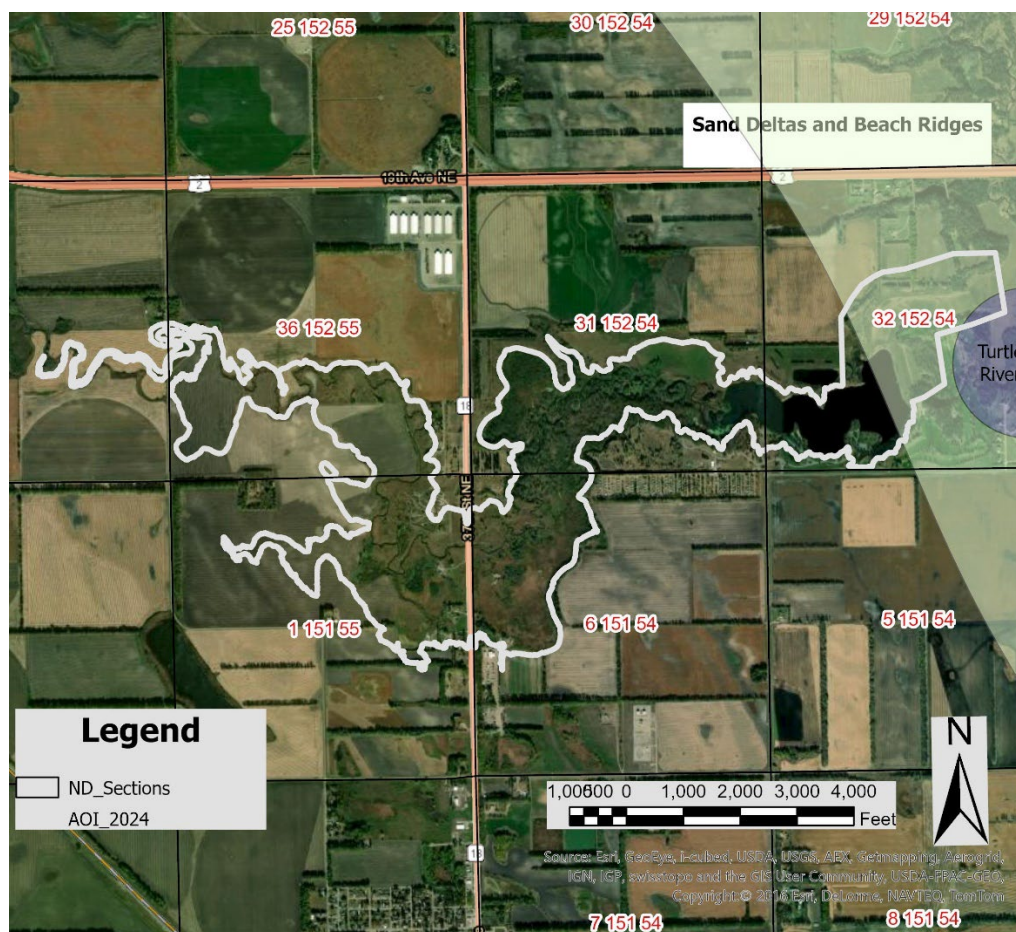


Figure 13 NDGFD Landscape Focus Areas Relevant to the U-AA (AOI)

Consultation with the ND Parks and Recreation Department resulted in identification of two vegetative communities they deem “Significant Ecological Communities” present in the U-AA: Dogwood-willow Thicket (*Cornus sericea-salix (bebbiana, discolor, petiolaris)* thicket) and Bur Oak Upland Woodland (*Quercus macrocarpa/prunis virginiana* northern ravine woodland).

6.3 NDGFD Species of Conservation Priority

The NDGFD has listed species of concern for the state’s wildlife conservation strategy, which are considered “species of conservation priority” and are included in the 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) (NDGF et al., 2015). Level I species are the highest level of conservation priority due to declining status and are the most vulnerable species. This is followed by Level II moderate level conservation priority and Level III which are believed to be peripheral in North Dakota. In total there are 49 species applicable in the U-AA including 18 birds, 2 reptiles, 9 mammals, 11 fish, 5 freshwater mussels, and 4 insects (Table 3). The NDGFD is in the process of updating the SWAP. The Draft 2025 is available online and was reviewed for this report. While a few species were removed from the 2015 report, many species were added under their updated classification system.

