

# Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

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

## What is RCPP?

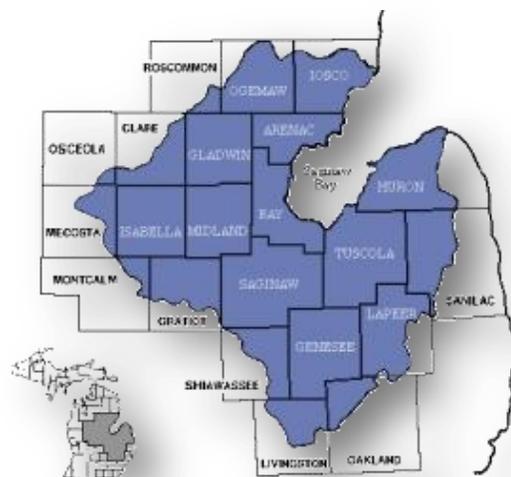
The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a new program being implemented by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the 2014 Farm Bill. The RCPP intends to make \$1.2 billion in federal funding available over 10 years to address critical conservation concerns across the 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 a leading candidate 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.

## 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. One of the most significant drivers of change to coastal and inland freshwater habitats throughout the Saginaw Bay watershed is fertilizer and sediment entering rivers and lakes due to

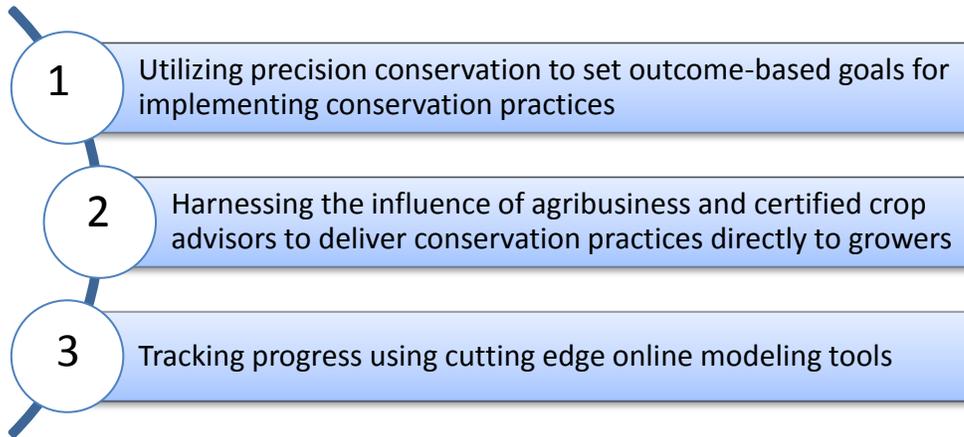
intensive land use practices. With agricultural land use covering 45 percent of the watershed's land area, it is crucial that we work to understand how to properly manage this land to balance agronomic and environmental needs.



The Saginaw Bay watershed is Michigan's largest.

## How Does it Work?

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



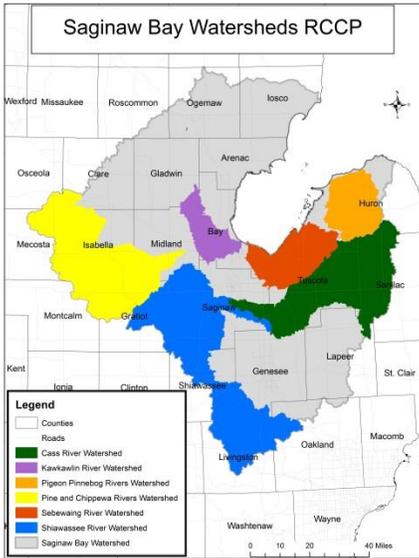
### Precision Conservation

This work in the Saginaw Bay watershed involves setting goals for implementing agricultural best management practices that are based on how many acres are necessary to affect a change in water quality. In other words, how much conservation is enough to achieve a desirable ecological outcome? The right conservation practices need to be implemented in the right amount in the right places to have the largest return on ecological investment (i.e. water quality improvement).



