

CEDARBURG BOG – A NATIONAL NATURAL LANDMARK

Recently, the Cedarburg Bog and adjoining upland beech woods were designated, with nine other Wisconsin locations, as National Natural Landmarks. The other sites are the Wyalusing Hardwood Forest in Grant County, Summerton Bog in Marquette County, the Kakagon Sloughs in Ashland County, Abraham's Woods in Green County, Spruce Lake Bog in Fond du Lac County, the Flambeau River Hardwood Forest in Sawyer County, the Finnerud Pine Forest in Oneida County, the Chippewa River Bottoms in Buffalo County and the Chiwaukee Prairie in Kenosha County. Previously, the Ridges Sanctuary in Door County was the only Wisconsin site included.

Designation of these areas as landmarks came about only after considerable research and evaluation. The natural landmarks program originated in 1970 with the objective of a registry to:

“1) encourage the preservation of sites illustrating the geological and ecological character of the United States, 2) enhance the educational and scientific value of sites thus preserved, 3) strengthen cultural appreciation of natural history, and 4) foster a wider interest and concern in the conservation of the nation's natural heritage.”

To produce this registry the National Park Service developed a theme study—classifying natural areas, resulting in a detailed inventory. Evaluation of areas listed in that inventory is proceeding theme by theme, the landmark areas chosen being designated each year.

To be selected as a National Natural Landmark a site must meet the following criteria:

“The site must be nationally significant as possessing exceptional value of quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural heritage of our nation and must present a true accurate, essentially unspoiled example of natural history”.

Natural landmarks may include geological formations or features, fossil locations, ecological communities, habitats of vanishing or rare restricted species, relic floras or faunas or sites containing significant evidence concerning important scientific discoveries, as well as those of scenic grandure.

After a site is evaluated, it is proposed for consideration to the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments. This board, advisory to the Secretary of Interior (authorized by an act of August 21, 1935), recommends approval or disapproval of a site. If approved, the owner may apply for a certificate and plaque. Registration requires agreement by the landowner to preserve the significant natural values although he relinquishes none of his other rights and privileges.

In 1971, the Park Service asked us to undertake a survey of 17 potential natural sites in Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. This survey was conducted by a team consisting of James Dunnum, William Granert, and Diane Ringger, graduate students in Botany and Professors P. Whitford and F. Stearns. For each evaluation, background data and maps were gathered and team members inspected each site on foot or by boat and canoe. A Michigan cedar stand had been destroyed by logging. Sixteen sites were examined; twelve were recommended from Wisconsin, of those, nine were accepted (the Cedarburg Bog and Beech woods were combined). Concurrently, Dr. William Brooks, Ripon College, examined eight or ten additional sites and, of those he examined, several were accepted. The Natural Landmark Program is still in progress and we anticipate that more natural national landmarks may be established within Wisconsin. Most of the landmarks chosen were already designated as Wisconsin State Scientific Areas.

The UWM Field Station and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are proud to have had the Cedarburg Bog and Beech woods chosen as a National Natural Landmark. We trust that this program will further assist us in providing the essential framework of study and observation areas essential for the understanding needed to maintain a quality Wisconsin environment.

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