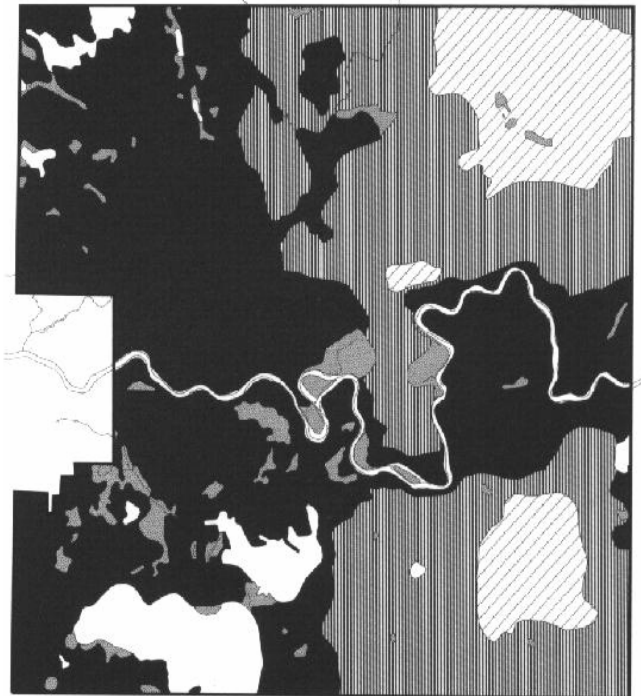
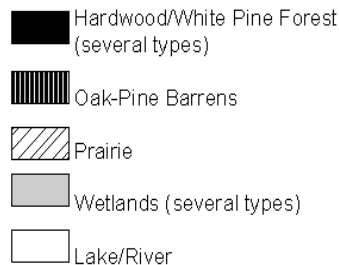


What Did Brooks Township Look Like 200 Years Ago?

At one time prairies and barrens covered large expanses throughout the Midwest. In Michigan alone 2.35 million acres were classified as prairies and barrens. Newaygo's historic dry sand prairies were large, grass-dominated openings that supported a range of animal and plant life. The prairies were surrounded by barrens, grasslands dotted with trees such as white pine and white oak. Together, these areas ranged in size from 600 - 1,500 acres. Surrounding Newaygo's prairies and barrens were dense forests of white pine and oak, along with other species like beech, sugar maple, and red maple.

Newaygo's landscape changed with the coming of European settlers. Logging and failed farms in the 1800s left forests, prairies and barrens stripped of vegetation. Many of these areas were planted with rows upon rows of red pine in the 1920s and 1930s to prevent soil erosion. Fire, a key element in sustaining healthy prairie openings in the forest, was also suppressed and left remaining prairies defenseless against the invading forests. Today, residential, commercial and industrial development continue to take over natural areas at a growing rate. Without the help of private landowners, sprawl will continue to consume forests, prairies and barrens. As natural areas are lost, the plant and animal species that depend on these places may be lost as well.

1830s Landcover in Brooks Township



If you are a prairie, barrens or forest landowner, we encourage you to...

- 1) Maintain healthy forest areas where they occur on your property.
- 2) Maintain open prairie and barrens areas where they occur on your property.
- 3) Protect these areas from potentially destructive practices such as inappropriate off-road vehicle use, trash dumping, and excessive development.
- 4) Consider converting forest sections on your property to barrens or prairie, especially those areas adjacent to existing prairie or barrens openings.
- 5) Consider removing old scotch pine, red pine or neglected Christmas tree plantations where they occur on your property.
- 6) Remove invasive, alien plants like spotted knapweed and St. Johnswort from your property, either by hand pulling, herbicide application or prescribed burns.
- 7) Contact the Newaygo Conservation District or the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to obtain technical assistance for conservation planning on your property.