

# PROTECTING OUR SHARED NATURAL HERITAGE: NO WETLAND PERMIT SHOULD BE GRANTED TO THE KOHLER GOLF COURSE

E. Montgomery, PhD Student Forest Science  
Submitted to [jessica.l.kempke@usace.army.mil](mailto:jessica.l.kempke@usace.army.mil)  
4.5.17

Development within forest and wetland habitats of the Black River Watershed will have negative impacts on the following Wisconsin wildlife: rare plant communities and native trees, birds, reptiles and amphibians of special concern, wetland-associated mammals, freshwater invertebrates, fish spawning and reproduction. Degradation of these resources will have serious implications for the protection of natural resources, population viability of game fish and other lifeforms, and preservation of American and Wisconsin Heritage. When the importance of these ecological, humanitarian, and historical provisions of the Black Forest habitats are taken into account, fragmentation of the site for a golf course is not only a poor land management decision, but will potentially have adverse affects on the surrounding communities and neighborhoods of Kohler, Mosel, Oostburg, Ourtown, Sheboygan, Sheboygan Falls and far beyond.

The following rare plants have been observed within the township: *Anticlea elegans ssp. glaucus* – White Camas, *Botrychium campestre* – Prairie Dunewort, *Botrychium lunaria* – Common Moonwort, *Cakile edentula var. lacustris* – American Sea-rocket, *Calamovilfa longifolia var. magna* – Sand Reedgrass, *Cirsium pitcheri* – Pitcher's Thistle, *Elymus lanceolatus ssp. psammophilus* – Thickspike, *Euphorbia polygonifolia* – Seaside Spurge, *Galium brevipes* – Swamp Bedstraw, *Orobanche fasciculata* – Clustered Broomrape, *Solidago simplex var. gillmanii* – Dune Goldenrod, *Triglochin palustris* – Slender Bog Arrow-grass (WI DNR). The remnant forest-wetland-prairie mosaic of the landscape supports rare flowers that can be found in few other locations in the state. Land development for a golf course, let alone the significant habitat destruction involved in movement of fill material, paving of lots, and building construction, will be detrimental to these beloved Wisconsin native plants.

The Black River supports numerous aquatic resources and the flow of this river that is perpendicular to Lake Michigan creates an amazingly unique landscape that is rarely replicated around the globe. Actions should be taken in the direction of improving the poor to fair water quality of Black River (*The State of the Sheboygan River Basin* Publ# WR-669-01), which runs through remnant forest and as such is a unique and irreplaceable part of Wisconsin's natural heritage and provider of invaluable ecosystem services. Despite serious issues currently with water quality, sedimentation, and intrusion of aquatic invasives, the estuary continues to support "seasonal fishing opportunities during the spawning runs of smelt, trout and salmon." In some areas of the country with high development indices, trout and salmon are threatened and even endangered species. In Wisconsin, we place a high value on our natural resources because they support us in terms of food, ecosystem services, and appreciation of the natural world. The golf course will result in a transference of the cost of mitigating environmental damages to the public trust. Some damages, such as the loss of rare plants or trout habitat, cannot be mitigated for.

We can no longer operate with the environmental illiteracy of past decades for the sake of private gains. This is not marginalized or disturbed land, it is an ecosystem intact. The ecosystem services provided by this watershed- fisheries, wildlife, tourism, water, water and air filtration - are absolutely vital to human health and are irreplaceable.

Elizabeth Montgomery

PhD Student Forest Science  
School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science  
Michigan Technological University