Little Pic 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).

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.

5. Little Pic

Many iconic Lake Superior photos have been taken from the majestic Slate Islands where Woodland Caribou roam the shores generally unconcerned by human visitors. The current viability ranking of Woodland Caribou, however, is unknown. At least 53 species and communities of conservation concern have been documented in this regional unit, including Peregrine Falcon and Northern Brook Lamprey[1,2]. Once extirpated from the area, Lake Sturgeon have been observed again off the Prairie River. One of the two sources of Lake Trout brood stock used for rehabilitation efforts in the Lake Superior basin is from this region. The coast is home to a number of communities including Marathon, Pays Platt First Nation, Terrace Bay, and Rossport. Campsites dating back to an estimated five hundred years have been found, signifying the long history of First Nations and Métis peoples in the area. Shipping and rail transport, energy production, mining, forestry, and pulp and paper are all part of the area's economic and cultural heritage. The Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern and the Jackfish Bay Area of Concern in Recovery are located here. Today 29% of the coast is in a park or protected area, including the 2014 purchase by the Thunder Bay Field Naturalists of the Terrace Bay Nature Reserve, 10.5 kilometres of high-quality shoreline and 15 small islands.

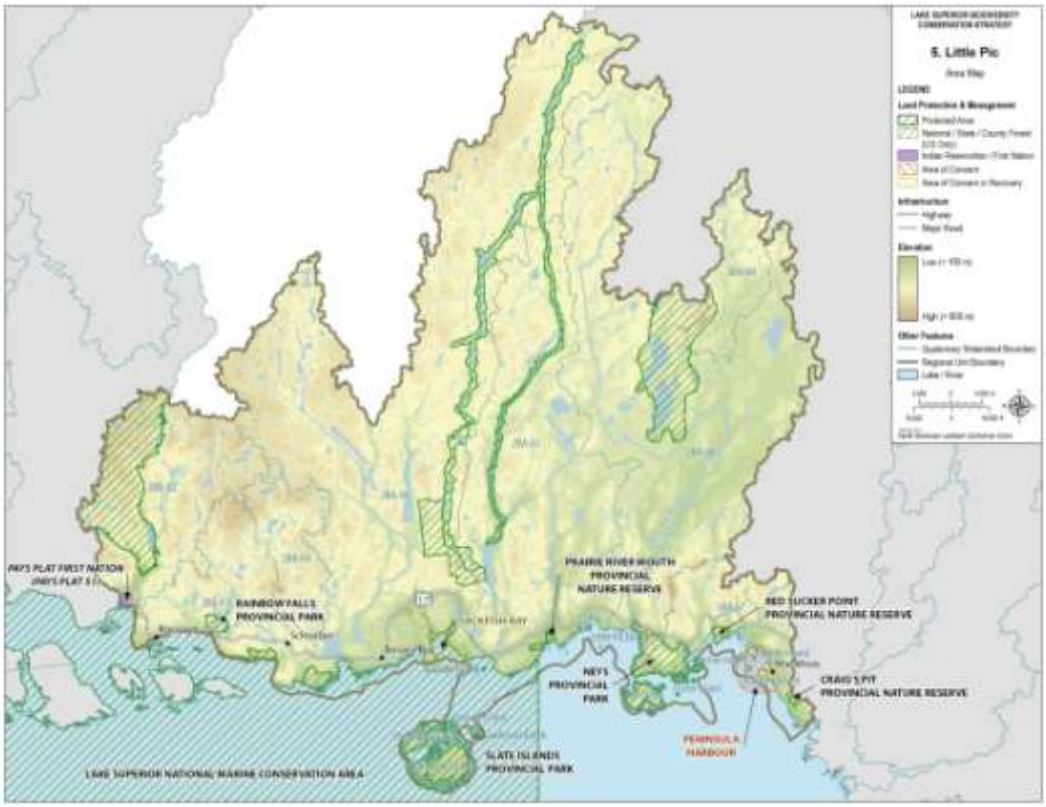
Report Card[3], Overall Grade: B		
Conservation Target	***Grade***	***Conservation Target Notes***
Nearshore	**C**	Remediation of contaminated sediment in Peninsula Harbour has recently been completed and monitoring of recovery is underway.
Embayments and Inshore	**B**	Once established, the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area will include a large portion of the region's embayments, inshore, and nearshore waters.
Islands	**A**	The largely natural condition of the 317 islands along the coast makes an impressive sight, and provides excellent habitat for water and migratory birds.
Coastal Wetlands	**B**	Wetlands make up only one percent of the coastal zone, making them a very unique and important habitat for the region.

[1] Data included here were provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Copyright Queen's Printer for Ontario (2012).
[2] For full list please see the corresponding regional unit chapter in Vol. 2 of the Lake Superior Biodiversity Conservation Assessment.
[3] 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 conditions 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.

Coastal Terrestrial Habitats	**A+**	Ninety-four percent of the coastal zone is under natural cover, dominated by rocky shores, cliffs, and cobble beaches.
Tributaries & Watershed	**B**	Dam development, including the diversion of northern flowing waters south into Lake Superior (i.e. Long Lac diversion), reflect a long history of logging and hydro-power production in the area.