The 2025 draft ND SWAP report divides species into two categories – Species of Greatest Information Need (SGIN) and Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Overall, the NDGF has recognized a need for information particularly for aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates – 57 appear to be potentially applicable to the U-AA. Information needs for other species (SGIN) not previously included in the 2015 plan, include 8 land birds, 4 mammals, 7 amphibians and 1 fish that may have suitable habitat in the U-AA. The SGCN also emphasized invertebrates, with 28 potentially present. Several birds were also added including 13 shore birds, 1 land bird and 1 waterfowl bird. Other species of SGCN were 3 bats and 1 amphibian that may find suitable habitat in the U-AA.

The USFWS listed T&E species, northern long-eared bat and monarch butterfly, fall under Level I species. All of the migratory birds from the IPac were also included in the ND SWAP as Level I or II species except for the bird species Lesser Yellowlegs, Chimney Swift and Western Grebe. Overall, there was good correlation with the federal and state species of concern or priority (Table 3).

Table 3 NDGFD Species of Conservation Priority in the U-AA

Species	NDGF Priority Level (2015 SWAP)	NDGF Habitat Focus Area
American Bittern (<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Yellow Rail (<i>Coturnicops noveboracensis</i>)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Marbled Godwit ¹ (<i>Limosa fedoa</i>)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Franklin's Gull ¹ (<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>)	I	None
Black-billed Cuckoo ¹ (<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Red-headed Woodpecker ¹ (<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Grasshopper Sparrow ¹ (<i>Ammodramus bairdii</i>)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Nelson's Sparrow (<i>Ammodramus nelsoni</i>)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Plains Hog-nosed Snake (<i>Heterodon naicus</i>)	I	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Big Brown Bat (<i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Little Brown Bat (<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Northern Long-eared Bat ¹ (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>)	I	Red River and Tributaries

Northern Pearl Dace (Margariscus nachtriebi)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Creek Heelsplitter (Lasmigona compressa)	I	Red River and Tributaries
Monarch Butterfly ¹ (Danaus Plexippus)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Regal Fritillary ¹ (Speyeria idalia)	I	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Northern Pintail (Anas acuta)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Northern Harrier ¹ (Circus cyaneus)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
American Kestrel (Falco sparverius)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Sharp-tailed Grouse (Tympanuchus phasianellus)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Greater Prairie Chicken (Tympanuchus cupido)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Willet ¹ (Tringa semipalmatus)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Short-eared Owl (Asio flammeus)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Le Conte's Sparrow ¹ (Ammodramus leconteii)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Bobolink ¹ (Dolichonyx oryzivorus)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Western Meadowlark (Sturnella neglecta)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Pygmy Shrew (Sorex hoyi)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Richardson's Ground Squirrel (Urocyon richardsonii)	II	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Burbot (Lota lota)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Northern Redbelly Dace (Chrosomus eos)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Silver Chub (Moxostoma valenciennesi)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Trout-perch (Perca omiscomaycus)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Threeidge (Amblema plicata)	II	Red River and Tributaries

Wabash Pigtoe (Fusconaia flava)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Black Sandshell (Liquimia recta)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Pink Heelsplitter (Potamilus alatus)	II	Red River and Tributaries
Dakota Skipper (Hesperia dacotae)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Powershiek Skipperling (Carisma powershiek)	II	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Northern Prairie Skink (Plestiodon septentrionalis)	III	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Arctic Shrew (Sorex arcticus)	III	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Plains Pocket Mouse (Perognathus flavescens)	III	Sand Deltas & Beach Ridges and Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Eastern Spotted Skunk (Spilogale putorius)	III	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley)
Gray Fox (Urocyon cinereoargenteus)	III	Tallgrass Prairie (Red River Valley) and Red River and Tributaries
Largescale Stoneroller (Campostoma oligolepis)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Hornyhead Chub (Nocomis biguttatus)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Pugnose Shiner (Notropis anogenus)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Blacknose Shiner (Notropis heterolepis)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Carmine Shiner (Notropis percobromis)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Finescale Dace (Phoxinus neogaeus)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Creeper (Strophitus undulatus)	III	Red River and Tributaries
Bald eagle ¹ (Haliaeetus leucocephalus)	(removed in 2025 draft)	Red River and Tributaries
Lesser Yellowlegs ¹ (Tringa flavipes)	Added in 2025 Draft	
Chimney Swift ¹ (Chaetura pelagica)	Added in 2025 Draft	
Western Grebe ¹ (Aechmophorus occidentalis)	Added in 2025 Draft	

¹USFWS species identified in consultation of U-AA, (Migratory Birds of Conservation Concern and T&E Species)

6.4 ND Park & Recreation Dept Natural Heritage Inventory

The ND Parks and Recreation Department was consulted in June 2025 regarding any surveys and investigations they have that would apply to Section 12 of PL-566. They provided a map (Attachment B) and list of rare animal and plant species and significant ecological communities within and adjacent to the U-AA (Table 4).

