

PORT SEVERN OUTLIER

UTM Ref. 17TNV987620

Baxter Township, Georgian Bay
Status: Recommend Heritage Area

Area: 11 ha

Site Characteristics

Port Severn Outlier is a small raised dome of limestone, located west of Hwy 69 along the Honey Harbour Road. This outcrop, composed of limestone of the Gull River formation, is one of two known Paleozoic outliers in Muskoka District (Bajc, 1992).

The weathered surface of the bedrock displays joints and fractures widened by the processes of groundwater and surface water dissolution. Vegetation is early successional, recovering from former pasturing use, with sections of open White Oak-White Pine-Balsam Poplar woodland and shrub thickets of Chokecherry, Staghorn Sumac, American Bittersweet and Poison Ivy mat covering large portions of the area. A Red Cedar-Common juniper barrens occupies part of the site.

Flora and Fauna

Total numbers of species recorded were:

Vascular Plants	46 native including 3 regionally uncommon; 20 introduced
Butterflies	5 including Eastern Black Swallowtail <i>Papilio polyxenes asterius</i> [RR]

Significant Natural Values and Selection Criteria Met

- 1. Representative Landform** - (A2) Bajc (1992) identified this outlier as the best example of Paleozoic Bedrock within Muskoka District, indicating the former existence of a more extensive cover of these younger rocks in the region. From a geological point of view, the outlier is relatively undisturbed.
- 2. Representation** - (B1) Despite its small size, Port Severn Outlier contains two vegetation communities not well-represented elsewhere in Muskoka - a Chokecherry-Poison Ivy shrub thicket (warmer/sand/very dry), and a Red Cedar-Common juniper open rock barrens (warmer/rock/very dry).
- 3. Biogeographic Significance** - (B7) Several of the plant species found on the Outlier are calciphiles, including Red Cedar, Glaucous Honeysuckle, and Viper's Bugloss. Downy Arrowhead, another shrub found on site, is approaching its northern limit of distribution at this site.

Ownership and Disturbance

The entire area is privately owned. Agricultural use and a recent residential development occupy adjacent lands. The site has been severely disturbed from past agricultural use, as indicated by the occurrence of over 30% non-native flora.

Sensitivity

The existing vegetation on the site will likely continue to develop and diversify with protection from further grazing. The limestone itself should be protected from future quarrying or other development. The small escarpments that surround the outlier should also be protected from filling or grading, to maintain the scientific value of the outlier.

Major Sources of Information

Bajc, 1992; Reid et al, 1992.