

SHENANGO TOWNSHIP AND WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH

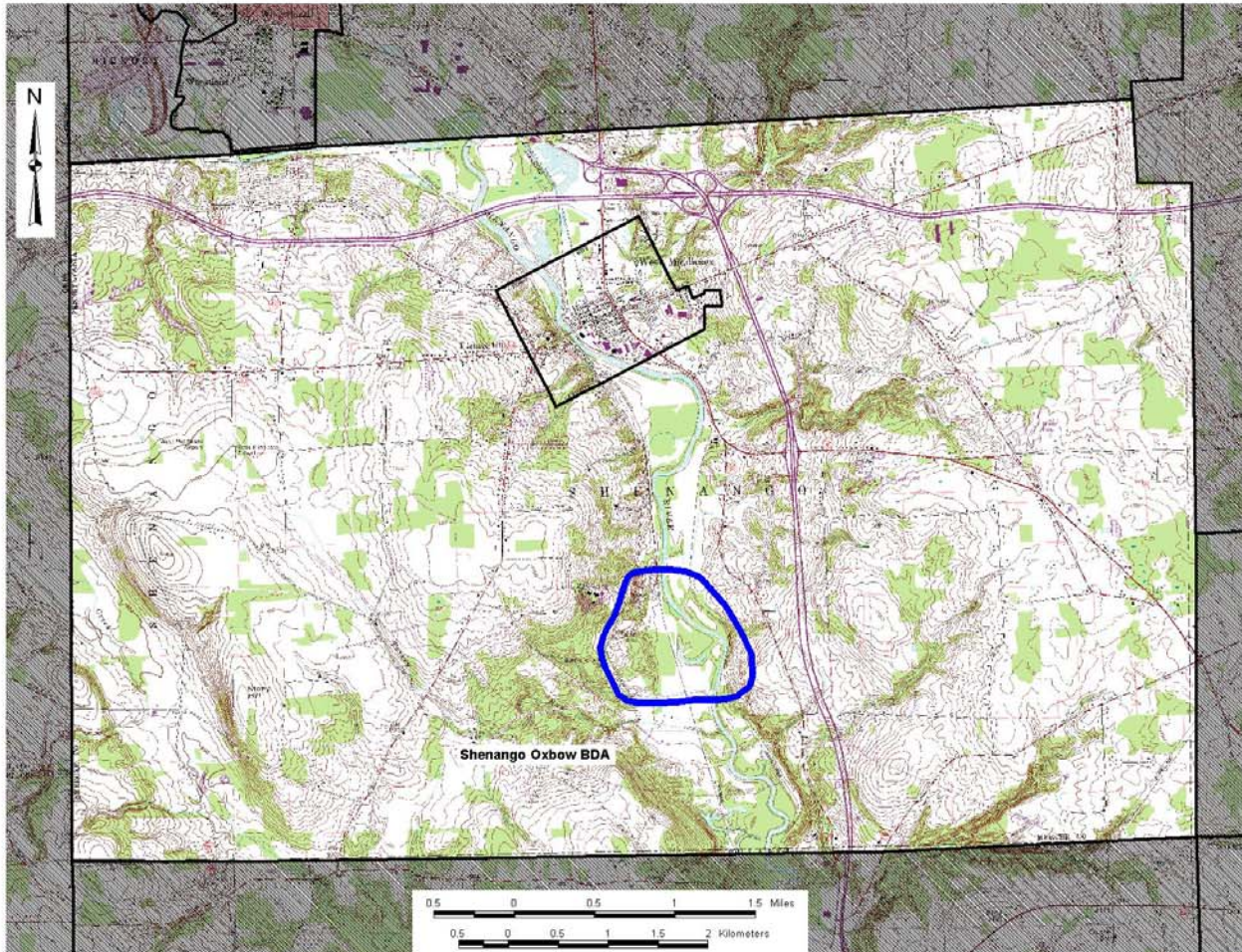
<u>PNDI Rank</u>		<u>Legal Status</u>	
Global	State	Fed.	State

NATURAL HERITAGE AREAS:

SHENANGO RIVER OXBOW BDA	<i>County Significance</i>
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MANAGED LANDS: None

