

MUD LAKE BOG:

Landscape change from 1940 to 2010



1940



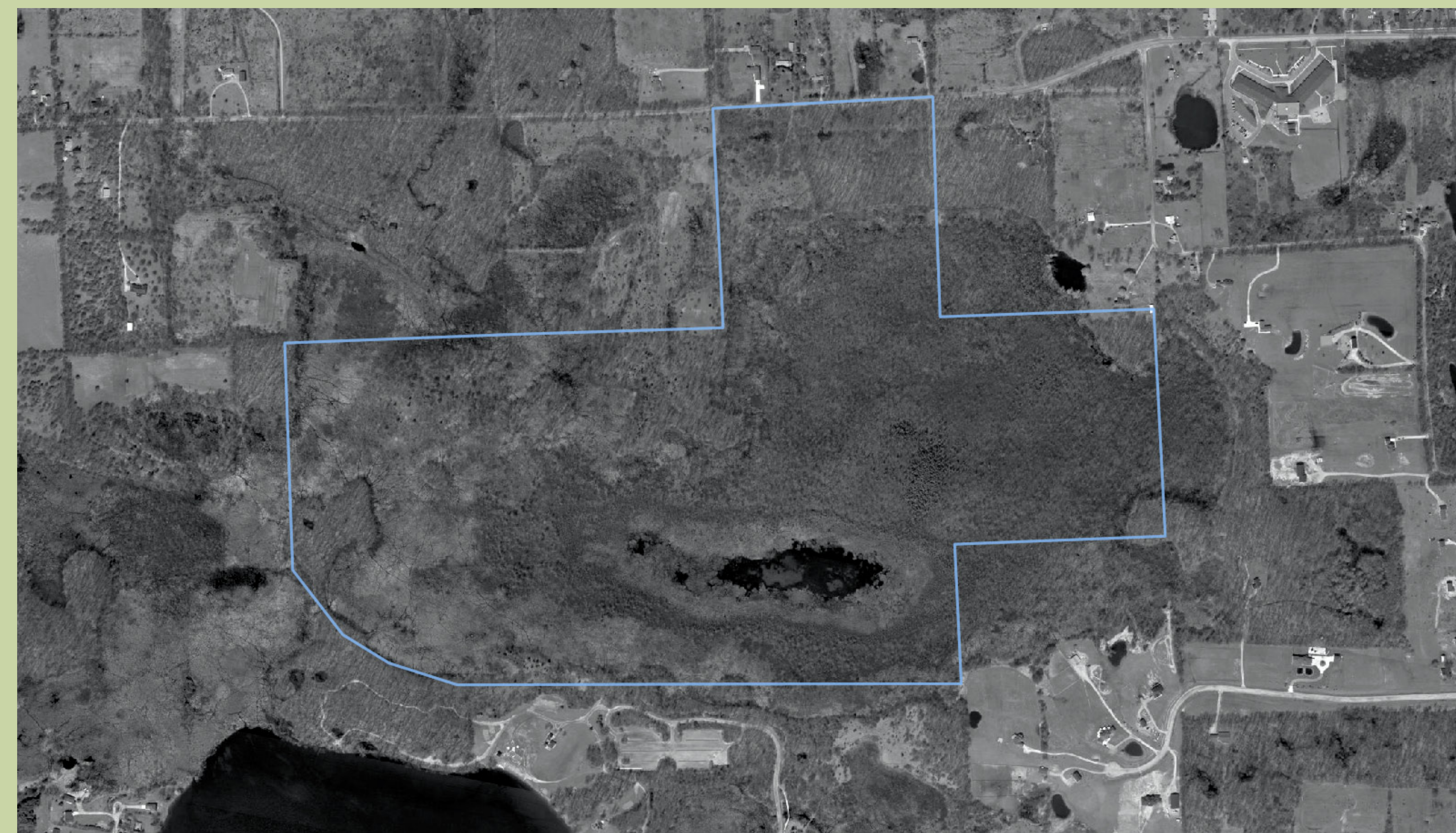
1966



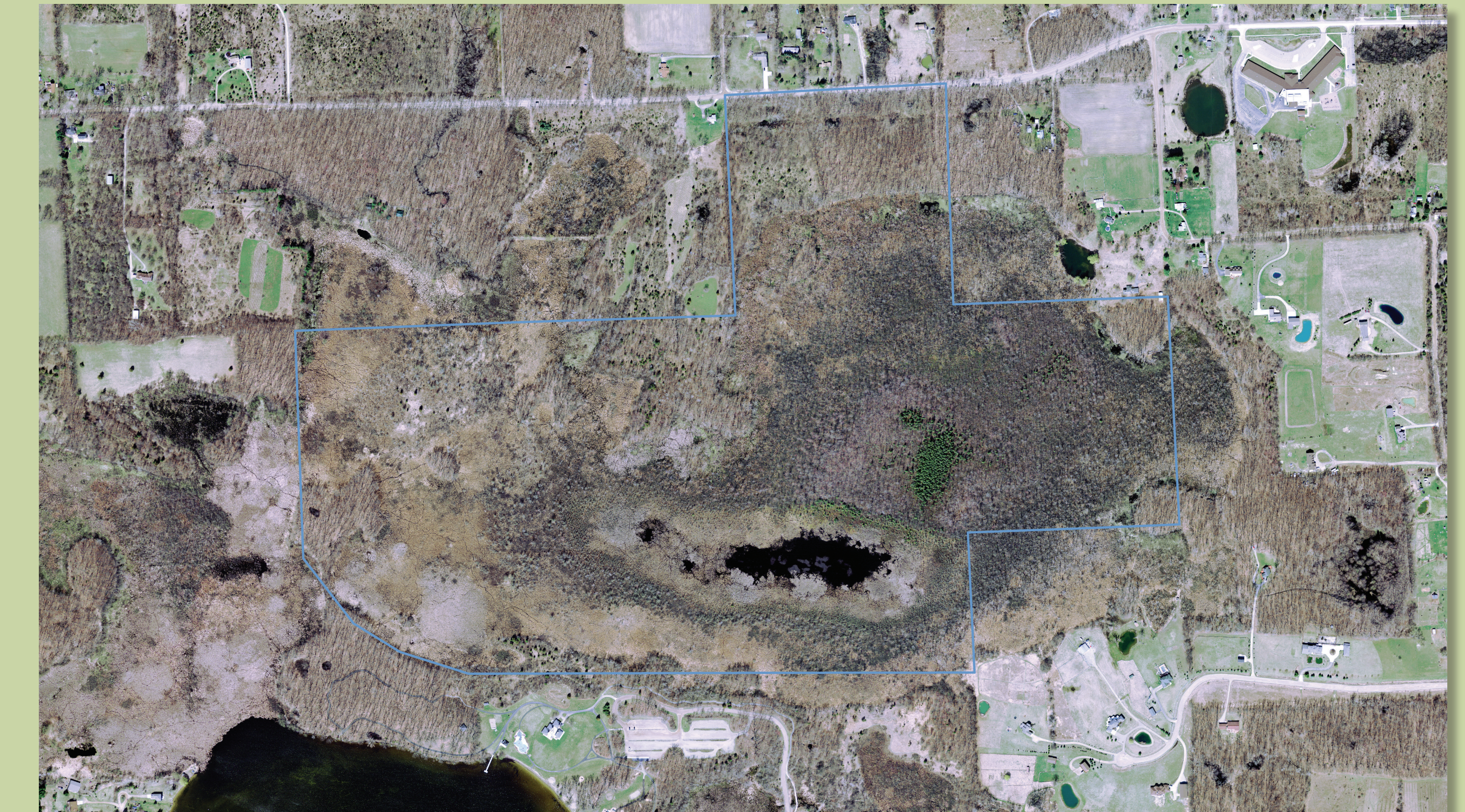
1984



1990



2002



2010

Mud Lake Bog, owned by the University since 1955, is more than just a bog. Of the 260 acre property, just a small portion is truly a bog ecosystem--an open, often floating, wetland characterized by a lack of water inputs from either groundwater or streams, and by acid-loving plants adapted to nutrient-poor conditions. Mud Lake itself was probably once an arm of nearby Independence Lake, and much of the surrounding wetland complex is likely still influenced by the larger lake. Much of the western side of the property therefore tends toward southern wet meadow, shrub-carr and rich tamarack swamp, which are home to several calcium-loving plants that benefit from groundwater input.

The north-eastern section of the property is mainly southern hardwood swamp, in which Elm trees were once common. With the advent of Dutch Elm Disease, many of the swamp's large trees were lost, and appear to have been succeeded by dense thickets of High-bush Blueberry and Michigan Holly. One area consists of poor conifer swamp dominated by Black Spruce, which has a bog-like carpet of sphagnum moss.

From the mid-1800s to early 1900s, locals occasionally harvested Tamarack and Black Spruce from around Mud Lake Bog, and accounts tell of intense fires that occurred in 1855, 1887, and around 1934. Several small islands within the wetland complex support oak-hickory woodlands that may once have been used for grazing livestock. Areas of wet meadow were likely mowed for marsh hay in the past, which may have protected them from being overtaken by shrubs. By 1940, the majority of the land surrounding Mud Lake Bog was farmed. Since that time, most farms have been subdivided, and the area has trended toward low-density, single family residential use. Fortunately, Mud Lake Bog is bordered on the south by Independence Lake County Park and thus buffered on that side from major development.