

McCormicks Island Archipelago

This site encompasses a series of islands in the Susquehanna River on the north side of Harrisburg. McCormick's Island, the largest of the series, is characterized by a **Silver maple floodplain forest Natural Community**. This silver maple and tulip poplar-dominated forest is relatively mature and contains many canopy gaps with scattered subcanopy trees and shrubs. The largest gaps are dominated by a dense mix of native and exotic herbs including the native jewel-weed, ostrich fern, and poison ivy, and the non-native garlic mustard and mile-a-minute weed, and Japanese knotweed. Spicebush is the most common shrub. The site supports a population of the **umbrella magnolia (Magnolia tripetala)**. This site has been disturbed by logging and campfires in the past but has recovered well. Its quality as a natural community should continue to improve over time.

This island is one of a series of islands occurring along this stretch of the river, which together make up a greater system of habitats including riparian forest, sloughs and shrub swamps, a littoral zone, and several types of aquatic habitats such as riffles, sand bars, and pools. The site provides habitat for three **species of concern**. This site has been identified by the PA Audubon Society as one of the most important areas in the state for supporting bird diversity.

Threats and Disturbances:

The habitat associated with the McCormicks Island Archipelago would be threatened by an increase of the water level along this stretch of the river through the construction of the Dock Street Dam. Increased water levels would kill trees on the islands, and likely drown entirely many of the smaller islands and sand bars. The abundant diversity that helps retain the wild character of the river in this urban area exists primarily due to these islands.