



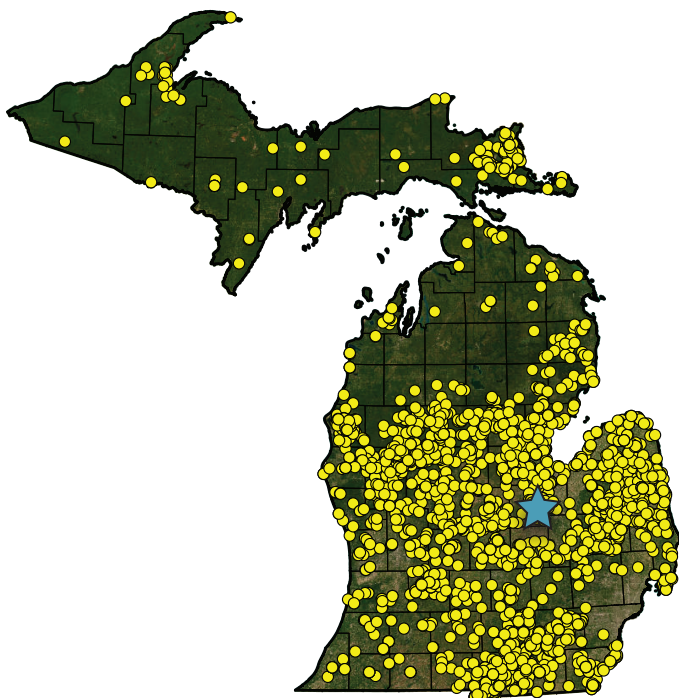
USFWS PROGRAM PROTECTS 40,000 ACRES

In February 2023, Ducks Unlimited (DU) in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) hired Colleen Gleason as a private lands biologist to aid in delivering the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) program. PFW focuses on improving habitat for federal trust resources, such as migratory birds, threatened and endangered species, fish, and pollinators on private land. In collaboration with DU, over 9,500 acres have been protected across the state since the mid 2000s; the PFW program has restored 40,000 acres in Michigan over the last 35 years. Gleason is working with landowners in the Western Lake Erie Basin to protect grasslands and wetlands, which filter nutrients—phosphorous and nitrogen—before they enter Lake Erie, a source of drinking water for tens of thousands of people and one the premiere walleye fisheries in the U.S.



★ RECONNECTING SHIAWASSEE NWR

Straddling the confluence of the Cass, Flint, Shiawassee, and Tittabawassee Rivers, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) is in the heart of the Saginaw Bay Watershed. One of the largest (10,000 acres) and most productive wetland ecosystems in Michigan, much of the refuge was historically drained for agriculture and fragmented by levees. For more than a decade, the USFWS and DU have partnered on a five-phase project to reconnect Shiawassee, restoring and enhancing habitat resiliency for native plants and wildlife in the Great Lakes ecosystem. DU and its partners (both public and private organizations) have invested over \$3.5 million to reconnect more than 2,000 acres to 10 miles of rivers, streams, and other waterways at Shiawassee. The reconnection of Moist Soil Unit 9 (100 acres) along the Eastwood Drain is currently under construction and expected to wrap up this year. Another 35-acre wetland restoration at Little Prairie West is set to begin in spring 2024.



Ducks Unlimited
PROJECTS

.....
● Completed Project(s)
.....
Note: Project points may represent more than one project.

ADM COVER CROP PARTNERSHIP CONTINUES

DU partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), Archer-Daniels-Midland (ADM), U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Farmers Business Network in 2022 to incentivize producers in Michigan (and Indiana) to plant 75,000 acres of cover crops to improve water quality and wildlife habitats. DU and ADM enrolled 45 producers to reach the full allotment of 37,500 acres in Michigan in 2022 under two to four-year contracts. Landowners enter two- to four-year contracts, receiving a \$10 per acre incentive payment each year. Throughout the cover crop partnership, DU makes on-farm visits to properties enrolled in the program to learn more about producer successes and failures. This helps DU biologists and technicians assist landowners during the program and identify new opportunities to improve yields and on-farm ecology.



WHITMER ALLOCATES \$13 MILLION FOR STATE WETLAND RESTORATION

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer made a major investment in the future of Great Lakes water quality and wildlife habitat this year, allocating \$13 million for wetland restoration. The investment is critical to the creation of healthy wetlands, which play a vital role in filtering nutrients before returning water to Michigan’s lakes, rivers, and streams.

A portion of the funding (\$550,000) is budgeted for urban wetlands, which make cities more livable. With so many paved surfaces in metropolitan areas—and fewer places for water to disperse during storms—urban wetlands are important to mitigate flooding (a single acre can store 1.5 million gallons of floodwater). Wetlands filter stormwater before it returns to waterways, absorb heat, improve air quality and provide greenspaces for people and wildlife as well.

“Michigan is making a serious commitment to strategic wetland restoration that will benefit Great Lakes water quality and the wildlife and people that depend on that habitat to survive,” said DU Director of Policy, Kyle Rorah. “We are just getting the ball rolling in Michigan, and there will only be more and more habitat development in the years ahead.”

According to Michigan’s Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, the state has just over 275,000 acres of wetland acres remaining. Michigan has lost 50% of its historic wetlands and, in some locations—Saginaw Bay and Lake Erie watersheds—that loss is as high as 90%. Michigan’s Department of Natural Resources will play an important role in administering the funding and serving as DU’s primary partner in actively restoring state wetlands.

DU and its partners have long advocated for Michigan to provide increased funding to restore wetlands near Saginaw Bay and throughout the Lake Erie Basin as they are vital habitat for breeding and migratory waterfowl and other bird species. Without enough healthy wetlands in place to filter nutrients from run-off, harmful algal blooms (HABs) have become an annual occurrence in both watersheds since the late 1990s.

“The Great Lakes state is known for our abundance of freshwater,” said DU Regional Biologist, Kali Rush. “It is our responsibility to keep water clean and the landscape healthy. DU and our long-standing partners are working diligently to include wetland restoration as a crucial tool in combatting HABs while providing breeding waterfowl and other wildlife habitat.”



DUCKS UNLIMITED conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

MICHIGAN CONSERVATION STAFF

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MICHIGAN NUMBERS

2023

- 601 acres conserved
- \$2,282,395 invested

HISTORICAL

- 90,699 acres conserved
- \$57,855,319 invested



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