



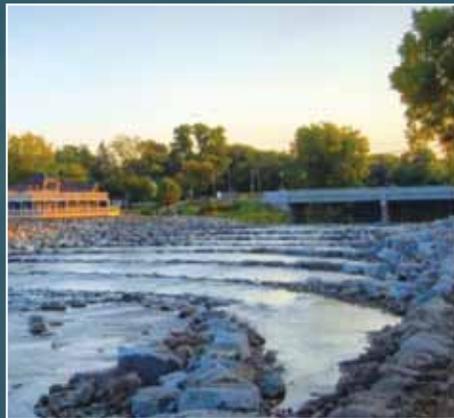
SAGINAW BAY  
WATERSHED  

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INITIATIVE  

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NETWORK



2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Dear Friends:

When the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) was established more than a decade ago, the founders of this unique organization knew they were creating something special – in a special place. They knew they were creating more than just a grantmaking vehicle, but rather, something that could inspire new ideas, address regional challenges, and provide a forum to discuss sustainability in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. They envisioned an organization that could take risks, become an advocate for the relationship of our environment and economy, and bring together a variety of organizations to focus on common issues.

With this in mind, in September I stood among friends and partners on a Shiawassee riverbank in Chesaning, Michigan, watching something remarkable: three excavators, two dump trucks and all manner of assorted construction equipment in the midst of a long-overdue, yet critically important construction project. The focus was something called a “fish passage ramp” at the site of the failing Chesaning dam.

This ramp, when completed, would reopen more than 73 miles of stream to migrating fish that had been compromised and disconnected for more than 150 years. WIN provided the first grant to make this project happen – and WIN partners offered technical and additional financial support along the way.

These kinds of projects are the reason the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) exists.

Our mission is to mobilize communities and partners to develop sustainable solutions for the remarkable region in which we live. In 2009, our efforts once again reached varied communities and efforts. From supporting fish passage and non-motorized transportation to developing and supporting educational projects related to the new “green” economy, WIN once again proved to be a catalyst. Whether it is through funding, technical expertise or simply helping groups explore new ideas, WIN helps transform inspiration into great projects and programs.

On behalf of The Conservation Fund and WIN’s partners and supporters, I present this report. I believe you’ll find a few items that will make you appreciate our region – and the vision of our founding partners – even more.

Michael Kelly



The Conservation Fund



## Where Is the Saginaw Bay Watershed?

The Saginaw Bay Watershed region contains rich resources in agriculture, forestry, industry, and recreation. As the state’s largest watershed, it encompasses nearly 8,700 square miles in all or part of 22 counties in central Michigan. Approximately 15 percent of the state’s waterways drain into the Saginaw Bay.



## A Catalyst for Sustainability

The saying “many hands make light work” can be

applied to our list of 2009 projects. Often when an effort is successful, it is because of the commitment and creativity of multiple people and organizations. This is always true of WIN projects.

What’s more, as a funder we understand that in addition to providing funding, our role also can be one of catalyst – one of the first hands contributing to making a project possible. In many cases, our contribution starts a chain reaction that leads other funders and technical experts to join in.

With our 2009 grants, we continued to focus on efforts that promote and encourage the wise use of resources and that showcase the exceptional outcome of collaboration. WIN is thrilled to be a catalyst for sustainability, promoting the notion that many hands do in fact make light work for our region.

Projects that received WIN funding in 2009 are as follows:

- Central Michigan University, Assessment of WIN-Supported Fish Passage Projects
- Huron Area Technical Center, Small Wind Generator Learning Center
- Friends of Bay City State Park, Spray Park with Rain Garden
- City of Frankenmuth, Cass River Greenways Project
- Bay City Tall Ship Celebration, Saginaw Bay WIN/Great Lakes United “Green Village”
- Midland County Parks Department, Chippewa River Universal Canoe/Kayak Sites
- Ducks Unlimited, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge Wetland Restoration
- DeVries Nature Conservancy, Shiawassee River Vernal Pool Restoration Project

## About the Saginaw Bay Watershed

- Home to more than 90 fish species, 138 endangered or threatened species, and 1.4 million people
- Includes more than 175 inland lakes
- Contains about 7,000 miles of rivers and streams
- Path for migrating song birds and waterfowl on the Mississippi Flyway
- Significant agricultural and industrial resources supporting Michigan’s economy

## Our Vision

As stewards of the Saginaw Bay Watershed, we value our shared, unique resources, and together we will balance economic, environmental, and social priorities to enhance the quality of life for this and future generations.

