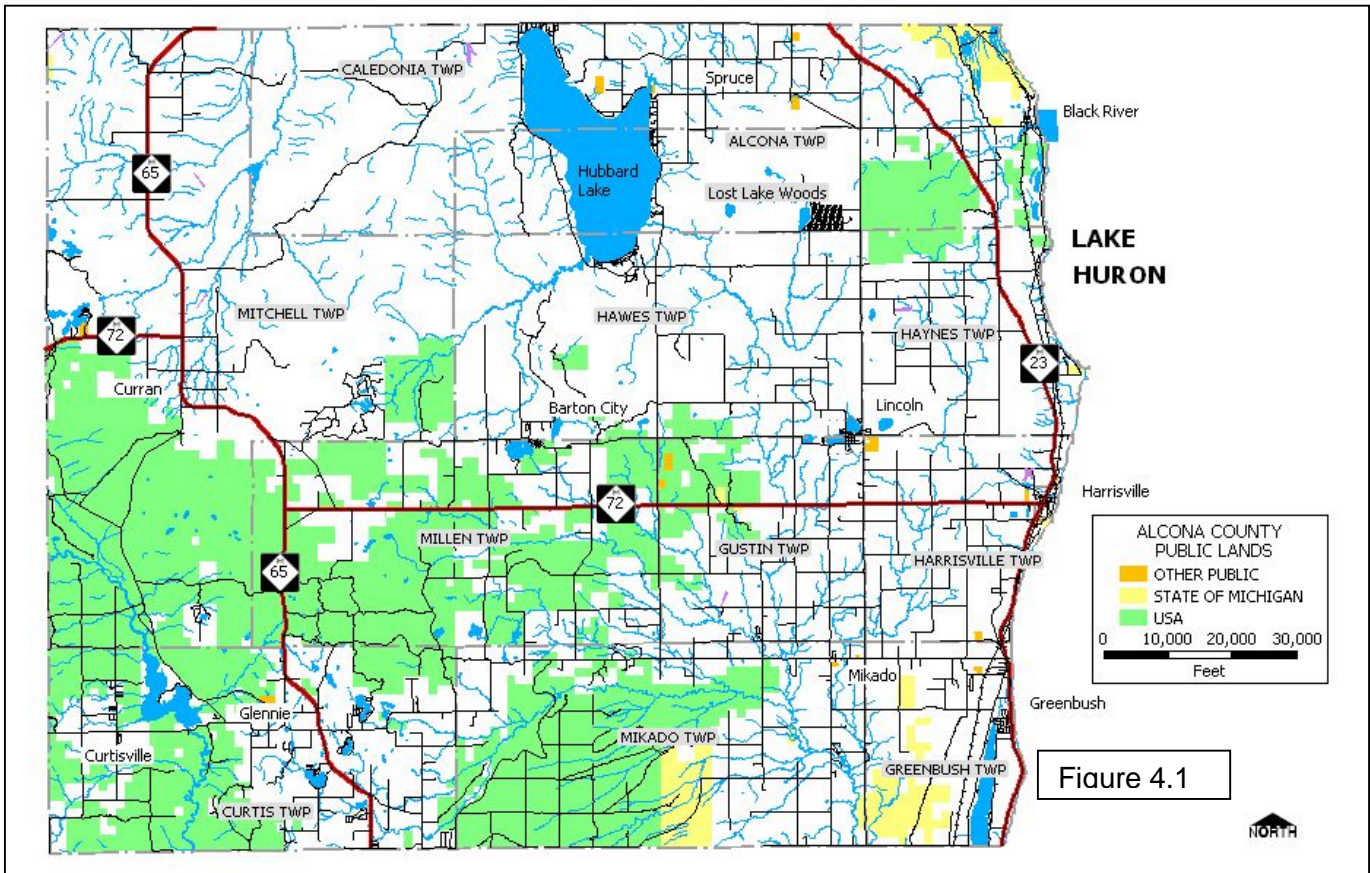


Chapter 4 - Land Use Characteristics

Land Divisions and Ownership

Most of the private ownership is divided into tracts 10 acres or larger. Large hunt clubs, owning several sections of land are common in the northwest part of the county. Small lots and subdivisions can be found within the communities of Lincoln, Harrisville, Barton City, Curran, Spruce, Black River, Glennie, Mikado, Greenbush, Lake Huron Shoreline, and around the many lakes within the County

The Huron National Forest occupies considerable portions of the southern half of Alcona County. State lands can be found in Caledonia, Greenbush and Mikado Townships. Negwegon State Park, a day use park is located in Alcona Township. Harrisville State park, a popular campground, is located in Harrisville Township, just south of the City of Harrisville. Primarily due to these two large holdings, 29 percent of the land is in public ownership and 73 percent of the county is forested, see **Figure 4.1**.



Land Cover/Use

In 1978 a countywide land cover use inventory was completed under the Michigan Resource Information System of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. This is the only countywide land use inventory ever completed. The map of 1978 land cover use, shown as **Figure 4.2**, illustrates the distribution of land uses throughout the County. **Table 4.1** is a listing of the land cover/use categories by acreage. Upland forest, mainly aspen, oak and jack pine

forest types, was the primary land cover/use in Alcona County. This is still the case today. The top five largest categories included upland forest, lowland forests, farmland, upland openings, and non-forested wetlands. These five categories accounted for 95 percent of the land cover/use. While residential and commercial development has occurred since the 1978 inventory, the amount of undeveloped land is still expected to be around 92 percent of the County.