Table 4 ND Park & Rec Heritage Inventory Rare Species and Significant Ecological Communities

State Scientific Name	State Common Name	Type	Location
Chrosomus eos ¹	Northern Redbelly Dace	Rare Fish	Adjacent and just downstream of U-AA
Cypripedium parviflorum	Small Yellow Lady's-slipper Orchid	Rare Plant	Within U-AA
Cornus sericea – salix (bebbiana, discolor, petiolaris) thicket	Dogwood – willow Thicket	Significant Community	Within U-AA
Quercus macrocarpa/prunus virginiana northern ravine woodland	Bur Oak Upland Woodland	Significant Community	Within U-AA

¹NDGFD Level II Species of Conservation Priority

The Wetland Inventory confirmed the presence of the Dogwood-willow Thicket and Bur Oak Upland communities. Small yellow lady's-slipper orchid is designated by the ND Park and Recreation as a Level II Plant Species of Priority (ND Natural Heritage Program, 2013). The orchid was not observed in the field during the wetland inventory. The Northern Redbelly Dace was not present in recent fish surveys by the NDGFD.

6.4 Birds of USFWS Conservation Priority

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) makes it unlawful to “take, possess, import, export, transport, sell, purchase, barter, or offer for sale, purchase, or barter, any migratory bird, or the parts,” nests, or eggs of such a bird except under the terms of a valid federal permit.” Provisions are in place for the protection of migratory birds, parts, nests, eggs, or products. Under the MBTA, “migratory birds” includes migratory birds native to the U.S. The law provides protections at any time of the year, not just during migration.

North Dakota is located within the Central Flyway, one of the major migration paths in North America. Migratory birds can occur within the U-AA or in the vicinity during spring and fall migration or even use

the area for breeding or nesting during summer months. Being that the Project is located within the Prairie Pothole Region, the study area has additional importance to waterfowl species.

The USFWS IPaC Migratory Bird list for the U-AA was generated in June 2025 and included 13 bird species. All the birds listed are considered Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), except for the Bald Eagle, which is not considered a BCC, but warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from development activities. The report provides a bird's relative probability of presence during a year in the U-AA. Birds from the IPaC list are summarized in Table 4.

Table 5 USFWS List of Migratory Birds Potentially Present in the U-AA

Species	Type	Breeding	Probability of Presence (months)
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	Raptor	Dec 1 – Aug 31	Jan, March, April, June, July, Sept - Dec
Black-billed Cuckoo (<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>)	Landbird	May 15 – Oct 10	June 7 – August 15
Bobolink (<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>)	Landbird	May 20 – July 31	May 15 – June 7
Chimney Swift (<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>)	Landbird	Mar 15 – Aug 25	May 7 – June 7
Franklin's Gull (<i>Leucophaeus pipixcan</i>)	Waterbird	May 1 – Jul 31	May 1 – May 7
Grasshopper Sparrow (<i>Amodramus savannarum perpallidus</i>)	Landbird	Jun 1 – Aug 20	Jul 1 – Jul 7
Le Conte's Sparrow (<i>Ammospiza leconteii</i>)	Landbird	Jun 1 – Aug 15	June 7 – Jul 7
Lesser Yellowlegs (<i>Tringa flavipes</i>)	Shorebird	Elsewhere	April 15 – April 22
Marbled Godwit (<i>Limosa fedoa</i>)	Shorebird	May 1 – Jul 31	Jun 7 – Jun 22
Northern Harrier (<i>Circus hudsonius</i>)	Raptor	Apr 1 – Sep 15	Jun 7 – Jul 7
Red-headed Woodpecker (<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>)	Landbird	May 10 - Sep 10	Jun 17 – Jun 22
Western Grebe (<i>aechmophorus occidentalis</i>)	Waterbird	Jun 1 – Aug 31	May 15 – May 22
Willet (<i>Tringa semipalmata</i>)	Shorebird	Apr 20 – Aug 5	Jun 7 – June 22

The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (16 USC § 668-668c) provides for the protection of bald and golden eagles by prohibiting the taking, possession, and commerce of such birds, except under certain specified conditions. USFWS issues permits to take, possess, and transport bald and golden eagles. The bald eagle is a Level II species with primary habitat in Grand Forks County. The bald eagle's habitat consists of large rivers and lakes or wetlands bordered with mature stands of trees, or a single large tree, such as cottonwood (NDGF et al., 2015). Due to the ideal habitat for the bald eagle, there is the potential for nests in the project vicinity, though none were noted during field visits.

