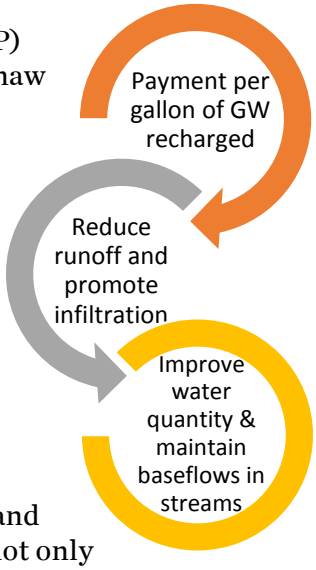
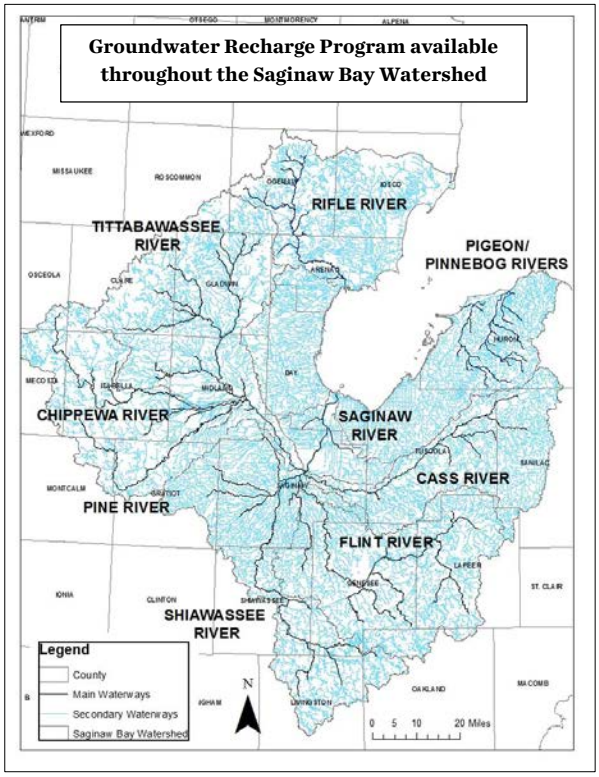
Pay-for-Performance Conservation

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Groundwater Recharge Pay-for-Performance (GWR PfP) Project offers a non-traditional conservation funding option for farmers in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. Through GWR PfP, participants are eligible to receive annual payments based on the increase in groundwater recharge (in gallons) achieved by adopting new agricultural best management practices (BMPs). The groundwater recharge impacts from new conservation practices can be estimated by using the Great Lakes Watershed Management System (GLWMS; available at www.iwr.msu.edu/glwms). The GLWMS is a web-based tool developed by the Michigan State University Institute of Water Research (MSU-IWR) and is used to quickly and easily estimate the environmental benefits of proposed conservation practices including sediment and nutrient reductions and groundwater replenishment.





Saginaw Bay Watershed

The ecological health of Saginaw Bay and its tributaries is critically important not only to 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 impacts on coastal and inland freshwater habitats throughout the Saginaw Bay watershed is fertilizer and sediment entering rivers and lakes via surface water runoff. 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. Many conservation practices produce benefits for both surface water and groundwater. Funding for this project is provided by a variety of The Conservancy's corporate partners who are interested in offsetting their water use by investing in activities that protect natural resources in the Great Lakes.

Funding Opportunities

The following best management practices are eligible for this project:

Drainage Water Management (DWM) – allows growers to manage their tile drainage system by installing a control structure on a main or sub-main to vary the depth of the water table seasonally. DWM is an effective water conservation tool with both water quality and agronomic benefits.

No-Till – is a management system that allows growers to plant directly into the previous year's crop residue without working the soil up first. No till can save time and fuel, increase soil organic matter and reduce erosion and sediment loss.

Reduced Tillage/Residue Management – is a management system (which includes strip tillage) that requires at least 30% of the previous year's crop residue on the field at the time of planting. Reduced tillage can also increase soil organic matter and decrease erosion and sediment loss.

Filter Strips - are grassed areas planted along waterways that help filter sediment and nutrients from surface water runoff. They also provide habitat for wildlife and help protect against stream bank erosion.

Forage and Biomass Planting – refers to planting forage in place of traditional row crops which can significantly reduce erosion and sediment loss, provide habitat for wildlife and pasture for livestock and can be harvested for livestock feed.

Conservation Cover - involves planting grasses, forbs or legumes in areas that may have been row cropped which provides permanent cover and habitat for wildlife and reduces soil erosion and sediment loss.

Riparian Herbaceous Cover – involves planting grass or grass-like plants and forbs in areas with saturated soils or subject to intermittent flooding in order to filter surface water runoff and provide wildlife habitat.

How to Enroll

Step 1: Those interested in the GWR PfP program should contact the Huron Conservation District (see contact information below).

Step 2: The Huron Conservation District staff will ensure your fields are within the eligibility area, and will use the Great Lakes Watershed Management System (GLWMS) to assess the environmental benefits of the practices you are interested in implementing on your land. The GLWMS assessment will determine how much groundwater can be replenished annually, which will be used to estimate an annual payment amount.

Step 3: If you would like to proceed, you can enter into a contract with Huron Conservation District which will detail everything that will be expected of you and your payment terms.

Payment Rates

- Annual payment for DWM = **$6.90/acre + $1,387 for each water control structure.**
- Annual payment rate for all other surface practices = **$0.000849/gallon recharged.**
- CRP filter strip BONUS payments = **$0.000849/gal in addition to normal USDA-FSA payments.**

Contact

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For more information, please visit **www.nature.org/saginawbayGWR**

The Nature Conservancy Michigan

HURON CONSERVATION DISTRICT