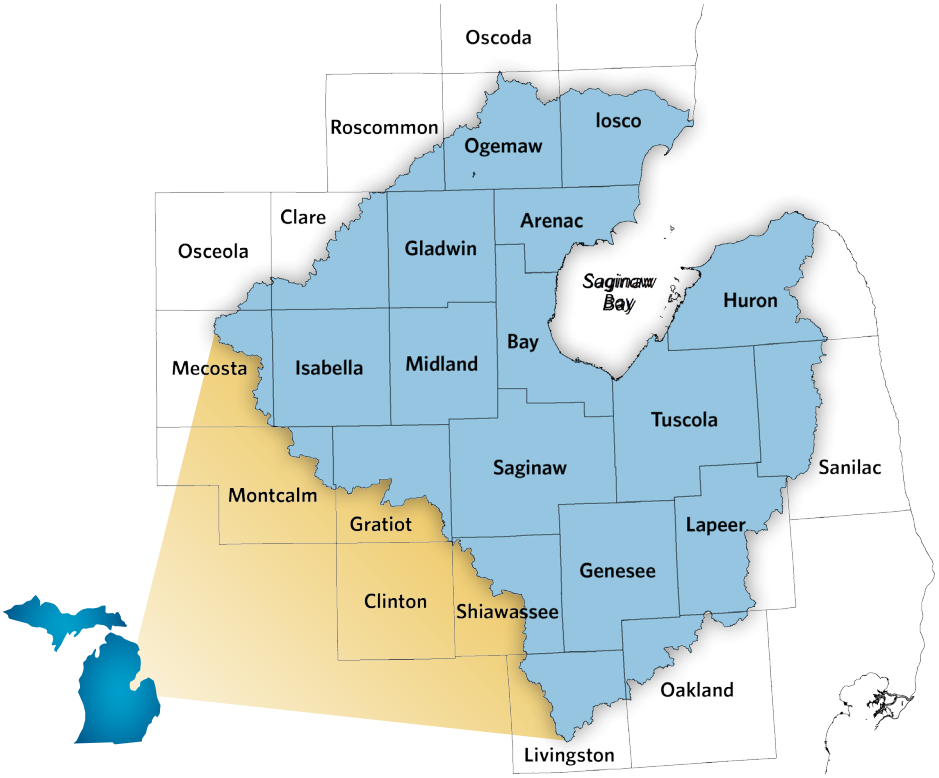
SAGINAW BAY WATERSHED CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

USDA

MABA



Michigan's Saginaw Bay watershed

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is being implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the 2014 Farm Bill. The RCPP makes $1.2 billion in federal funding available over 10 years to address critical conservation concerns across the country. Already, the Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership, co-led by The Nature Conservancy and the Michigan Agri-Business Association, is earning national attention and is considered by the USDA, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and others as an innovative way to address water quality resource concerns. The Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership will provide a total investment of $20 million, including $8 million in direct financial assistance and $12 million in technical assistance, to growers in the watershed to implement conservation practices intended to improve water quality for both people and nature.

Why Saginaw Bay?

The Saginaw Bay watershed is the largest in the state of Michigan, spanning 5.5 million acres and 22 counties. The ecological health of Saginaw Bay and its tributaries is critically important to not only Lake Huron, but the entire Great Lakes ecosystem, supporting a diversity of fish, migratory birds and other wildlife. It has the largest concentration of coastal wetlands in the Lake Huron Basin and serves as Lake Huron's most important source for several fish species, including walleye, and is home to some of Michigan's most productive farmland. With agricultural use covering 45 percent of the watershed's land area, it is crucial that we understand how to properly manage this land to balance agronomic and environmental needs.

How Does it Work?

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership is specifically designed to reduce excess nutrients and sediment in regional waterways throughout the Saginaw Bay watershed by employing three innovative strategies:

1. **Setting outcome-based goals for implementing conservation practices in optimal locations**
2. **Harnessing the influence of agribusiness and crop advisors to deliver conservation practices directly to growers**
3. **Tracking progress using cutting edge online modeling tools**

Agribusiness Delivering Conservation

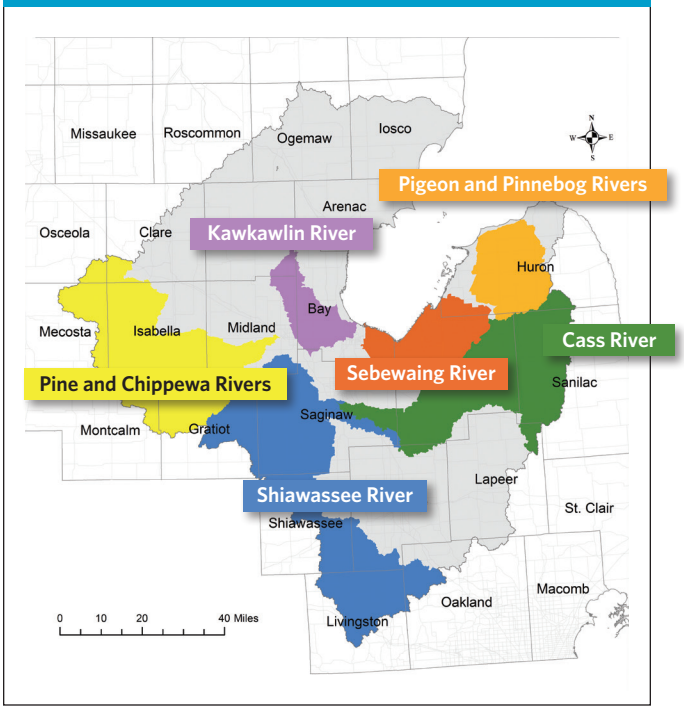
In partnership with the Michigan Agri-Business Association, this project will engage agribusinesses as a delivery system for conservation practices. Agronomy retailers and their on-staff crop advisors, who already provide year-round advice and technical assistance to growers, will work directly with them to deliver approved, measureable conservation practices in six priority watersheds including the Shiawassee, Pigeon/Pinnebog, Cass, Pine/Chippewa, Sebewaing and Kawkawlin River watersheds. The eligible conservation practices, including cover crops, no till, mulch till, buffer strips and nutrient management, among others, will reduce runoff of sediment and fertilizer to nearby rivers and streams.