Residential

As can be seen on the Existing Use Map and table, residential use occupied almost two percent (7,820 acres) of the land in the county. As would be expected, residential development was concentrated within communities of Harrisville, Lincoln, Greenbush, Glennie and Barton City. Seasonal residential development was located adjacent to inland lakes and along the Lake Huron Shoreline. General trends in residential development have been construction of primary or secondary homes on lots two acres and larger. Housing around the lakes and along Lake Huron have been transitioning from seasonal into year round dwellings. As well, residential development is more common along major roads. A large open space, recreational-residential development, called Lost Lake woods, is located in eastern Alcona Township.

Commercial

The largest concentrations of commercial uses are found in the communities of Lincoln and Harrisville. Strip commercial development is also located along US-23 south of Harrisville. Most of the commercial land uses are service and retail in nature, catering to local residents and tourists. Small pockets of commercial uses can be found in several rural locations around the county. These rural commercial uses are typically convenience retail uses that serve the rural residents and tourists. Lands used for commercial purposes comprised less than one tenth of one percent of the county's area.

Category	Acres	Percent of Total
Residential	7,820	1.8%
Commercial	223	0.1%
Industrial/Extractive	988	0.2%
Institution/Recreation	1,014	0.2%
Agricultural	41,621	9.4%
Non-forest	38,023	8.6%
Upland forest	252,660	56.9%
Lowland forest	71,926	16.2%
Wetlands	16,382	3.7%
Surface water	13,135	3.0%
Beaches and dunes	534	0.1%
Total	444,326	100%
Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources - MIRIS: 1978		

Industrial Extractive/Transportation

Land in this use category included industrial, extractive (sand and gravel pits) and transportation (airports) and accounted for less than one percent of the land area. Today, industrial development can be found in Lincoln and Harrisville.

Institutional/Recreational

This land use includes such uses as schools, churches, cemeteries and recreational areas. This category accounted for 1,014 acres or 0.2 percent of the land area in the county. Approximately 29 percent of Alcona County is in public ownership, most of which is in the Huron National Forest. While these lands were not mapped as recreational, the considerable amount of public land does offer residents and visitors ample area for a wide range of outdoor recreational activities such as fishing, hunting, cross country skiing and snowmobiling.

Agricultural

According to the 1978 inventory, a majority of the agricultural lands were concentrated in the eastern part of the county. The townships with the greatest percentage of agricultural lands were Caledonia, Haynes, Hawes, Harrisville, Gustin and Mikado, with smaller amounts found in Greenbush and Curtis Townships.. While there has been a downward trend in acreage dedicated to agricultural uses, these lands are falling idle as opposed to being developed for urban built-up uses like other parts of the state and country.

Non-Forested Uplands

The 38,023 acres (8.6 percent) of non-forested upland openings made it the fourth largest land cover in the county. This category consists of herbaceous open and shrub land. This land cover was scattered throughout the county with larger concentrations in the central part. Much of the non-forested land was once active farmland. Given the downward trend in acreage dedicated to farming, this category has increased over the last 25 years.

Upland Forest

The upland forest lands were the most predominant land cover in the county and accounted for 57 percent or 252,660 acres of the county. The most prevalent forest types were aspen, oak and jack pine. Young jack pine forests provide critical nesting habitat for the globally rare Kirtland Warbler. Other forest types include red and white pine and northern hardwoods.

Lowland Forests and Wetlands

Wetlands include land that has sufficient water at, or near, the surface to support wetland or aquatic vegetation. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes and bogs. The wetland category comprises non forested types such as lowland brush (tag alder and willow), cattail marshes, bogs and wet meadows. Non-forested wetlands accounted for 16,382 acres or 3.7 percent of the county. Lowland forests grow on soils with a seasonally high water table and are often classified as wetlands. Lowland forests include areas that support lowland hardwoods and conifers, such as northern white cedar, black spruce, balsam fir, elm, red maple, ash and aspen species. At 71,926 acres or sixteen percent of the county's area lowland forest was the second largest land cover/use type. Lowland forests are usually swampy in nature and often are classified as wetlands.

Two of the most important functions of wetlands are water quality protection and ecological corridors. As can be noted in **Figure 4.2**, the major wetland areas are adjacent to streams and lakes. The networks of wetlands receive surface water and subsurface water discharge, creating the many streams and creeks which in turn flow into the area lakes. The interconnected resources exemplify how activities distant from major water bodies can still have an impact on the water quality.

Surface Water

According to the *Alcona County Resource Plan*, there are 233 bodies of water in Alcona County. Lakes and impoundments were mapped as open water and accounted for three percent of the

area in the county. The largest lakes that are at least partially found within the County are: Hubbard Lake (9,200 acres), Alcona Dam Pond (1,008 acres), Cedar Lake (775 acres in the County), Jewell Lake (193 acres), Vaughn Lake (115 acres), and McCollum Lake (81 acres in the County). The county's major waterways are the Au Sable River, Pine River, Black River and Thunder Bay River.

Planning and Zoning

Land use planning and zoning is administered at the city, village and township level. Alcona County does not have a county planning commission.

