



In May, in Michigan, wetlands are transformed by the profuse greens of the growing season. Winter silence is replaced by the chirp, click, and hum of birds, amphibians, and other animals; water teems with tadpoles, tiny fish, and new life. And in May, we join the nation in celebrating American Wetlands Month in recognition of the gifts that wetlands offer to our natural world and to our human communities.

This year, the theme of American Wetlands Month is, "It Pays to Save Wetlands." Protection of wetlands that provide flood storage, filter stormwater, and recharge groundwater rewards our citizens with significant economic benefits. These wetlands also provide open space and wildlife habitat that are not offered by more costly "hard-engineered" water management systems, maintaining natural resources while supporting sustainable development for a more livable world.

Wetlands also play a vital role in supporting Michigan's migratory waterfowl, provide essential nursery areas for fish reproduction - both in inland waters and in the Great Lakes, and are home to a large percentage of Michigan's threatened and endangered plants and animals.

In 2004, American Wetlands Month has special meaning for us because 25 years ago, Michigan's legislature was preparing to pass the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act. A quarter of a century ago, a far-sighted coalition of sportsmen, environmentalists, land use planners, and other citizens recognized the value of our wetland resources, and joined in supporting a wetland program that has made Michigan a national leader in wetland protection and management. We will acknowledge their contribution during a special wetland conference in Traverse City, on May 20-22, and in other ways throughout the year. I hope that you will join us, and that you will savor spring in Michigan's wetlands.



**Steven E. Chester, Director
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Earth Day, 2004**