

## Michipicoten Island Regional Plan

This is one of twenty Regional Plans that support implementation of the Lake Superior Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (Strategy). The Strategy, prepared and overseen by the Lake Superior Partnership, contains information and 62 sub-strategies to provide guidance to restoring and protecting biodiversity ([www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca)).

Regional Plans are intended to be adaptive documents that support and respond to local conservation efforts and contribute to lakewide biodiversity goals. To contribute an update to this Regional Plan, please contact: [greatlakes-grandslacs@ec.gc.ca](mailto:greatlakes-grandslacs@ec.gc.ca).

### 4. Michipicoten Island



The region contains 83 islands including the most isolated freshwater island in world, Caribou Island, and Lake Superior’s third largest island, Michipicoten Island. Aboriginal history, abandoned mines, an old fishing station, shipwrecks, and lighthouses reflect the historic use of this area. The good ecological condition of the region supports at least two rare species and communities ranked vulnerable,

imperiled, or critically imperiled<sup>2</sup>. At least 10 species and communities of conservation concern have been documented in this regional unit, including Shortjaw Cisco and Deepwater Sculpin<sup>3</sup>. Michipicoten Island is home to an abundant population of Woodland Caribou; the southernmost population in Ontario benefits from a remote roadless environment free from the influence of predators such as wolves and bears. The majority of this region is water containing important habitat and spawning grounds for a variety of aquatic species.

Report Card <sup>1</sup> , Overall Grade: A		
Conservation Target	Grade	Conservation Target Notes
Nearshore	A	The provincially rare Pygmy Whitefish is found in the eastern waters of Lake Superior, around Michipicoten Island.
Embayments and Inshore	A	The healthy Lake Trout population strain, spawning around Michipicoten Island, is used for rehabilitative stocking in other areas of Lake Superior.
Islands	A	Human disturbance is limited on Michipicoten and Caribou Islands, mainly due to their rugged terrain and remote location in Lake Superior.
Coastal Wetlands	A	The Quebec Harbour Wetland Complex is essentially undisturbed and is provincially significant due to its excellent condition, isolation, size, diversity, and exposure to the climatic effects of Lake Superior.
Coastal Terrestrial Habitats	A	The shores of Michipicoten Island provide habitat for arctic-alpine vascular plants.
Tributaries & Watershed	A+	Michipicoten Island is roadless, and 87% forested. An abundant beaver population is flooding some areas.

<sup>1</sup> Report Card grades are intended to denote relative (within the Lake Superior basin) condition/health and stresses for each biodiversity target in the region based on available condition and stress indices. A more detailed explanation and expert comments on grades are available in the Lake Superior Biodiversity Conservation Assessment – Volume 2: Regional Unit Summaries.”

<sup>2</sup> Data included here were provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Copyright Queen’s Printer for Ontario (2012).

