

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

Date:	02/16/2010	Entry Number:	1070
Case Study Name:	Preservation or degradation? communal management and ecological change in a southeast Michigan Forest		
Authors:	Nelson, F., E. Collins, A. Frechette, C. Koenig, M. Jones-Yellin, B. Morgan, G. Ramsay, et al		
Document Type:	paper in scientific journal		
Year:	2008		
Language:	English		
Document Location:	<i>Biodiversity and Conservation</i> 17, (11), 2757-72		
Full Citation:	Nelson, F., E. Collins, A. Frechette, C. Koenig, M. Jones-Yellin, B. Morgan, G. Ramsay, et al. 2008. Preservation or degradation? communal management and ecological change in a southeast Michigan Forest. <i>Biodiversity and Conservation</i> 17, (11), 2757-72		
Region:	North America		
Country:	United States		
Ecosystem Type:	temperate deciduous forest		
Social Characteristics:	remote community		
Scale of Study:	community		
Resource Type:	biodiversity conservation		
Type of Initiative:	community initiative		
Community- Based Work:	conservation		
Keywords:	community-based forest management, common pool resources, Michigan Quakers, Oak savannas, preservation, local institutions, Forest conservation		

Summary:

Local communities play an increasingly important role in the management and conservation of forests at local and global scales. Conventional analyses of community forest management tend to view the outcomes of these efforts, as with common pool resources (CPRs) more generally, as contingent on the ability of local institutions to control collective levels of extractive use and enforce group rules. This paper provides a case study of a community forest in southern Michigan, in the Midwestern United States, that challenges these assumptions about community-based forest management. The factors driving change in this forest are not tied to excessive extraction or disturbance by human agents but rather the proliferation of shade-tolerant invasive species. The community institutions and values that made it possible for the forest to grow and mature now threaten its very existence. By discouraging any form of active management, the forest has become susceptible to the growing pressures of human-induced environmental change such as the introduction of exotic plant species. Biodiversity conservation in such contexts consequently relies not only on restraining local forest utilization practices or the preservation of land from development, but on active management interventions by local forest users. Understanding the impact of community management on CPRs in human-dominated ecosystems will require broadening the scope of analysis to account for the importance of active management and the potentially deleterious effects of preservationist approaches on native biota.