6.5 Native Fish and Aquatic Species of Conservation Priority

Fish distribution in the Red River of the North and tributaries was documented by the USGS in 1995 (USGS et. al, 1995). Twenty-three native fish species were present in the Turtle River at that time. Of these, two were identified as Level II Species of Conservation Priority in the 2015 SWAP: Silver chub and Trout-perch. Neither species have been identified during recent fish surveys in the reservoir or in the Turtle River in the U-AA. Native species identified in recent Larimore reservoir surveys include: Black Bullhead, Northern Pike, Walleye, White Sucker and Yellow Perch (ND Game and Fish Dept, 2025). Four NDGF mussel Species of Conservation Priority have the Turtle River identified as in their historic or secondary range. The Pink Heelsplitter includes the Turtle River in its primary range (NDGF et al., 2015).

7. Conclusions

The field survey and desktop evaluation identified several major habitat types following NDGFD categories that include habitats: prairie, tame grassland, upland deciduous forest, wetlands (wet prairie, marsh) and lakes, and rivers, streams, and riparian zone. The ND Department of Parks and Recreation also noted two Significant Ecological Communities within the U-AA: Dogwood-willow Thicket and Bur Oak Upland Woodland.

The U-AA is present in the Turtle River sub-basin of the Red River Valley geological region which strongly influences the biological resources. The watershed is located entirely within the Level III EPA designated ecoregion of the Lake Agassiz Plain, which was historically dominated by tall grass prairie. The U-AA is within two EPA Level IV sub-ecoregions - Beach Ridges and Sand Deltas to the west and Glacial Lake Agassiz Basin to the east (Figure 3). The NDGFD has identified two wildlife habitat focus areas which are relevant to the U-AA: the Sand Deltas and Beach Ridges area and the Turtle River (as one of several Red River tributaries) (Figure 13) in their State Wildlife Action Plan (NDGF et al., 2015). Land cover data in the U-AA (Figure 2) included cultivated cropland (31%), grass/hayland (21%), forest/shrub land (17%), woody wetlands (15%), open water (11%), emergent herbaceous wetlands (4%), and smaller amounts of developed land (USDA NASS, 2023). The grassland habitat is of fair quality as it is dominated by non-native species. Higher quality habitat is present in the other cover types such as the woody wetland areas which are largely composed of native and desirable species. Desirable riparian habitat adjacent to the river is also composed of native tree and shrub species. The reservoir, while artificial in the landscape, never-the-less provides significant open water habitat for fish, invertebrate, mammal and bird species.

The wetland delineation identified the potential presence of fourteen noxious, invasive or troublesome plant species (Table 1). Noxious weeds are a minor vegetative component in the U-AA, however invasive grass species such as smooth brome grass and Kentucky bluegrass inhibit the growth of more desirable grassland species in the upland areas.

The ND Game and Fish Department and USGS track and monitor water bodies for Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) (NDGF, 2025). One ANS – Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), is frequently found in the Larimore Dam reservoir during annual fish surveys. Another aquatic species recorded near the study area is the zebra mussel. Zebra mussels (*Dreissena polymorpha*) are known to occur in the Red River and were first discovered there in 2015 (ND Game and Fish Dept, 2025). Although the Red River is further downstream and east of the reservoir, NDGFD sampling efforts noted that zebra mussels were found at the Red River testing location within Grand Forks and thus may have potential to be present in the tributaries feeding or leaving Larimore Reservoir.

The results from the USFWS online Information Planning and Conservation System (IPaC) consultation review (USFWS, 2025) found one listed Endangered species – the Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) (*Myotis septentrionalis*), two proposed Threatened species: Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Western Regal Fritillary (*Argynnis idalia occidentalis*), and one proposed Endangered species: Suckley's Cuckoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus suckleyi*). Also, there is proposed critical habitat for the Monarch butterfly. No critical habitat has been designated for the NLEB or the other species. Formal consultation is ongoing with the NLEB at the time of this report. Other than the wetland delineation (Appendix D-9), formal biological surveys were not conducted in the U-AA. No federally listed threatened and endangered species or Level I plant, animal or fish/aquatic species of conservation priority were observed during the wetland delineation, windshield surveys or incidentally observed when staff visited the site.