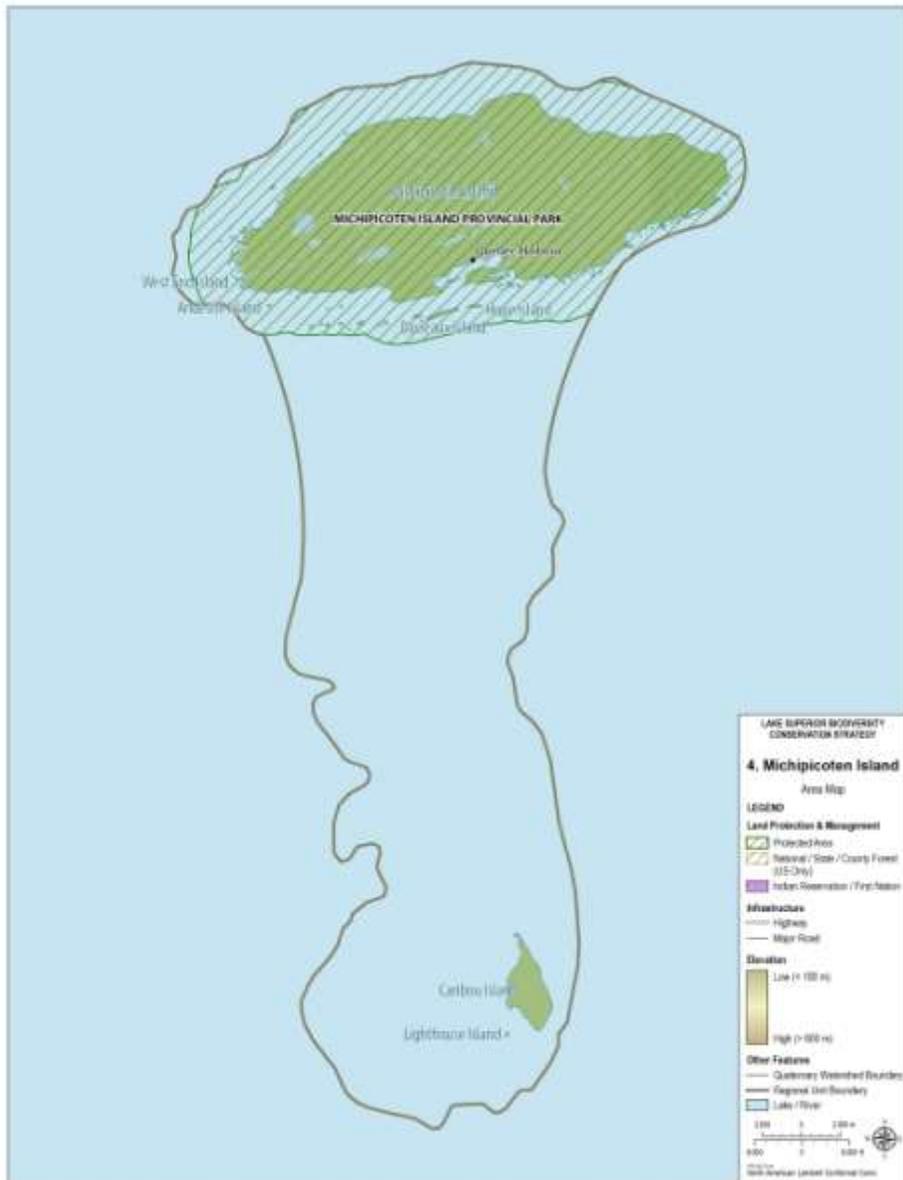
<sup>3</sup> For a full list please see the corresponding [regional unit chapter](#) in Vol. 2 of the Lake Superior Biodiversity Conservation Assessment.

## Overview of Conservation Opportunities

The landmass of this regional unit is largely (96%) afforded protections by provincial park designation, with a small number of private cottages/camps on the south shore. The abandoned Quebec Mine site on the northwest shore of Michipicoten Island is rich in cultural resources relating to exploratory copper mining from 1846 to 1959. The sand beaches are sought out by some recreational users and are the most sensitive feature to recreational use. There is the potential for increased visitation which may create pressures on sensitive

ecosystems or species. Due to its isolated location and corresponding low use, the Michipicoten Island Provincial Park has many attributes typically associated with larger wilderness class parks. For this reason, and for reasons of visitor safety, the park is not actively promoted. This is significant as the park is “non-operating”, meaning there is no park staff to assist visitors or to ensure compliance with park regulations.

Caribou Island is also part of this regional unit and is the most remote island in Lake Superior. The Island is owned by a private foundation. It is also designated as a provincially-significant Earth Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). Caribou Island is the only sand dune island in the Great Lakes, and is virtually undisturbed.



## Conservation Actions

The Lake Superior community has a strong an ongoing history of taking action to restore and protect the lake’s extraordinary biodiversity. Actions are occurring at all scales - from national, state, provincial, tribal, First Nations, Métis, and municipal programs, to lakewide initiatives and local projects by communities, businesses, and households. Some important habitats currently have a conservation designation with a corresponding management strategy, and active supervision of these areas is essential to sustaining biodiversity. The table below presents next steps for conserving and protecting biodiversity in this regional unit. Other existing plans relevant to conserving habitats and species in this region should continue to be implemented. A list of existing plans relevant to the next steps presented below is presented at the end of this document.

### Regional Plan Next Steps

There is some variation among Regional Plans in how future actions from existing plans were incorporated into this document, based on advice from the implementers of those plans in the region. Similarly, implementation approaches vary greatly among regional units. The Lake Superior Partnership serves an important role in facilitating cooperation among agencies to support on-the-ground action. Priority implementation actions developed through the Partnership are identified in the Lake Superior LAMP, Lake Partnership committee work plans, and agency specific action plans.

