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& The Statewide Energy Efficiency and Renewables
Administration**

Environmental and Economic Research and Development Program

Executive Summary

July 2008

Applying the Natural Heritage Inventory Classification System to Characterize the Natural Communities in the Ongoing Peatlands Study

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Applying the Natural Heritage Inventory Classification System to Characterize the Natural Communities in the Ongoing Peatlands Study



Executive Summary:

Report Date: 30 June 2008

Title of Project: Applying the Natural Heritage Inventory Classification System to Characterize the Natural Communities in the Ongoing Peatlands Study

Investigators: Craig Anderson, NHI Botanist; Eric Epstein, NHI Ecologist; Christina Isenring, Assistant NHI Ecologist

Institution: Wisconsin DNR Bureau of Endangered Resources

Research Category: Global Warming and Greenhouse Gasses

Project Period: 30 October 2006 through 30 June 2008

Object of Research: This project complements the “Biodiversity in Selected Natural Communities Related to Global Climate Change” (Peatlands Project) grant funded by the Wisconsin Focus on Energy program. A proposed but unfunded component of the Peatlands Project was to characterize the natural communities, or habitats, for each of the peatland study sites using the Natural Heritage Inventory classification system. During the course of conducting site evaluations and rare plant surveys for the project, data pertaining to natural communities were collected for many of the sites. Analyzing and incorporating these data into the Natural Heritage Database is important for providing a valuable baseline for the evaluation of change over time related to natural community composition, structure, and extent when these sites are re-

visited in 10-20 years, as proposed in the Peatlands Project proposal. In addition, this project included further field investigation on both Intensive and selected Extensive Sites, as defined in the previous grant, by focusing first on a comprehensive community assessment of the 13 Intensive Sites, then on follow-up work for a portion of the 200 Extensive Sites as time and funding allowed.

Summary of Results / Accomplishments: Natural communities were mapped and incorporated into the Natural Heritage Information system following standard methodology. A total of 164 natural community element occurrences were mapped in the NHI Database. These data are now accessible to researchers, local communities, land use planners and policy-makers through data sharing agreements and are available for environmental review, assessing and identifying conservation project priorities, and other conservation-related purposes including future research. Field investigations were completed on 13 Intensive Sites and 18 Extensive Sites.

Future Direction / Activities: Data collected through the Peatlands Project and this grant will continued to be entered in the NHI database as time and funding allow.