Shenango Township and West Middlesex Borough



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Mercer County Natural Heritage Inventory

Biological Diversity Areas:

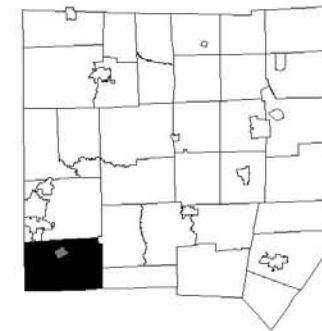
Shenango Oxbow

Landscape Conservation Areas:

None

Managed Areas:

None



Map Legend

-  Biological Diversity Area (BDA)
-  Landscape Conservation Area (LCA)
-  Audubon Society Important Bird Area (IBA)
-  Managed Area
-  Municipal Boundary

SHENANGO TOWNSHIP

Shenango Township is located south of the City of Sharon and encompasses the southwestern part of Mercer County. The Shenango River flows to the north of Sharpsville and south into Sharon. There is one Natural Heritage Area and no managed lands in Shenango Township.

Shenango River Oxbow BDA

This BDA is located on the Shenango River downstream of the Sharon metro area. Several habitats are present including an oxbow of the Shenango River, a graminoid wetland and a beaver impoundment. An old railroad right-of-way runs through the middle of the site. Most of the site has been impacted by previous land uses including agriculture, the railroad and general clearing of the land.

The oxbow community is the highest quality natural community within the BDA. This type of wetland is formed around old meanders in rivers. This community is unusual in Mercer County and is therefore recognized in spite of the disturbance present at the site. A narrow, wooded buffer with agricultural fields, both active and fallow, on all sides girdles the oxbow. Canopy species in the buffer are red maple (*Acer rubrum*), silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*) and swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*). Understory species include spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) and black willow (*Salix nigra*). Common herbaceous species are mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), false solomon's seal (*Smilacina racemosa*), intermediate log fern (*Dryopteris intermedia*), common blue violet (*Viola sororia*), whorled loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*), black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) and erect trillium (*Trillium erectum*).

The graminoid wetland is located some distance from the river in a large, flat area of the floodplain. Common species include harvestlice (*Agrimonia parviflora*), spike rush (*Juncus effusus*), red-top grass (*Agrostis alba*), halbeard-leaved tearthumb (*Polygonum sagittatum*), wool grass (*Scirpus cyperinus*), wide-leaved cattail (*Typha latifolia*), ditch stone-crop (*Penthorum sedoides*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and manna grass (*Glyceria* spp.).

The beaver impounded wetland is separated from the river by the old railroad right-of-way. Part of the wetland is open water and part contains a shrub swamp. The shrub swamp is disturbed as is the section adjacent to the old railroad. Species in the open water portions include yellow pond lily (*Nuphar lutea* ssp. *variegatum*) and marsh primrose willow (*Ludwigia palustris*). Species in the shrub swamp are silky dogwood (*Cornus amomum*), swamp white oak and white meadowsweet (*Spiraea alba*). On drier areas, near the railroad, there is a denser canopy of sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), pignut hickory (*Carya glabra*) and red oak. The understory is comprised of spicebush and multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*).

Threats and Stresses

This site is heavily disturbed from previous land uses and clearing for agriculture. However, flooding and occasional inundation are part of this community and produce a regime of natural disturbance. Invasive species are always a factor in high activity and frequently disturbed communities and this site must contend with the problem of invasives.

Recommendations

Informing the landowner of the significance of the property is a good first step in the protection of this area. The removal of beaver or draining of the wetland could negatively impact the vegetation community at this site. Increasing the size of the palustrine community would better buffer the community from invasive species and increase the viability. Any additions to the existing forested areas through succession of adjacent lands would help to increase the viability of this wetland. Limiting disturbance and allowing the site to recover from past disturbance would be a minimal management approach to aid in conserving this area.

WEST MIDDLESEX BOROUGH

West Middlesex Borough is located downstream of the City of Sharon on the Shenango River in southwestern Mercer County. There are no Natural Heritage Areas and no managed lands located in West Middlesex Borough.