

Michigan Botanical Society

Statement of Endorsement: Support for the Preservation of Sibley Prairie, Brownstown Township, Wayne County, Michigan

The Michigan Botanical Society (formerly the Michigan Botanical Club), founded in 1941, is a statewide organization devoted to the study, appreciation, and conservation of Michigan's native plants and natural communities. With five active chapters, our mission includes the **conservation of all native plants and their home places**, the **education of the public** to value and protect plant life, the **support of botanical research**, and the **establishment of sanctuaries and natural areas** that safeguard Michigan's botanical heritage.

The Society strongly supports the Michigan Land Conservancy's effort, under the leadership of Jack Smiley, to acquire and permanently protect approximately **440 acres of Sibley Prairie** in Brownstown Township, Wayne County. This project represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve **Michigan's largest and highest-quality lakeplain prairie remnant**—an ecosystem of exceptional rarity and ecological value.

Identified by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory as the **finest example of lakeplain prairie in the state**, Sibley Prairie exhibits a **Floristic Quality Index of 69.95** and supports at least **15 threatened or special concern plant species**, along with rare fauna such as the state-threatened Duke's skipper butterfly. Protecting this landscape will conserve a remarkable diversity of native flora, including species emblematic of Michigan's natural heritage such as *Platanthera leucophaea* (Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid) and *Asclepias sullivantii* (Sullivant's Milkweed).

Beyond its botanical and ecological importance, the preservation of Sibley Prairie will advance opportunities for **research, education, and community engagement**. The site's accessibility within metropolitan Detroit provides an unparalleled setting for environmental learning and public enjoyment, offering students, researchers, and visitors a living classroom that demonstrates the beauty, resilience, and importance of Michigan's native ecosystems.

For these reasons, the Michigan Botanical Society enthusiastically **endorses and supports the Michigan Land Conservancy's efforts to secure, restore, and steward Sibley Prairie** in partnership with public and private agencies. We urge decision-makers and potential funders to act decisively to ensure that this extraordinary landscape is protected for the benefit of future generations.

Sincerely,

Robert Ayotte

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