

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EXISTING LAND USE/LAND COVER**

#### **Land Use Statistics**

The area of Corwith Township, including water bodies, is roughly 108 square miles, or three geographic survey townships. The distance from the north boundary of the Township to the south boundary is six miles, with the east to west distance at 18 miles. Existing land use and land cover statistics for the Township are shown as Table 5-1. Michigan Resource Information System (MIRIS) statistics, which were compiled by Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) using 1978 color infrared aerial photographs utilizing a detailed classification system, were used as a base in developing existing land use/land cover information. The base files were then updated with 1998 aerial photos. In 2001 NEMCOG completed the *I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan*. Existing land use/land cover in the vicinity of I-75 was updated for that plan and is included in the existing land use/land cover map for this chapter. As part of this Master Plan process, extensive field checking was conducted in March of 2004. The 2004 information was then computerized to produce the existing land use/land cover map, presented as Figure 5 at the end of this chapter. Each of the land use categories is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

#### **Pattern of Land Divisions**

As development occurs, larger tracts of land are generally broken down into smaller parcels. Therefore, studying the existing pattern of land divisions is one way to analyze the status of land use and development.

Large undivided tracts of land can be found in the eastern half of the Corwith Township. These parcels are generally whole sections, and most are part of the Pigeon River Country State Forest. Land in the south central part of the Township, south of East Sturgeon Valley Road is mostly privately owned. Parcels there vary in size, ranging from 10 acres to several hundred acres. The eastern one-third of the Township is the location for the most concentrated development, where smaller lots and parcels are noted.

Table 5-1:  
Existing Land Use/Land Cover Statistics  
Corwith Township, March 2004

Land Use/Cover	Number of Acres	Percent of Township
Residential	1,214	1.8
Commercial	76	0.1
Industrial/Extractive	279	0.4
Institutional/Recreation	309	0.5
Agricultural	1,010	1.5
Open/Non-Forest	10,135	14.8
Woodlands	53,424	78.0
Wetlands	1,647	2.4
Water	409	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,503</b>	<b>100.1</b>
Source: MIRIS Land Use/Land Cover 1978, Updated with 1998 MDNR Aerial Photos; NEMCOG <i>I-75 Scenic Corridor Plan</i> ; Wade-Trim, Inc. Field Check, March 2004.		
Note: Due to rounding percent total does not equal 100 percent. Existing land use/land cover statistics do not include the Village of Vanderbilt.		

## Residential

As can be seen in Table 5-1, 1.8 percent of the Township's total area is used for residential purposes. For reference purposes, residential land use is shown on the existing land use/land cover map as yellow in color. Residential development is most heavily concentrated in the eastern one-third of the Township. Residential development in Corwith Township is generally single-family homes. It is important to note that while residential land use makes up less than two percent of the Township's area, it makes up the bulk of the Township's tax base, 65.1 percent in 2003.

## **Commercial**

Table 5-1 shows less than one percent, or only 76 acres, of the Township's total area is categorized as commercial use. Commercial areas are shown as red on the existing land use/land cover map. Because of the limited commercial offerings in the Township, most residents rely on commercial services in Gaylord and other urbanized locations.

## **Industrial/Extractive**

Industrial land use covers only 279 acres, or less than one percent, and is shown as purple on Figure 5. Industrial uses include a manufacturing operation on Alexander Road just east of I-75, two industrial sites at the Old 27/Thumb Lake Road intersection, a sawmill on Alexander Road west of Old 27, and gas/oil processing and pumping facilities. Several sand/gravel extractive sites were noted during the field check and are noted on the map.

## **Institutional/ Recreational**

Institutional land uses include two churches on Old 27 and the cemetery north of Vanderbilt. Black Bear Golf Resort is included in this category. This land use category makes up less than one percent of the Township's total land area and is shown in dark blue on Figure 5. This category makes up 0.5 percent of the Township. This Master Plan process recognizes that there are several hunting or fishing club lodges in the Township that are used for recreational purposes. Because of their privacy and remoteness, they may or may not show up on the map in the recreational category, and may be included in the woodland category.

## **Agricultural**

Agricultural activity is somewhat important in Corwith Township, covering more than 1,000 acres of land. It is shown as brown on the existing land use/land cover map. Farming occurs generally on the east one-third of the Township, where soil conditions are suitable. Agricultural land use covers 1.5 percent of the Township's land area and contributes 4.9 percent to the tax base.

## **Open Land or Non-Forested**

Non-forested land and open land makes up nearly 15 percent of the community. These areas are scattered throughout the Township, and are mixed with forests, wetlands and agricultural lands. Some of these areas may be abandoned farmland. This category is shown as white on Figure 5.

## **Woodlands**

For the purpose of this existing land cover analysis, upland forest and lowland forest are grouped together. The existing land use/land cover map depicts woodlands as green. The woodlands category is the most predominant land cover in Corwith Township, making up 78 percent of the land area. The east half of the Township is nearly all forested, and is part of the Pigeon River County State Forest.

## **Wetlands**

Wetlands include land that has sufficient water at or near the surface to support wetland or aquatic vegetation. These areas are commonly referred to as swamps, marshes or bogs. It is important to note that the existing land use/land cover map used in this report is based on MIRIS maps. Wetland information was not verified by field inspection when these maps were compiled. Because of inaccessibility and snow cover, wetland information was not verified during the consultant's field check in March of 2004. Thus, the areas shown as wetlands by MIRIS may not actually meet State and Federal criteria for legally regulated wetlands. As mapped, wetland areas in Corwith Township make up 2.4 percent or 1,647 acres of the land. Heavy wetland areas generally occur adjacent to the many streams in the Township. The wetland category is shown as blue/brown hatch pattern on Figure 5.

## **Water**

Less than one percent of the Township is covered with surface water (light blue on Figure 5). Corwith Township lakes include: Reardon Lake, Fleming Lake, Lake Eighteen, Woodin Lake, Berry Lake, Pickerel Lake, Mud Lake, Grass Lake, Lansing Club Pond, Round Lake and Hardwood Lake. Rivers and streams in the Township are: Sturgeon River, Pigeon River, Black River, Stewart Creek, Club Creek, Harwood Creek and several unnamed small streams.

Hold page for Figure 5, Existing Land Use/Land Cover Map