Welcome to the Galien River Marsh, an ecosystem that was once prevalent along the Lake Michigan shoreline which is now rare.

Great Lakes Marsh: Synchronized to the Rhythms of Lake Michigan

The marsh ecology and the plants and animals found here are influenced by the climate and water levels of Lake Michigan.

In addition to being closely linked to a Great Lake, a Great Lakes marsh has the following communities:

1. A deep marsh with submerged plants, largely under water.
2. An emergent marsh with plants whose roots are in standing water, but whose leaves emerge from the water.
3. A wet meadow whose soil may be inundated with water, but at other times may be dry.
4. A shrub boundary between the marsh and the forest.
5. A dry forest containing oaks, hickory, black cherry and other trees.

Migration Rest Stop

The coast of Lake Michigan is a migration route for waterfowl, raptors and songbirds. As the birds migrate in the spring and fall, the marsh provides a resting and feeding area. The calm water, protected from storms, serves a vital function for many species.

Water Trail Tips

Length: 2 miles from the MDNRE boat launch to the City launch in New Buffalo.

Time: approximately 90 minutes

Conditions: The river current is slow and the route has few obstacles and no rapids. Most paddlers will have no problem paddling upstream. Marshy banks make stopping along the route difficult and is not recommended, except in designated areas.

Protecting the Marsh

In 2002, the Louis J. Sima Family of New Buffalo donated 156 acres of the Galien River Marsh to Chikaming Open Lands (COL). The Berrien County Department of Parks and Recreation acquired 88 acres of the marsh and adjoining upland in 2001. To date, about 70% of the great lakes marsh at New Buffalo has been forever preserved. COL coordinates and encourages stewardship of the marsh and has received a major grant from The Pekagon Fund for restoration work, along with contributions from Berrien County Parks and our neighbors in the Preserve and Riviera homeowner associations.

Chikaming Open Lands is working hard to remove the threat of non-native invasive plants from spreading uncontrollably and choking out the native plants on which marsh wildlife depend. Controlling invasive plants, now and in the future, is essential to preserving the marsh’s rich biodiversity and importance as a functional wetland.

Other threats to the marsh include pollution from failing septic systems and storm water run-off. Educational and regulatory efforts to reduce these threats are underway by other partners.

Thank you for doing your part to protect the great lakes marsh at New Buffalo - an important part of our Michigan heritage!

For your safety:

- Please wear a U.S. Coast Guard Approved Personal Flotation Device
- Travel with a companion or group
- Keep to your right
- Keep your eyes open for motor boat traffic
- Bring insect repellent and sunscreen
- Please don’t litter or disturb plants and animals!