

## Paw Paw River Watershed Survey (2016)

The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is responsible for ensuring our waters meet water quality standards and are safe for swimming, fishing, boating, agricultural and industrial uses, and protects aquatic and wildlife communities. The DEQ has Aquatic Biologists that sample aquatic macroinvertebrates in the water, along with their habitat, to determine the health of our rivers and streams.

*“A watershed is all of the land that drains into a river, lake or stream.”*

**Aquatic macroinvertebrates are insects and other small organisms without backbones that live in our streams and rivers and are excellent indicators of water body health** because many live in the water all year. In addition, some macroinvertebrates are more tolerant to pollution than others. In general, healthy streams have a wider variety of macroinvertebrates than waters that are polluted.

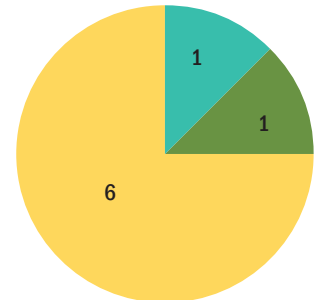
**Additional information can be found on the DEQ’s Assessment of Michigan Waters website at: [www.Michigan.gov/waterquality](http://www.Michigan.gov/waterquality)**

Routine sampling of the Paw Paw River occurs every five years to evaluate stream condition or health. Sampling occurred in 2006, 2011, and 2016 and will occur again in 2021. The aquatic macroinvertebrate community and habitat condition for sites sampled in 2016, are shown in the graphs to the right. A map on the last page depicts macroinvertebrate condition at specific stream locations. To request a copy of the full report, please contact the DEQ staff noted on the back of this fact sheet.

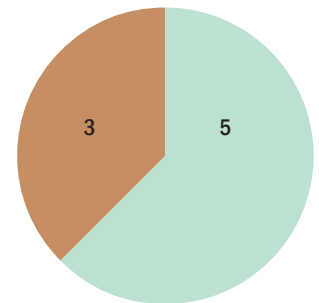
Overall, the aquatic macroinvertebrate community scored at the low end of acceptable and stream habitat (including habitat in the stream and along the edge) was rated good, or fair (see pie charts). Waterbodies in the Paw Paw River watershed that are not meeting one or more water quality standards and are on the Federal Clean Water Act Section 303d list include; Pine and Mill Creek, the South Branch of the Paw Paw River upstream of 60th Avenue to (and including) Three Mile Lake Drain, Eagle Lake Drain, Blue Creek, and Ox Creek. More information regarding waterbodies not attaining water quality standards can be found at: [www.Michigan.gov/tmdl](http://www.Michigan.gov/tmdl).

**Aquatic Bug and Habitat Health at 8 stations in the Paw Paw River Watershed (2016)**

**Aquatic Bug Community**



**Habitat Rating**



- Excellent
- High Acceptable
- Good
- Marginal
- Low Acceptable
- Poor



MDEQ employee sampling a Michigan stream



Calopterygidae

Jason Neuswanger  
[www.troutnut.com](http://www.troutnut.com)

### Watershed Land Use

Watershed	Natural	Developed	Cultivated Agriculture	Hay or Pasture	Wetlands	Barren Land	Open Water
Paw Paw River	23%	13%	40%	7%	15%	<1%	1%



Paw Paw River (T. Lipsey MDEQ)

### Land Use

The use of the land in the watershed that drains to waterbodies greatly influences the types of pollution that can enter the water. The Paw Paw River watershed is dominated by cultivated agriculture followed by natural land cover, which includes forests, shrubs, and other vegetative areas.

### Water Quality Data

Water chemistry data have been collected as part of the DEQ Water Quality Monitoring Program ([www.michigan.gov/waterquality](http://www.michigan.gov/waterquality)) and to a limited degree with biological surveys (*The link provided was broken and has been removed*).

### Fish Consumption Data

In Van Buren County, Maple Lake, Rush Lake, Three Mile Lake, and Van Auken Lake, as well as other water bodies, have fish consumption advisories due to mercury and PCB levels in fish tissue. The Eat Safe Fish link has more information. The DEQ is not responsible for fish stocking. Please see the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for more information: [www.michigan.com/fishstock](http://www.michigan.com/fishstock). **Fish Consumption Advisory Details: [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish)**

### Beach Monitoring Data

Public beaches in this watershed (including those on rivers or lakes) may at times be closed due to elevated levels of bacteria; especially after rain. **Although this is rare, beach closing information is available online through BeachCast: (*link broken, removed*)**

### Watershed groups and Lake Associations

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission:  
<https://www.swmpc.org/>

Two Rivers Coalition: [www.tworiverscoalition.org](http://www.tworiverscoalition.org)

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy: [www.swmlc.org](http://www.swmlc.org)

The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi: [www.pokagonband-nsn.gov](http://www.pokagonband-nsn.gov)

Van Buren County Conservation District: [www.vanburencd.org](http://www.vanburencd.org)

Berrien County Conservation District: [www.berriencd.org](http://www.berriencd.org)

Friends of the St. Joseph River Watershed Association:  
<https://www.fotsjr.org/>

### Sampling Requests

If you have a water body that you would like the DEQ to consider sampling, you can fill out a Monitoring Request Form ([www.michigan.gov/waterquality](http://www.michigan.gov/waterquality)). Requests are reviewed annually and completed based on staff availability, budget, and other monitoring needs.



