

## Upper Mississippi River Forestry Partnership Bottomland Hardwood Reference Site

**State:** Iowa

**Name:** Odessa Complex (Odessa Wildlife Area and Port Louisa National Wildlife Refuge)

**Ownership:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Managing Agencies:** Iowa Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**Acres:** 6788 acres

**Location:** Louisa County, Iowa. T74N-R2W, Sections 7-9, 16-18, 20-22, 26-28, 33-36. T73N-R2W, Sections 1-3, 11.

**Access Considerations:** Schafer Access and Sand Run Access are located on county road X61 and provide parking lots and concrete boat ramps accessing the area. An extension of 120<sup>th</sup> street provides access to the north end of Port Louisa NWR and a boat ramp on the Mississippi River. An extension of Prairie Street provides access to the south end of the Odessa Wildlife Area and boat ramps to the Odessa Complex and the Mississippi River. A campground on the area is located off County Road X61. Port Louisa NWR is a migratory bird sanctuary and closed to all public access from September 15 until February 1 each year.

**Other Access Considerations:**

- Part of the Odessa Wildlife Area is a controlled waterfowl hunting area and special regulations restricting access are in effect from mid-October to mid-December.
- Motorized vehicles are prohibited except on access roads and parking lots.

**Forest Type:** Wet-mesic floodplain forest

**Composition:**

**Overstory** – The canopy is dominated by silver maple (*Acer saccharinum*) with lesser amounts of river birch (*Betula nigra*), cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), pin oak (*Quercus palustris*), swamp white oak (*Quercus bicolor*), bur oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*), shellbark hickory (*Carya laciniosa*), northern pecan (*Carya illinoensis*), willow (*Salix* spp.) and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*).

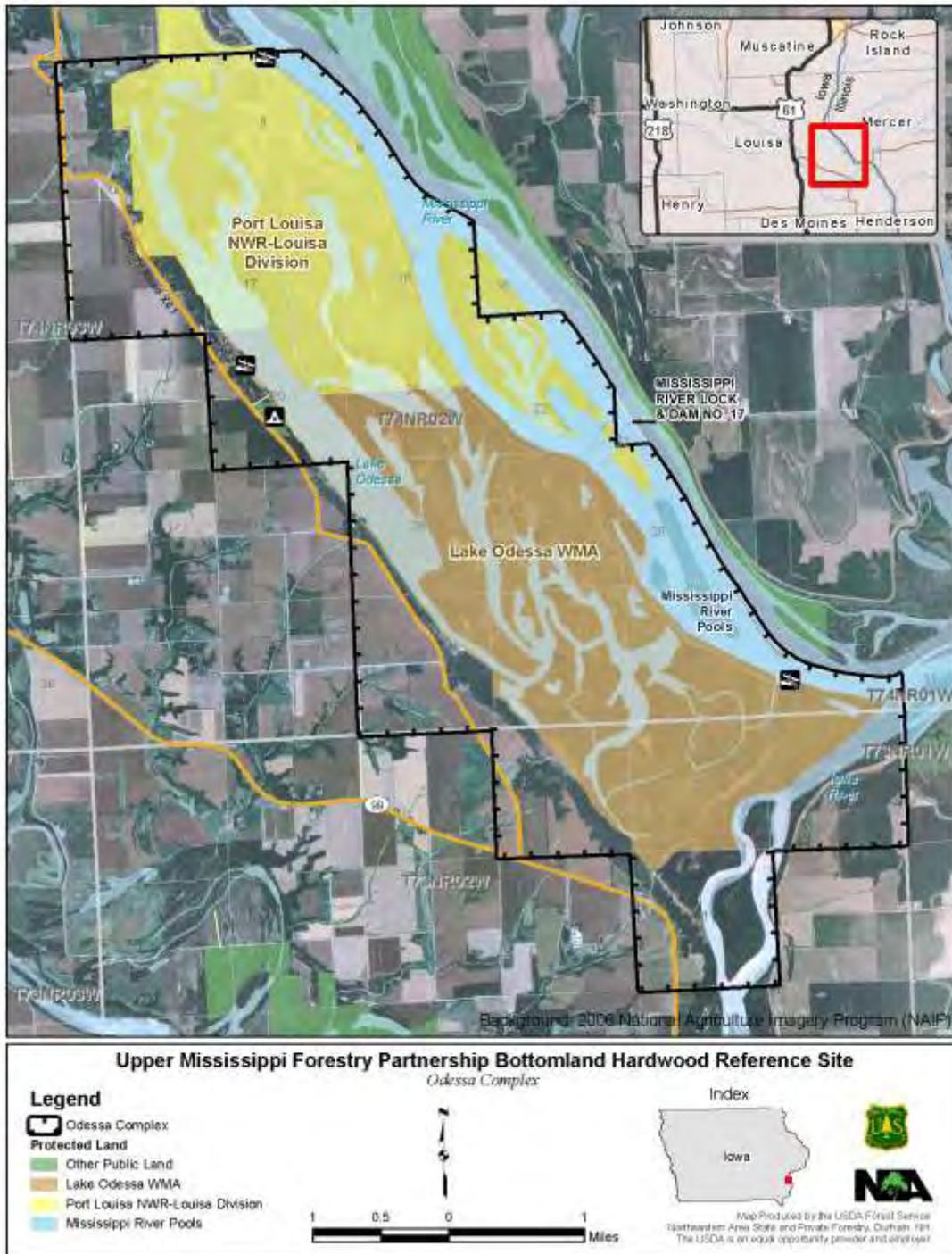
**Understory** – The shrub layer contains scattered fringes and thickets of common buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), the latter which grows in both shrub and vine form. Open areas and abandoned stream channels are usually dominated by annual moist soil plants such as smartweed

(*Polygonum* spp.), wild millet (*Echinochloa* spp.) pigweed (*Amaranthus* spp.) and a variety of sedges (*Carex* spp.). The understory of forest stands mainly contain silver maple and buttonbush for woody species along with white grass (*Leersia virginica*), poison ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), false nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrical*), beggars ticks (*Bidens* spp.), smartweed (*Polygonum* spp.), and wood nettle (*Laportea Canadensis*) as the most common herbaceous plants.

**Management Challenges:**

- **Impact of raised water table from lock and dam 17**
  - Saturated root zones
  - Shoreline erosion
  - Recreational use pressure for higher water
- **Fish and wildlife management**
  - Migratory birds—priority management
  - Threatened and endangered species conservation
  - Invasive species
- **Forest Management**
  - Seedling regeneration
  - Species, size, and age class composition of floodplain forest
  - Natural and artificial disturbance regimes
  - Water level management

**Comments:** The Odessa Complex is a bottomland forest and wetland complex located just above the mouth of the Iowa River. It is made up of a state wildlife area and a national wildlife refuge where management is a cooperative effort between the two agencies. It contains a maze of forested islands, chutes, ponds, and channels with permanent and seasonal wetlands. The site has four active bald eagle nests, and is home to several state-listed reptiles and birds. The Odessa Complex is a very important bottomland oak site along the Upper Mississippi River. It is locally one of the few public areas that boast some natural regeneration of this ever decreasing forest type.



Google Map:

<http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&ll=41.182088,-91.081477&spn=0.181133,0.308647&t=h&z=12&msid=107331387290931634668.0004719425dd0a8d0316c>