

Water WoRDs

Updates from the Water Resources Division

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Encouraging Enjoyment of Michigan's Wetlands

We're gearing up for the WRD's big holiday potluck later this month, with colleagues coming together to share feasts both here in Lansing and at many of our district offices. Given the number of avid sportsmen and women in the Division, we tend to see crockpots and trays contributed that would make our Gourmet Gone Wild friends proud. In light of our wide-ranging interests, the WRD is very excited to be participating in a new cooperative partnership with our sister agencies, the Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture & Rural Development, and Michigan conservation organizations: the Michigan Waterfowl Legacy.

We recognize that most people see our wetland-related work in the WRD as purely regulatory, but our staff enjoy taking off their regulatory hats to focus on conservation and restoration activities. To that end, we are getting involved in the Michigan Waterfowl Legacy to highlight the importance of wetlands, waterfowl, waterfowl hunting, and conservation partnerships. We are participating both in the Legacy's steering committee and by joining focused discussions on improving wetland habitat for waterfowl populations. The Legacy is sounding a "Call to Action" to honor yesterday, engage today, and build for tomorrow by restoring, conserving, and celebrating Michigan's waterfowl, wetlands, and waterfowl hunting community.

Due to Michigan's long history of wetland management and mitigation within its regulatory program-- including both the restoration of wetlands and preservation of existing wetlands-- the WRD brings a unique skill set to the Legacy team. The restoration of drained or altered wetlands re-establishes and adds important ecological functions to the landscape, including the creation of new wildlife habitat, increased flood storage and enhancement of water quality. We also work to conserve habitat for waterfowl species such as Wood Ducks and Mallard Ducks, as well as many of Michigan's threatened and endangered species that rely on our wetlands, like the American Bittern and the Marsh Wren. Many of these habitat areas are also rare and imperiled wetland communities, including Great Lakes Marsh and Interdunal Wetland. The conservation, enhancement, or restoration of many of these specialized communities can require various management considerations and actions, which are familiar to our WRD staff.



Andy Hartz, one of the WRD's district supervisors, and his son (Andrew Jr.) enjoying Michigan's waterfowl hunting opportunities in Wayne County, 2007.

Some areas that make ideal wetland restoration or enhancement candidates may be protected under existing state laws administered by the WRD and our staff will be able to contribute to and promote wetland restoration project designs which also address various ecological and regulatory considerations in these sensitive areas. In addition, the WRD brings to the table its resources related to Landscape Level Assessment that support broader evaluation of wetland functions on a watershed or landscape scale, typically based on remotely sensed or GIS data. Analysis can be used to provide a generalized map of current wetland functions within a watershed, the loss of wetland function associated with past land use changes, and potential wetland restoration areas. We are also developing a wetland monitoring program in Michigan; expanding on some of the smaller-scale coastal wetland monitoring efforts developed in partnership with academic institutions. These monitoring efforts can help to guide wetland restoration and enhancement efforts for waterfowl, based on the status and trends information we gather on wetland quantity and quality.

The WRD will be working as part of the Michigan Waterfowl Legacy to focus efforts on their three target areas: Improve Waterfowl Populations and Wetland Habitat; Understand and Increase Waterfowl Hunting Heritage; and Engage the Public in Michigan's Waterfowl Legacy. This includes recommendations for the public to engage in these goals and in wetland protection by doing things like buying a waterfowl hunting license, volunteering on a public wetland restoration project, or helping with invasive species control projects. These actions and many more included in the "Call to Action" will contribute to the waterfowl and wetland goals of the Legacy and the WRD.

The WRD is committed to supporting the Michigan Waterfowl Legacy and in turn believes that the Legacy will provide us with valuable opportunities to enhance Michigan's wetlands as a source for recreation, inspiration, and beauty.



Huron County, 2012.



Nelumbo lutea (American Lotus), a threatened species in Michigan.

What do you do in the WRD?

Meet Anne Hokanson

I am the Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Ecologist, in the WRD's Wetlands, Lakes and Streams Unit. I work on development and implementation of wetland monitoring efforts, coordinate with Michigan's Coastal Management Program on the review of grant proposals and coastal priority projects, and I provide support and expertise to our field staff when dealing with regulatory reviews in coastal wetlands and Environmental Areas. I am also working on coordinated efforts to plan draft climate change adaptation strategies for Michigan's wetlands. I am always happy to answer wetland questions through email or phone calls. I also attend workshops and public meetings regularly to give presentations on coastal wetlands.

My favorite part of this job is the field work - I love to get out into our coastal wetlands and identify plants, habitat characteristics, and evaluate wetland quality using the Michigan Rapid Assessment (MiRAM). The field work keeps me motivated and hones my ecology skills at the same time. When I'm out in the field, I often talk to landowners, birdwatchers, fishermen, and other people just out enjoying our natural resources. I consider myself very lucky to get to experience first-hand how much these areas are valued by Michiganders.



Anne Hokanson

WRD Question of the Week

Do you know of opportunities where the WRD might support wetland restoration and preservation efforts in your community?

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