

WILDERNESS LAKES EXPANSION

A "Big Win" for U.P. Forests



Scientific research has identified the Michigamme Highlands of the Upper Peninsula as some of the most resilient land in Michigan, providing a range of habitats and topographies—across 1,182 square miles of forestland—that can sustain natural diversity in a changing climate.

In this remote and beautiful region of the northern Great Lakes, TNC is working with partners and supporters to create a **conservation corridor** of protected lands, linking and strengthening existing conservation areas. This supports healthier forests while also mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The Opportunity

This year, we acted on an immediate and vital opportunity to nearly double the size of TNC's **Wilderness Lakes Reserve**—over 6,100 acres of spectacular forests, high-quality wetlands and glacial lakes. By connecting another 4,853 acres of stunning forests and wetlands with these healthy, resilient working forests as well as a neighboring state park (see map on next page), we are contributing to a mostly contiguous area of **over 19,000 acres of protected forestland!**

This is a crucial step toward the envisioned conservation corridor in the Michigamme Highlands. Through TNC's improved management and restoration of the property, the new addition will provide natural climate mitigation through the storage of approximately 140,000 more metric tons of carbon equivalent over ten years—demonstrating how nature can be part of the climate solution.

BY THE NUMBERS

4,853
ACRES

CARBON STORAGE
POTENTIAL: **140,000**
METRIC TONS

TOTAL PROJECT
COST: **\$4.9M**

CURRENT
FUNDRAISING NEED:
~\$2.5M



Race to the Finish!

The full cost of the Wilderness Lakes Reserve expansion is approximately \$4.9 million, including land purchase and stewardship. We secured a loan in order to be able to act quickly and close on the property this spring. Now, fundraising continues in order to meet our loan obligation, minimize interest costs and free up funds for more conservation.

Thank you to the generous supporters who have made this achievement possible!



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TNC's Work in the Great Lakes North Woods

Much of Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota's northern forestland has been intensively managed for many decades, leading to areas of low biodiversity. As the threat of increasing fragmentation and unsustainable practices becomes more pressing, increasing interest in carbon credits and natural climate solutions provides an opportunity to protect and restore the region's unique and irreplaceable natural legacy.

Here, TNC is working across boundaries to build on conservation victories like the Big U.P. Deal, which protected over 270,000 acres in 2005. On forest reserves like Wilderness Lakes, TNC shows how the right practices can not only promote forest health and biodiversity, but also help sequester the greenhouse gases that lead to a warming climate. We partner with private landowners, government agencies and Indigenous tribes to take our impact even further—working together to protect this region that is so important to us all.

North Woods Project Benefits

- Maintained and enhanced ability of working forests to **store carbon and mitigate climate change** by encouraging the growth of long-lived native trees.
- Increased **forest resilience** to a changing climate and other pressures.
- Sustainable **economic benefits** for local communities and states based on better-managed forests and recreational opportunities.
- Increased protection for **clean water**, as many rivers originate in these forests.
- Increased **habitat and connectivity** for wide-ranging wildlife species including moose, wolves, bobcat and migratory whitetail deer.
- A **model** for an approach to achieve similar results in working forests across the region and beyond.

Map

Ultimately, the goal is to work collaboratively with landowners to create a protected conservation corridor in the Michigamme Highlands that links Craig Lake State Park and the McCormick Wilderness—two of the most intact and least developed public lands in Michigan—to the Huron Mountains to the north and other protected lands. The **Wilderness Lakes expansion** (in red) is located at the western end, just north of TNC's existing reserve.