The USFWS IPaC Migratory Bird list for the U-AA was generated in June 2025 and included 13 bird species. All the birds listed are considered Birds of Conservation Concern (BCC), except for the Bald Eagle, which is not considered a BCC, however it warrants attention because of the Eagle Act or for potential susceptibilities in offshore areas from development activities. The listed birds prefer varying habitats including prairie, woodland and water habitats. Most of the migratory birds are passing through and their probability of presence is short – averaging 2.5 weeks and ranging from April 15th to July 7th. The exception being the black-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*) which has a long probability of presence ranging from June 7th to August 15th. Black-billed cuckoo habitat is abundant in the U-AA as it prefers brushy margins, openings in woodlands, thickets of small trees or shrubs and uses riparian habitat, all of which are present. The cuckoo is primarily insectivorous.

Within the U-AA, the existing habitats are suitable for many of the species of conservation concern. In total there are 49 NDGFD species identified in the 2015 SWAP applicable in the U-AA including 18 birds, 2 reptiles, 9 mammals, 11 fish, 5 freshwater mussels, and 4 insects (Table 3). The NDGFD is in the process of updating the SWAP; the Draft 2025 SWAP as written will change how species are categorized and appears to have an increased focus on insects and invertebrates. The ND Natural

Heritage Inventory has identified two rare species within or adjacent to the U-AA: the Small Yellow Lady's Slipper and the Northern Redbelly Dace.

Approximately 67 % of the U-AA is well suited for providing wildlife habitat – including the open water, forest and shrub dominated riparian areas. The tame grass and cropland areas are of lesser quality habitats, however, do provide wildlife food and cover. Overall, the U-AA supplies a significant area of higher quality, largely native habitat types, which are important to many species of concern or of biological importance to the state and nation.

