Healthy Waters
Working Farms

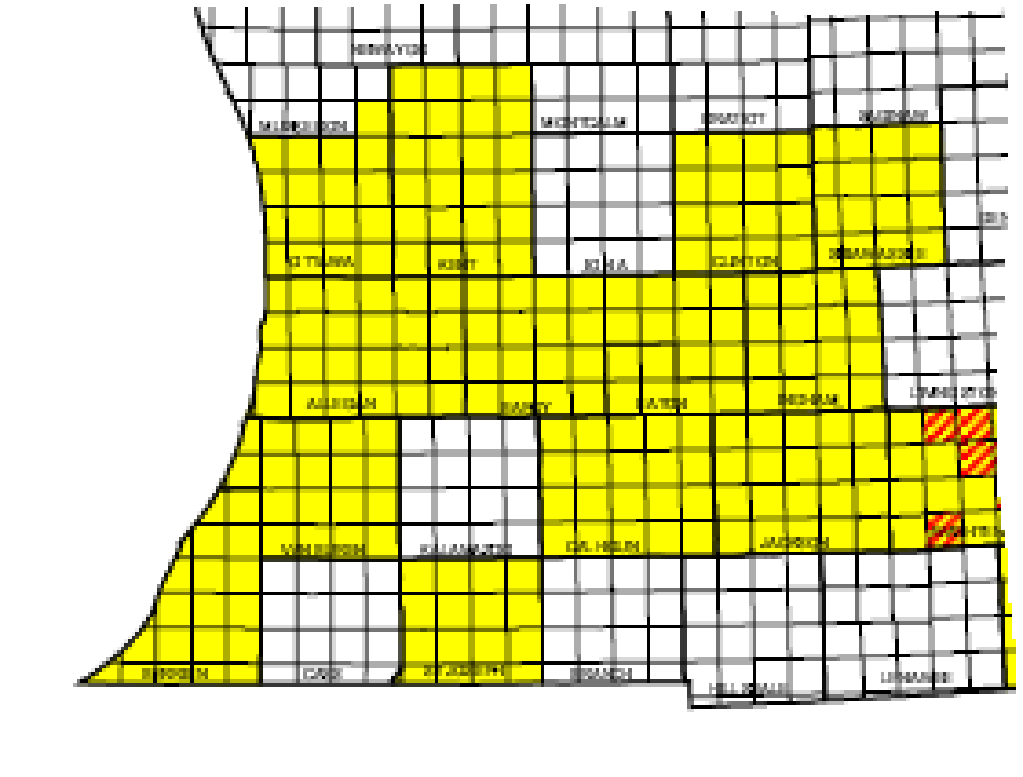
West Michigan Green Infrastructure Conference – August 5, 2015

Preserving Farmland & Improving Water Quality

- Why the time is ripe for this conversation
- What ***Healthy Waters, Working Farms*** brings to the table
- In the context of green infrastructure

Why now?

- **Infrastructure is in place**
- Farmland Lost
- Water Quality
- Water Strategy



This map of southwest Michigan shows counties and townships with existing Farmland Preservation Ordinances in yellow

Why now?

- Infrastructure is in place
- **Farmland Lost**
- Water Quality
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- Despite having a Farmland Preservation Ordinance, nearly all of the counties in SW Michigan lost farmland from 2007 to 2012 (data from the USDA Agricultural Census)

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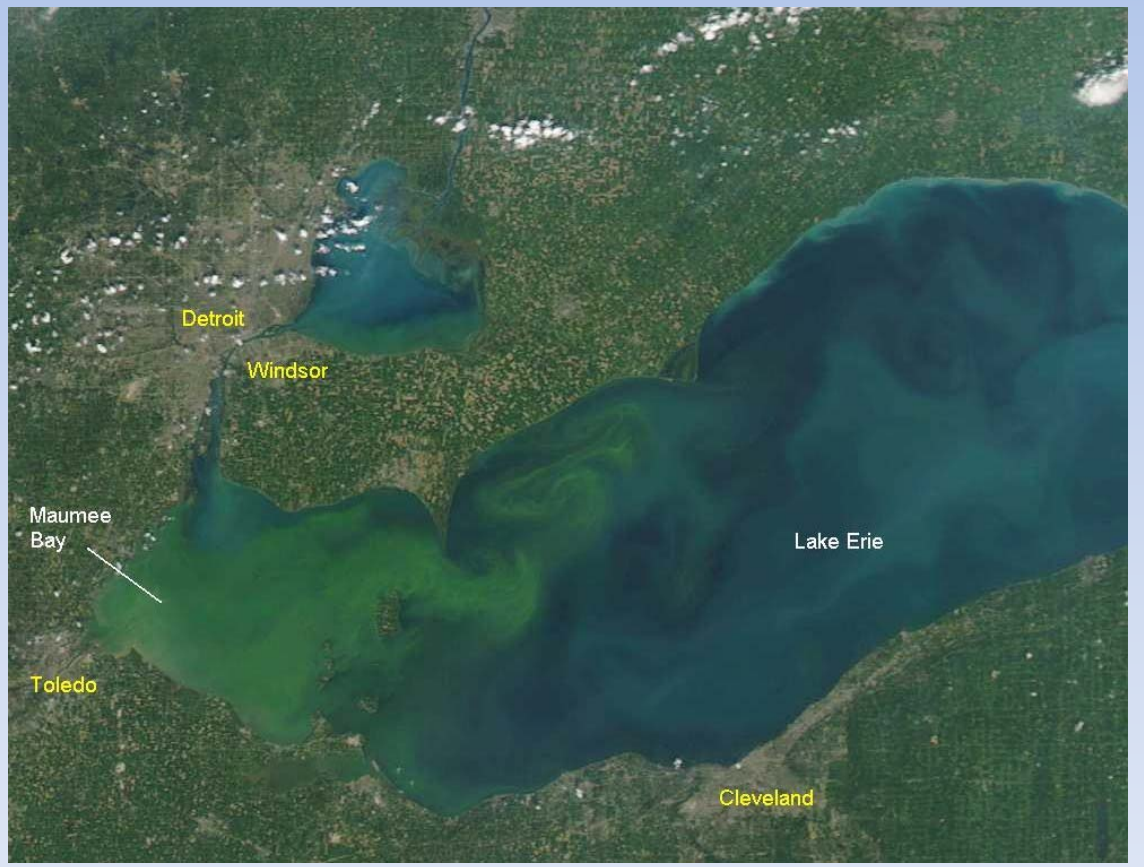

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What we bring to the table

- Water quality BMPs on the farm
  - Specifically, vegetated buffer strips along every inch of waterway and shoreline on the farm
  - Proven
  - uncontroversial
- Certified conservation plan specific to the farm

In context: *building resiliency and sustainability in the economy and environment*

- Preserved farmland
  - Recruitment tool for future generations of producers because the land is cheaper to purchase
- Water quality
  - Reduced sediment and nutrients benefits aquatic wildlife, recreation
- Buffer strips
  - Can connect fragmented landscapes, open spaces & green ways for people and for wildlife