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy <sup>j</sup>
Lakewide Strategy 1: <b>Restore and protect a system of representative, high quality habitats.</b>			
<i>Common Actions For All Region Plans</i>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain or enhance areas where large blocks of land with natural cover exist or could be expanded.</li> <li>- Preserve sites that have high species diversity and/or critical habitat for fish or wildlife.</li> </ul>	Multiple	1.1
Protect the habitats of biological and cultural significance with special consideration of the Quebec Mine site.	Conduct environmental and cultural heritage assessments of mine workings and shafts at the historic Quebec Mine site to determine feasibility of inclusion in Michipicoten Park boundary; include assessments of geological features including shore caves, stacks and arches along the northwest shore.	Coastal Terrestrial Habitats	1.9
Lakewide Strategy 2: <b>Manage plants and animals in a manner that ensures diverse, healthy, and self-sustaining populations.</b>			

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy <sup>i</sup>
<i>Common Actions For All Region Plans</i> - Review lists of regional species of conservation concern and identify gaps in monitoring, planning, and related conservation actions.		Multiple	2.7
Achieve and maintain genetically diverse self-sustaining populations of Lake Trout that are similar to those found in the lake prior to 1940.	Conduct acoustic and telemetry studies to pattern Lake Sturgeon movements within and outside Goulais and Batchawana Bays.	Embayments and Inshore	2.3
	Identify and confirm protection of Lake Trout spawning habitats near Quebec Harbour, around The Breeders islands, and along the north shore of Michipicoten island from the Quebec Rocks eastward to the Claybanks and Bonner Head Bay.	Embayments and Inshore	2.3
Restore and protect self-sustaining Lake Whitefish populations at or above abundances observed in 1990-99.	Conduct annual surveys to determine Lake Whitefish population status and trends.	Nearshore	2.3
	Identify and confirm protection of Lake Whitefish spawning habitat in Quebec Harbour and along the southwest shore of Caribou Island.	Nearshore	2.3
Restore and protect self-sustaining Woodland Caribou populations.	Prepare wildlife management guidelines for Michipicoten Park's Woodland Caribou population in conjunction with the Caribou Conservation Plan and habitat regulation.	Coastal Terrestrial Habitats	2.3
<b>Lakewide Strategy 3: Reduce the impact of existing aquatic invasive species and prevent the introduction of new ones.</b>			
<i>Common Actions For All Region Plans</i> - Control high priority infestations of aquatic and terrestrial species, including continued control of Sea Lamprey.		Multiple	3.2
Prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species.	Explore prohibition of the use or possession of live bait fish on inland waters in Michipicoten Island Provincial Park.	Multiple	3.9
	Develop rapid response protocols to deal with new invasives.	Multiple	3.1
	Develop and implement education program for public, local tourist operators, and commercial fishermen on how to prevent the introduction and spread of AIS.	Multiple	3.11

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy <sup>i</sup>
Lakewide Strategy 4: <b>Adapt to climate change.</b>			
<i>Common Actions For All Region Plans</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incorporate climate change model projections and adaptive management measures into natural resource management plans.</li> </ul>		Multiple	4.1
Lakewide Strategy 5: <b>Reduce the negative impacts of dams and barriers by increasing connectivity and natural hydrology between the lake and tributaries.</b>			
<i>Common Actions For All Region Plans</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Address barriers to fish passage created by dams, hydroelectric generation, or misplaced or wrong sized culverts.</li> <li>- Maintain flows and water levels on managed streams, rivers, and lakes that emulate natural conditions (i.e., magnitude, duration, timing, and pattern).</li> </ul>		Tributaries and Watersheds	5.2
Lakewide Strategy 6: <b>Address other existing and emerging threats that may impact important habitat or native plant and animal communities.</b>			

## Regional Plan Development

Regional Plans are informed by a technical assessment, including maps of: 1. Coastal and Watershed Features; 2. Condition, and; 3. Important Habitat Sites. This information is available at: [www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca).

The public and stakeholders who are connected to these areas provided input to the *Next Steps* in each Regional Plan. Oversight was provided by a Steering Committee from the Lake Superior Partnership. All input was considered and incorporated whenever possible and when relevant to a lakewide biodiversity conservation targets and threats. To contribute an update to this Regional Plan, please contact: [greatlakes-grandslacs@ec.gc.ca](mailto:greatlakes-grandslacs@ec.gc.ca).

### Existing Plans

Other existing plans for conserving habitat and species in this region should continue to be implemented, including but not limited to:

- Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserve Policy direction for the protection, development and management of provincial parks, conservation reserves and their resources
- Ontario Parks 2014, Michipicoten Island Preliminary Management Statement (draft document)
- Great Lakes Fishery Commission - A lake sturgeon rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior; A Brook Trout rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior; A rehabilitation plan for walleye populations and habitats in Lake Superior; Fish-Community Objectives for Lake Superior.
- Ontario's Provincial Fish Strategy: Fish for the Future
- Lake Superior Aquatic Invasive Species Complete Prevention Plan
- Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan, 2012

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<sup>i</sup> To access the full Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, other Regional Plans and supporting technical information and maps, please visit the project website: [www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca](http://www.natureconservancy.ca/superiorbca)