8. References

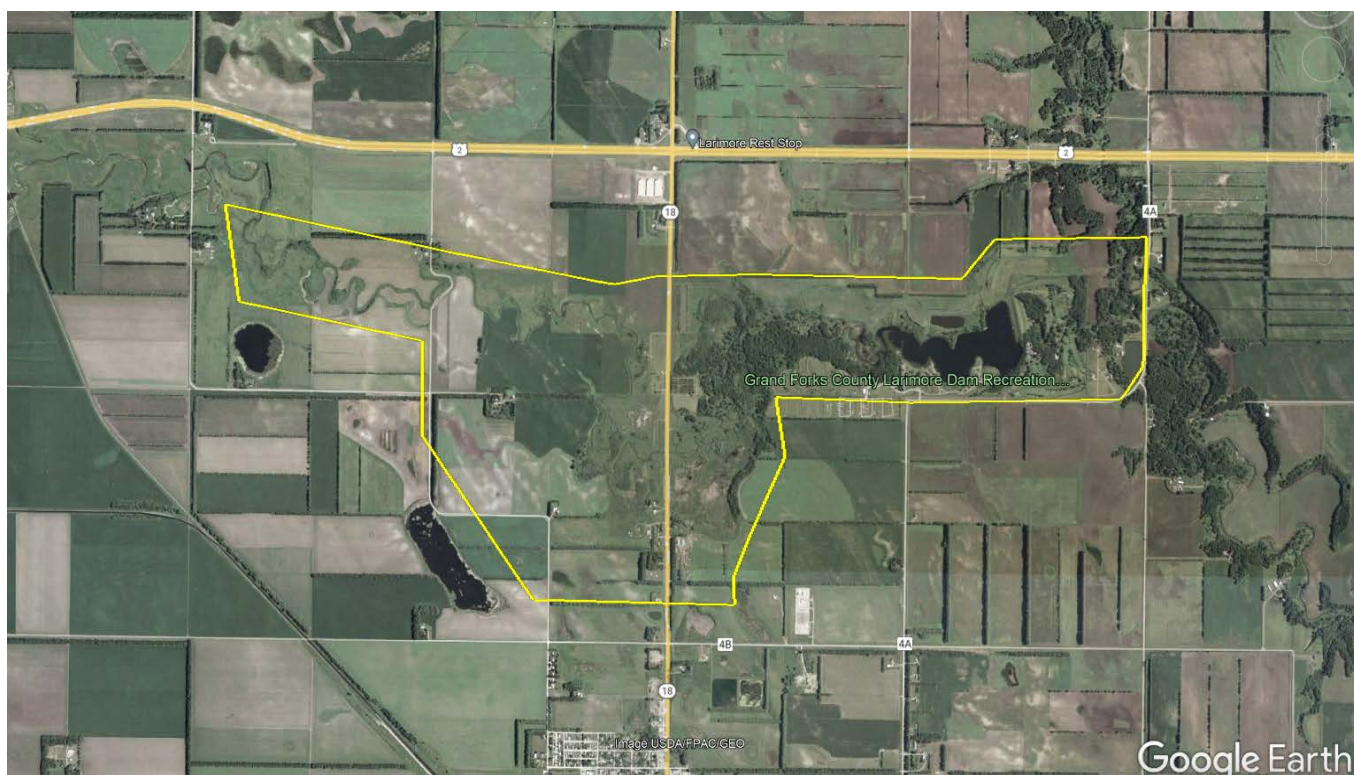
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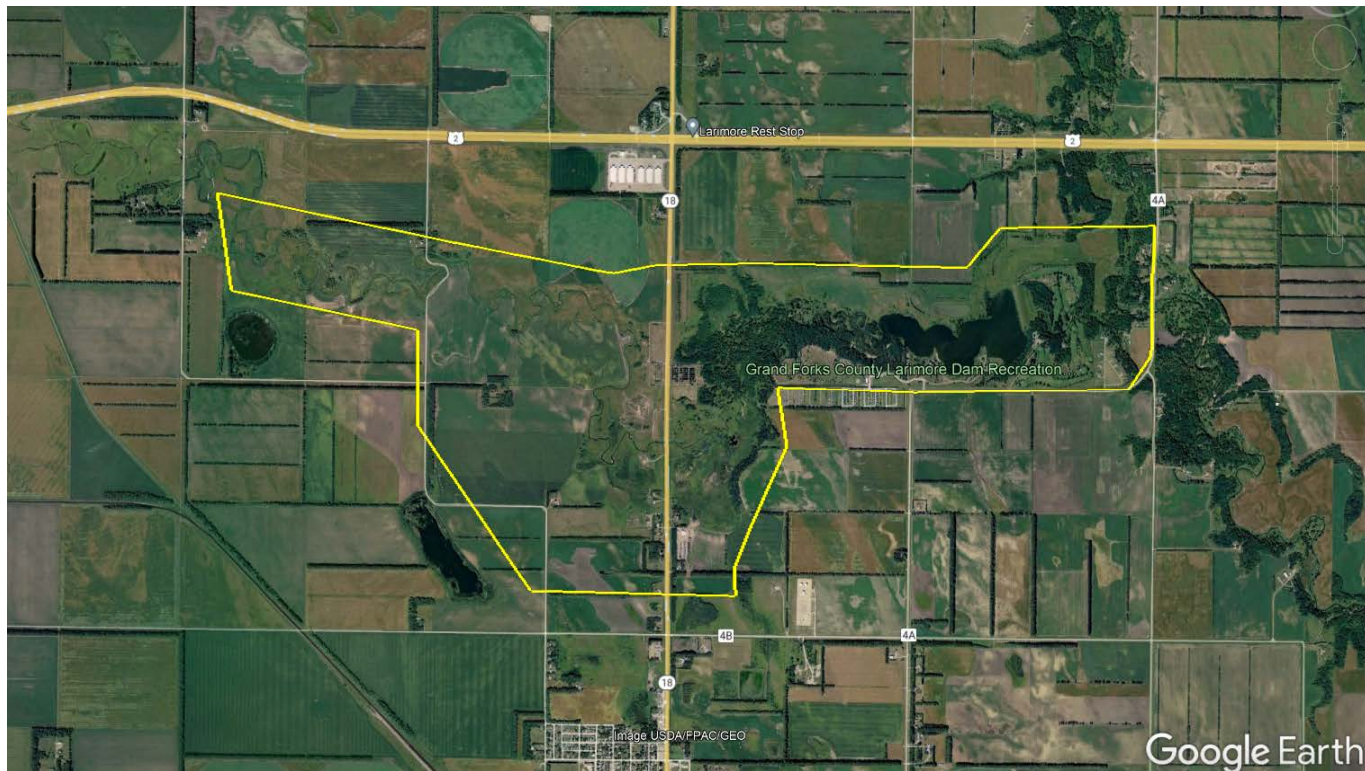
Attachment A
Aerial Photography