Overview of Conservation Opportunities

Ongoing management of numerous parks and protected areas in the region have secured habitat for many species of conservation interest. These areas collectively cover 11% of the entire land area and 29% of the coast. These areas include Neys Provincial Park, Slate Islands Provincial Park, Lake Superior North Shore Conservation Reserve, Schreiber Channel Provincial Nature Reserve, and many others. In addition, conservation of a significant portion of the waters of the region will be secured with the establishment of the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA). Parks Canada Agency and their partners plan to continue to increase and share their knowledge of species and habitats that are present in the area and to consider applying special protections for vulnerable areas of high conservation value. Continued monitoring of completed projects in the Jackfish Bay Area of Concern in Recovery and the Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern should confirm that recovery is ongoing and provide updates on the status of the environment. There are opportunities to assess and rehabilitate some selected existing barriers between the tributaries and the lakes with regard to increase habitat connectivity and natural hydrology. Current and future explorations and developments of wind power, hydro power, and mining in the region can continue to pursue excellence in environmental sustainability and conservation of biodiversity.



Conservation Actions

The Lake Superior community has a strong and ongoing history of 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. 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 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**[i]
Lakewide Strategy 1: **Restore and protect a system of representative, high quality habitats.**			
Common Actions For All Region Plans - Maintain or enhance areas where large blocks of land with natural cover exist or could be expanded. - Preserve sites that have high species diversity and/or critical habitat for fish or wildlife.		Multiple	1.1
Protect the habitats of biological significance with special consideration of important fish spawning sites in the tributaries.	Determine the highest quality cold water tributary habitats in the region, and prioritize potential action to restore, protect, or connect them.	Tributaries & Watersheds	1.2
Restore and delist the Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern.	Monitor recovery of benthic community and aquatic vegetation within Jellicoe Cove in area where sediment remediation has taken place.	Multiple	1.11

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy[i]
Restore and delist the Jackfish Bay Area of Concern in Recovery.	Monitor the recovery of benthic community and sediment quality in Jackfish Bay.	Embayments and Inshore	1.11
Protect habitats of biological and cultural significance in the Little Pic regional unit.	Further develop the inventory and assessment of priority areas for conservation in this regional unit.	Embayments and Inshore	1.9
	Inventory islands within the Little Pic regional unit that contain historic records of rare habitats.	Islands	1.9
	Establish special protection designations at sites identified significant to biodiversity, where appropriate and necessary.	Multiple	1.6
Lakewide Strategy 2: **Manage plants and animals in a manner that ensures diverse, healthy, and self-sustaining populations.**			
Common Next Steps For All Region Plans - Review lists of regional species of conservation concern and identify gaps in monitoring, planning, and related conservation actions.		Multiple	2.7
Protect and restore self-sustaining Brook Trout populations and other cold water species.	Assess the status and distribution of Brook Trout populations in the Little Pic regional unit.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
	Identify and protect terrestrial groundwater recharge areas that provide cold groundwater upwellings to Brook Trout spawning sites.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
	Assess tributaries where Brook Trout historically occurred to determine feasibility for habitat restoration.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
Achieve and maintain genetically diverse self-sustaining populations of Lake Trout that are similar to those found in the lake prior to 1940.	Conduct annual surveys to determine Lake Trout population status and trends.	Nearshore	2.3
	Protect and manage the Slate Island strain of Lake Trout for continued use in rehabilitative stocking efforts in other areas of Lake Superior.	Nearshore	2.2
	Continue with Fish Community Index Netting program to track the dynamics of fish populations and their recovery outside and within the Peninsula Harbour Area of Concern and Jackfish Bay Area of Concern in Recovery.	Multiple	2.9
Restore and protect self-sustaining Lake Whitefish populations at or above abundances	Conduct annual surveys to determine Lake Whitefish population status and trends.	Nearshore	2.3

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy[i]
observed in 1990-99.	Ensure commercial Lake Whitefish harvest levels in the region are sustainable and supportive for the long-term.	Nearshore	2.4
Restore and protect self-sustaining Lake Sturgeon populations.	Investigate the natal source for juvenile the Lake Sturgeon found off the mouth of the Prairie River.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
	Determine status of Lake Sturgeon population in the Prairie River.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
	Investigate potential Lake Sturgeon spawning habitat in the Prairie River and provide protection and rehabilitation as needed.	Tributaries & Watersheds	2.3
Lakewide Strategy 3: **Reduce the impact of existing aquatic invasive species and prevent the introduction of new ones.**			
Common Actions For All Region Plans - 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.	Continue annual AIS early detection assessments and 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
Lakewide Strategy 4: **Adapt to climate change**.			
Common Actions For All Region Plans - Incorporate climate change model projections and adaptive management measures into natural resource management plans.		Multiple	4.1
Lakewide Strategy 5: **Reduce the negative impacts of dams and barriers by increasing connectivity and natural hydrology between the lake and tributaries.**			
Common Actions For All Region Plans - Address barriers to fish passage created by dams, hydroelectric generation, or misplaced or wrong sized culverts. - Maintain flows and water levels on managed streams, rivers, and lakes that emulate natural conditions (i.e., magnitude, duration, timing, and pattern).		Tributaries and Watersheds	5.2

Regional Objective	Next Step	Conservation Target	Primary Lakewide Strategy[i]
Maintain flows and water levels on the Aguasabon River and other tributaries that emulate natural conditions.	Continue to pursue excellence in environmental performance on new potential projects.	Tributaries and Watersheds	5.4
Lakewide Strategy 6: **Address other existing and emerging threat that may impact important habitat or native plant and animal communities.**			
Share information and participate in decisions that may impact important habitat and species.	Continue with informed and public dialogues on the necessary selection site decision for nuclear waste repository in Ontario, which includes some consideration and interest in the region.	Tributaries and Watersheds	6.9

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.

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.

Existing Plans

Other existing plans relevant to conserving habitats 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.
- Slate Islands Provincial Park Management Plan
- Great Lakes Fishery Commission - A Lake Sturgeon rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior; A Brook Trout rehabilitation plan for Lake Superior; A Lake Trout restoration plan for 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

[i] 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**