My project was originally designed to inform habitat restoration for Species in Greatest Conservation Need within the Anoka Sand Plan Subsection of Minnesota. This subsection has been under increased focus since the publication of the 2006 Minnesota State Wildlife Action Plan Anoka Sand Plain subsection profile, which identified it as containing some of the last remnants of high quality dry oak savanna, dune, and prairie habitats in the state. The plan described 97 Species in Greatest Conservation Need that are known to occur or are predicted to occur within the subsection, 39 of which are federal or state endangered, threatened, or of special concern. Habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation were identified as the key challenges facing Species in Greatest Conservation Need within the Anoka Sand Plain (), and the plan highlighted the apparent relationship between documented rare species occurrence and conservation management lands ().

Sand Dunes State Forest (hereafter, Sand Dunes) (4,486 ha) is located in central Sherburne county within the Anoka Sand Plain subsection. It has been managed primarily for timber production and recreation and much of the area has been planted with pines and other evergreens, with the original intent of stabilizing the

A 2009 DNR report () identified Sand Dunes as