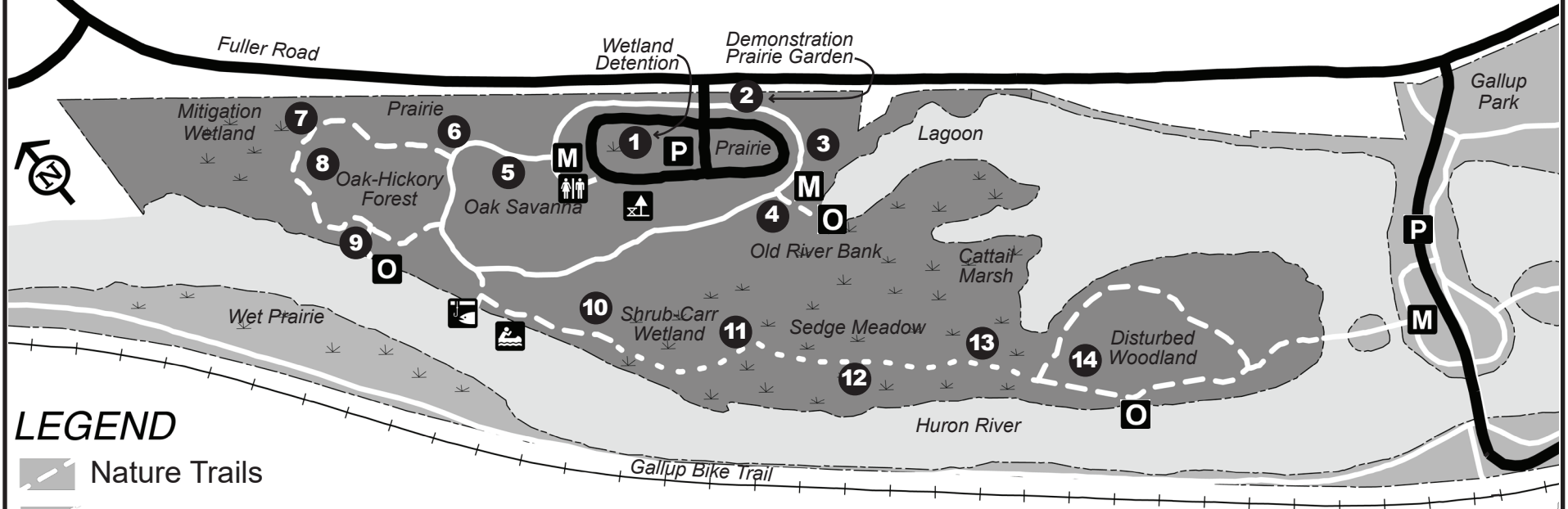












# FURSTENBERG NATURE AREA



## LEGEND

-  Nature Trails
-  Boardwalk (no bikes)
-  Paved Trails
-  Canoe Landing
-  Picnic Area
-  Fishing Dock
-  Restrooms
-  Overlook
-  Map
-  Parking

If you would like to help restore  
Furstenberg's ecosystems, contact  
Natural Area Preservation  
at 734.794.6627 or [NAP@a2gov.org](mailto:NAP@a2gov.org)

[www.a2gov.org/NAP](http://www.a2gov.org/NAP)



CITY OF ANN ARBOR  
**Natural Area  
Preservation**

## **FURSTENBERG INTERPRETIVE TRAIL GUIDE**

This 38-acre nature area, bordered by the Huron River, features the most diverse flora of any park in Ann Arbor. The descriptions below correspond to numbered posts along the trails. (See map.)

### **1. WETLAND DETENTION BASIN**

The parking lot stormwater run-off is collected in a basin in the middle of the lot. Native wetland species planted here aid in cleansing the water and help it to seep into the ground.

### **2. DEMONSTRATION PRAIRIE GARDEN**

This garden will help you identify plants that commonly grow in prairies and oak savannas, such as those at Furstenberg. In fact, you can use this garden as an identification guide to the plants in the park. All the flowers and grasses in this bed are native to Michigan. Native plants are well adapted to the climate in this area and will survive drought better than many exotic or introduced plants. Imagine these plants in your own garden!