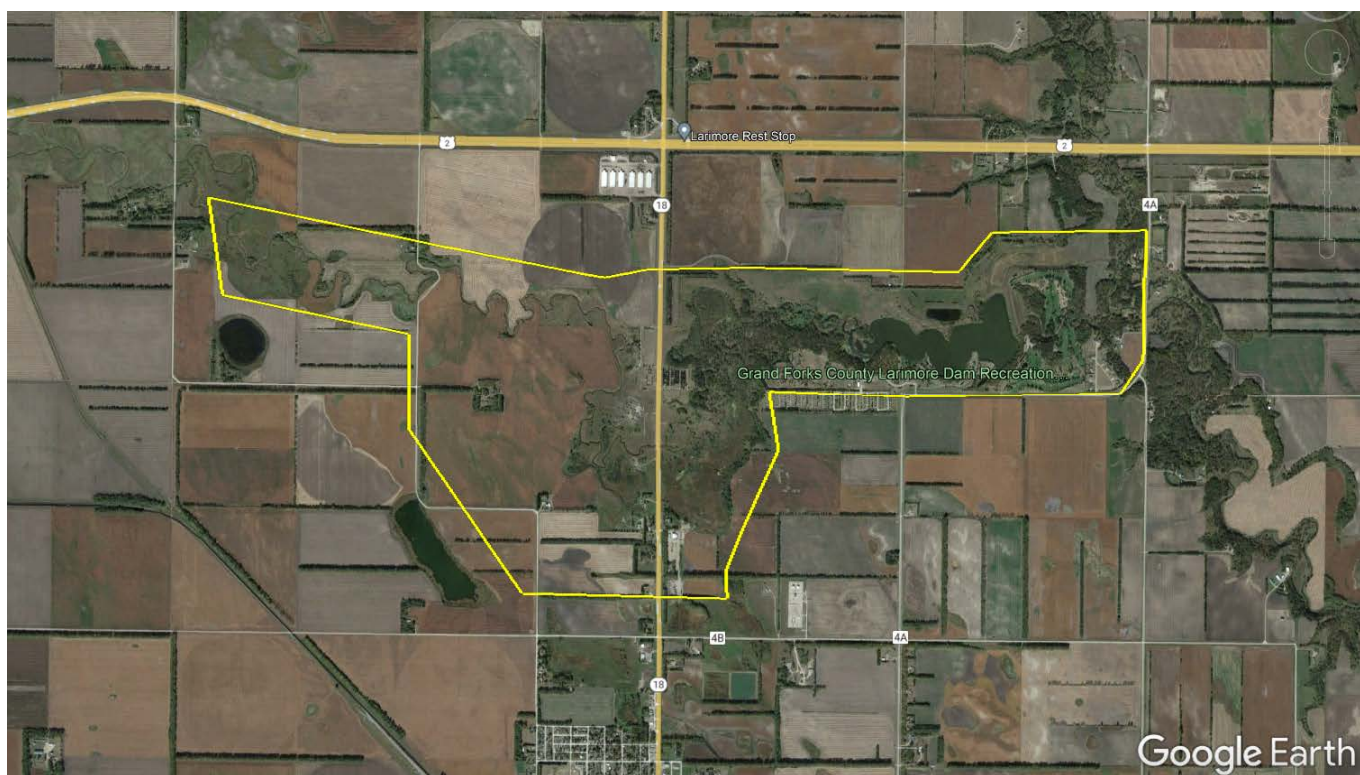
1997 Aerial



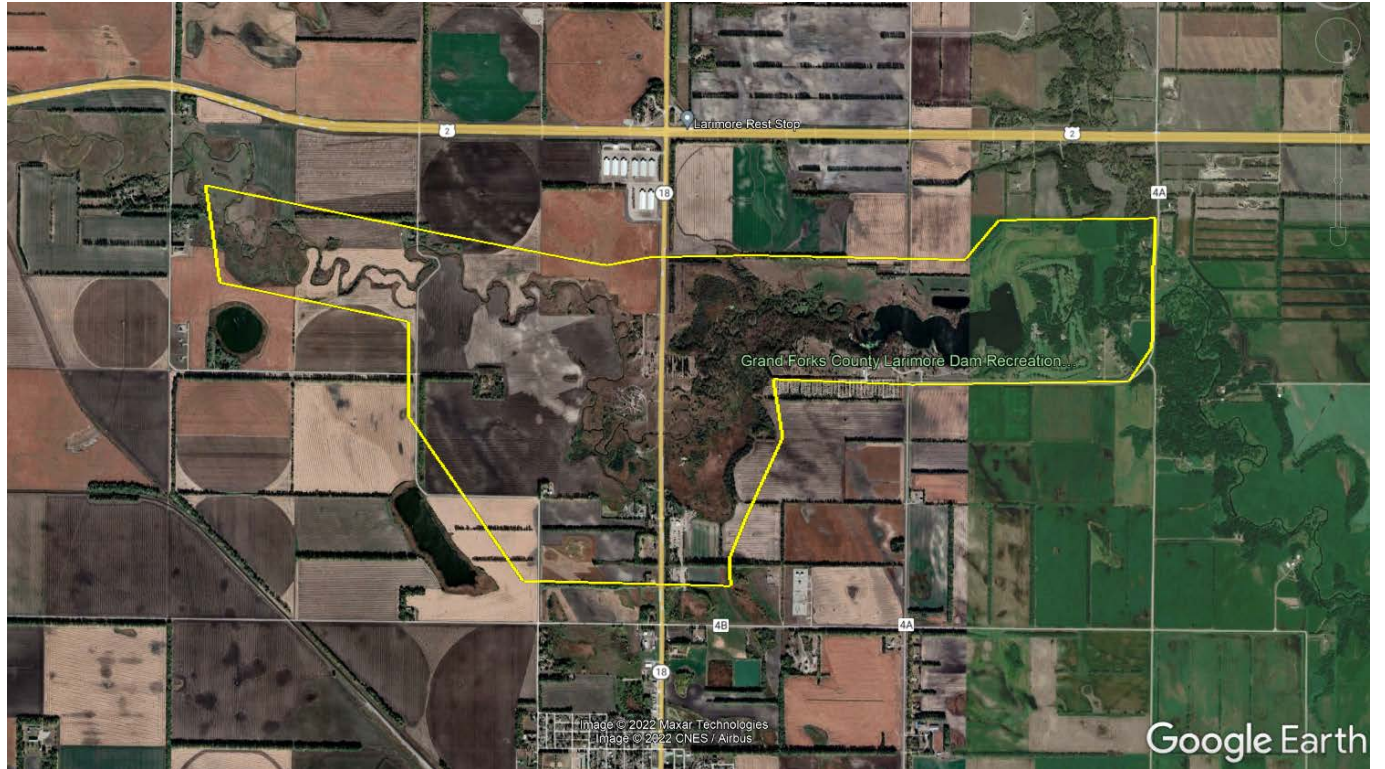
2003 Aerial



2009 Aerial



2015 Aerial



2020 Aerial

Attachment B: NDPR Natural Heritage Inventory List

North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory
Rare Animal and Plant Species and Significant Ecological Communities

State Scientific Name	State Common Name	State Rank	Global Rank	Federal Status	Township Range Section	County	Last Observation	Estimated Representation Accuracy	Precision
Calamagrostis stricta - carex sartwellii - c. praegracilis wet meadow	Brackish Wet Meadow	S2S3	GNR		152N054W - 28	Grand Forks	1983-08-07		S
Caprimulgus vociferus	Whip-poor-will	SU	G5		151N055W - 12; 151N054W - 06; 151N054W - 07; 151N055W - 13; 151N055W - 02; 151N054W - 18; 151N055W - 14; 151N055W - 01; 151N055W - 11	Grand Forks	1912-06		M
Chrosomus eos	Northern Redbelly Dace	S4	G5		152N054W - 32; 152N054W - 33; 152N054W - 30; 152N054W - 28; 152N054W - 29; 151N054W - 05; 151N054W - 03; 152N054W - 34; 151N054W - 04; 152N054W - 31; 151N054W - 06	Grand Forks	1979-06-12		M