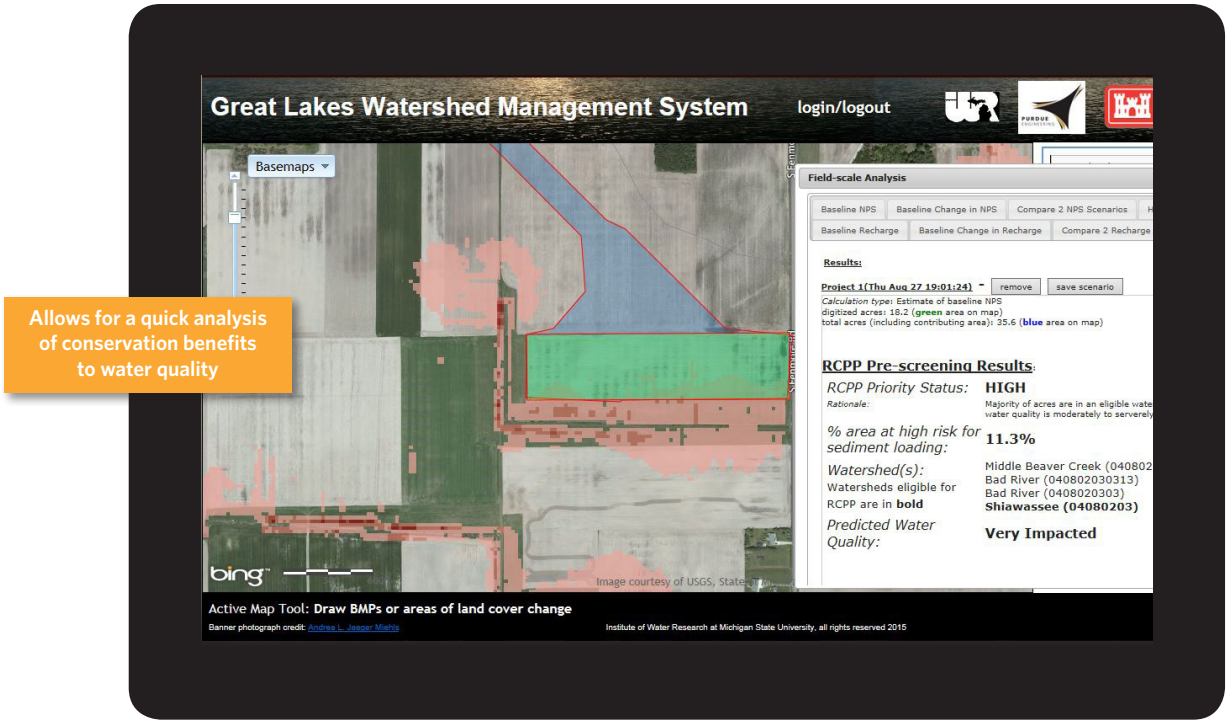
Precision Conservation

The right conservation practices need to be implemented in the right amount in the right places to have the largest return on ecological investment.

The Nature Conservancy has worked directly with the USDA in developing scientific models that allow us to link conservation practices to ecological outcomes. Using these models, we can now set realistic implementation goals that will result in tangible improvements in local water quality.

Priority Subwatersheds





The Great Lakes Watershed Management System is fully accessible online at: www.iwr.msu.edu/glwms

Online Tools to Target & Track Progress

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership will utilize the Great Lakes Watershed Management System (GLWMS), an online tool developed by Michigan State University's Institute of Water Research (MSU-IWR), to model, map, and track implementation progress and water quality benefits. GLWMS allows users to select specific fields and model the effectiveness of a landowner's management practices on sediment and nutrient load reductions to nearby surface waters.

GLWMS will be used by crop advisors to quickly screen potential projects for eligibility. Fields located in areas where water quality is impaired and that have a high potential for sediment runoff will be prioritized for enrollment. This web-based tool is an innovative step forward in conservation technology because it allows any user the freedom to quickly estimate the potential benefit of implementing these conservation practices at the field level.

For more information, visit http://nature.ly/saginawRCPP

"Our goal is to enroll approximately 25,000 acres in the program, putting best management practices in place to keep an estimated 2,695 tons of sediment on the land and 17,388 pounds of phosphorus out of the water annually."