The Nature Conservancy has worked directly with the USDA to develop scientific models that allow us to link conservation practices to ecological outcomes, giving us the ability to set realistic implementation goals. Using these models, we feel confident that by implementing a certain level of conservation practices in the highest priority areas, we can expect measurable water quality improvement. We can measure water quality improvements by examining long term trends in the health of fish communities (based on actual fish sampling data) and predicted water quality parameters (based on modeling via the Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT)) for the entire Saginaw Bay Watershed.

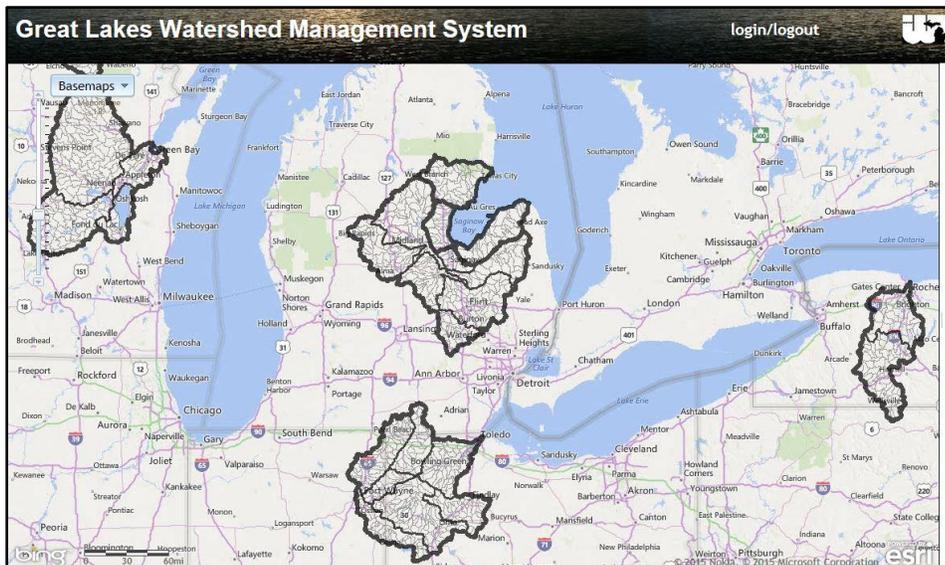
## Agribusiness Delivering Conservation



In partnership with the Michigan Agri-Business Association, this project will engage agribusinesses as a delivery system for conservation practices. In other words, agronomy retailers and their Certified Crop Advisors (CCAs), who already provide year-round agronomic advice and technical assistance to growers, will work directly with them to deliver approved, measurable conservation practices in six priority watersheds including the Shiawassee, Pigeon, Pinnebog, Cass, Pine, Chippewa, Sebewaing and Kawkawin River watersheds. The eligible conservation practices, including cover crops, no till, mulch till, buffer strips, and nutrient management, among others, will increase groundwater recharge and reduce runoff of sediment and fertilizer.

## Online Tools to Target & Track Progress

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Conservation Partnership project will utilize the Great Lakes Watershed Management System (GLWMS), a new 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. We will use this tool to quantify the annual increase in groundwater recharge (in gallons) and the amount of sediment (in tons) and phosphorus (in pounds) reduced for each conservation practice implemented. Long-term water quality improvement will ultimately be measured by examining trends in the biological health of riverine systems throughout the watershed.



The Great Lakes Watershed Management System is fully accessible online at: [www.iwr.msu.edu/glwms](http://www.iwr.msu.edu/glwms)

## Sponsors and Partners

This project is a unique collaboration between conservation organizations, foundations, agronomy retailers, higher education institutions, commodity groups, agribusinesses, private corporations and state and federal agencies. The current partner list includes:

### PLATINUM SPONSORS

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### PARTNERS

Agri Drain Corporation

Brown Milling

Delta Institute

Ecosystem Services Exchange, Inc.

Kellogg Company

Michigan Agricultural Commodities

Michigan State University-Institute of Water Research

Mondelēz International, Inc.

Syngenta

### SUPPORTERS

Cass River Greenway

Chippewa Watershed Conservancy

Friends of the Shiawassee River

Little Forks Conservancy

Michigan Bean Commission

Michigan Corn Growers Association

Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee

Michigan Wheat Program

Partnership for the Saginaw Bay Watershed

Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy

Saginaw Bay Resources Conservation and Development

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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