Cornus sericea - salix (bebbiana, discolor, petiolaris) thicket	Dogwood-willow Thicket	S2S3	GNR		152N054W - 31	Grand Forks	1986-07-06		S
Cypripedium parviflorum	Small Yellow Lady's-slipper Orchid	S2	G5		152N054W - 31; 151N055W - 03; 152N055W - 36; 152N054W - 28; 152N055W - 24; 152N055W - 15; 152N054W - 19; 152N054W - 33; 152N054W - 22; 152N055W - 12; 151N054W - 01; 152N054W - 32; 152N054W - 06; 152N054W - 25; 152N054W - 14; 152N055W - 32; 152N054W - 09	Grand Forks	1961-06-12		G
Quercus macrocarpa/prunus virginiana northern ravine woodland	Bur Oak Upland Woodland	S3	GNR		152N054W - 31; 151N054W - 06	Grand Forks	1986-07-06		S
Seiurus noveboracensis	Northern Waterthrush	S4	G5		151N054W - 04; 152N054W - 09; 151N054W - 17; 152N055W - 13; 152N055W - 22; 151N055W - 02; 151N054W - 01; 152N055W - 12; 152N054W - 22; 152N054W - 33; 151N055W - 01; 152N055W - 15; 152N055W - 24; 152N055W - 14; 152N055W - 27; 151N055W - 03; 152N055W - 36	Grand Forks			G
Spartina pectinata - calamagrostis stricta - carex spp. herbaceous vegetation	Wet Prairie	S2S3	GNR		152N054W - 28	Grand Forks	1983-08-03		S

North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department

North Dakota Natural Heritage Inventory