### **3. LAGOON**

The lagoon you see is a former channel of the Huron River. Since the river meandered to its present location, this area has become a backwater, or quieter pond, where you may see geese, ducks, swans, herons, and muskrats. Look for other marsh species in the cattails surrounding the lagoon.

### **4. OLD RIVER BANK**

As you walk out to the overlook, the sloping ground beside the boardwalk is a former bank of the Huron River. A river changes its course over time. As the water rushes along it erodes the river banks and creates a new route for itself, leaving behind banks that border dry sites.

### **5. OAK-SAVANNA**

A savanna is an ecosystem where the open tree canopy allows enough sunlight through for grasses to grow underneath. This savanna marks the interface between the forest and the prairie. The dominant tree species is the bur oak, which is the

city tree of Ann Arbor.

### **6. PRAIRIE**

A prairie is an ecosystem consisting predominantly of tall, native grasses and unique plants, which require lots of sunlight. To help guard against drought, many prairie plants have adaptations such as deep roots to collect water, sticky sap to retain water, very narrow leaves that do not expose a large surface to evaporation, and hairy surfaces to retain moisture and deflect sunlight. Fires set by Native Americans or by lightning occurred regularly in our prairies before European settlers started to limit these fires. Controlled fires are now used here periodically to mimic the historic patterns of fire. The fire discourages the invasive, shallow-rooted plants and woody shrubs that would not have grown in the native prairie, while converting the dead plants into nutrients, which quickly enrich the soil.

### **7. MITIGATION WETLAND**

Michigan state law requires a mitigation wetland to be created in place of a wetland destroyed by a construction project, in this case by the realignment of Fuller Road. In creating a new wetland, designers attempt to restore the functions of the natural wetland: creating wildlife habitat, storing water, and cleansing water of some pollutants.

### **8. OAK-HICKORY FOREST**

It takes hundreds of years for a forest to mature. This forest probably evolved through a long succession of plant communities, from cropland through abandoned field-thicket to forest. In Michigan, oak-hickory forests generally occur only in the south where drier, warmer conditions prevail. Many invasive species have taken over the forest floor here. Restoration of this ecosystem involves removing invasive shrubs such as buckthorn and honeysuckle and burning the oak leaf litter on the forest floor to allow the oaks, hickories, and native shrubs to thrive.

### **9. WET PRAIRIE**

Along the opposite bank of the Huron River you see a prairie with many of the same characteristics as the upland prairie. These prairie plants, however, have adapted to growing with their roots in water. This small, 5-acre site is one of the few remaining wet

prairies in the region. Despite its small size, it has an amazingly rich flora of 200 native plant species, several of which are legally protected in Michigan. Even though this prairie is wet, it is burned to control invasive species.

### **10. WETLANDS**

The area you are entering is a wetland. Different types of wetlands are defined by whether the water is salty or fresh and whether the soils are acid or alkaline. Some have water year-round, while others only have water intermittently. Common to all are water, special soils, and plants that are suited to live in a wet environment. Furstenberg's wetlands include a shrub-carr wetland, a sedge meadow, and a cattail marsh (all described below). Wetlands help cleanse runoff water and provide wildlife habitat. These wetlands are burned periodically to control invasive shrubs. Please stay on the boardwalks to prevent trampling the plants.

### **11. SHRUB-CARR WETLAND**

The shrub-carr wetland is dominated by native trees and shrubs, such as willow and dogwood, which survive well in muck soils. The ground is particularly wet in the spring.

### **12. SEDGE MEADOW**

A sedge meadow is a wet area dominated by sedges, which resemble grasses but have triangular stems. The species that grows here is called tussock sedge or hummock sedge, so named because of the mounds it forms.

### **13. CATTAIL MARSH**

The cattail is a very fast spreading species that tends to dominate other species. As sediment fills the lagoon, the cattails proliferate.

### **14. DISTURBED WOODLAND**

This area was expanded by dredged soils from the Huron River. The history of disturbance here has led to its current state with invasion by non-native shrubs, buckthorn and honeysuckle.