## WIN’s Guiding Principles

- Provide a pleasant and healthy environment
- Conserve historic, cultural, and natural resources
- Integrate economic prosperity, ecology, and aesthetics
- Use land and infrastructure effectively
- Continually evaluate and refine shared vision and goals

## WIN Partners

A committed group of 10 foundations support WIN with financial contributions and technical support. They are:

Bay Area Community Foundation  
Consumers Energy Foundation  
Cook Family Foundation  
The Dow Chemical Company Foundation  
Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation  
Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation  
Midland Area Community Foundation  
Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation  
S.C. Johnson Fund  
Saginaw Community Foundation

# Cass River Corridor

## Opening the Way for Water Fun

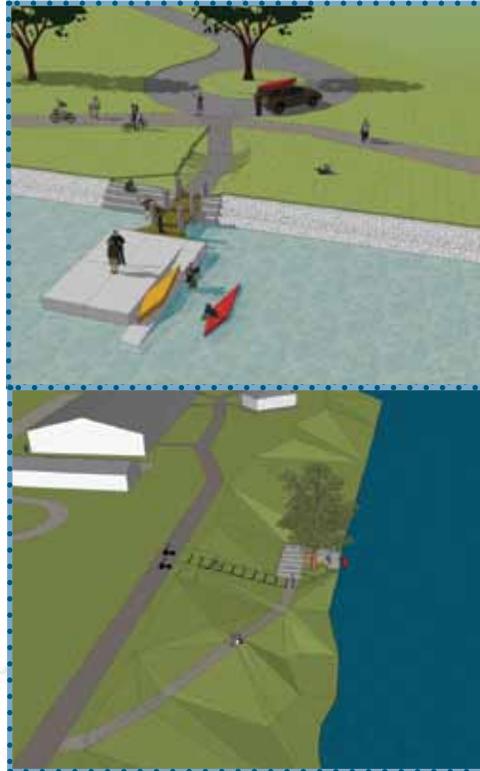
The vision to provide better recreational opportunities along the Cass River in Frankenmuth came from a report.

The Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network's (WIN) "Vision of Green" report describes a plan for improving the region's green infrastructure. When Bob Zeilinger and others on the Cass River Greenways Committee read it, an idea was born to start taking steps to make the river more accessible to water recreation.

"In 2008, a group of residents around Frankenmuth got together to see what we could do to improve the Cass River and adjoining greenway," says Bob Zeilinger, chairman, Cass River Greenways Committee.

"We decided to take a 25-mile section of the river and network with other people upstream and downstream to make it easier to access."

The resulting Cass River Greenways Committee includes representatives from Bridgeport to Cass City and all communities in between.



Using the "Vision of Green" report as a guide, they developed a plan to focus on three primary areas: recreation, the preservation and protection of wildlife habitat, and water quality improvements. The Committee also tapped WIN for an initial grant to get the project started and to encourage funding from other sources.

### Creating a Water Trail

Taking a phased approach to implementing their vision, the Cass River Greenways Committee chose first to develop a "water trail" along the Cass. Their idea was to

improve three specific access sites along the river for better boater and handicap accessibility. They

## LANDMARK PROJECT



## Improved Ecosystem Replaces Chesaning Dam

The dam in Chesaning was damaged, leaking, and needing repair. But when Chesaning officials sought grant money to upgrade this structure on the Shiawassee River, they discovered the dam was on the state's critical list for removal.

chose canoe and kayak launches in Vassar, Tuscola Township and Frankenmuth as their first projects.

### Three Launch Sites

One launch site will be at Vassar’s Riverside Park. This professionally designed kayak and canoe launch is on public property and is being expanded to offer parking, restrooms, picnic facilities, and interpretive and way-finding signage.

The design also meets requirements for disabled individuals. Easy access to the Vassar Rail Trail, the North Pavilion, barrier-free restrooms, and playground areas are other features to entice recreation to the area.

For those who choose to take the four- to five-hour water trip from Vassar to Frankenmuth, a new launch site is being added in Tuscola Township at an undeveloped site in the Tuscola Township Park.

Another site designed to meet requirements set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act, this launch area also has existing ball fields and other facilities.

*WIN encouraged ideas – and WIN encouraged others to fund our project, too. WIN’s support was really important because after we raised the local match, we were able to go to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to ask for additional funding. Without WIN, we wouldn’t have raised the local funds needed to apply for the state monies. It was critical.*

—Bob Zeilinger, Cass River Greenways Committee

Frankenmuth’s Heritage Park, near the Jaycee Pavilion, is the location for the third launch site. Here, a handicap accessible floating dock is designed to be easier to use for everyone. The platform can also be used as a fishing platform.

Construction of these three launches will begin in 2010. ✦

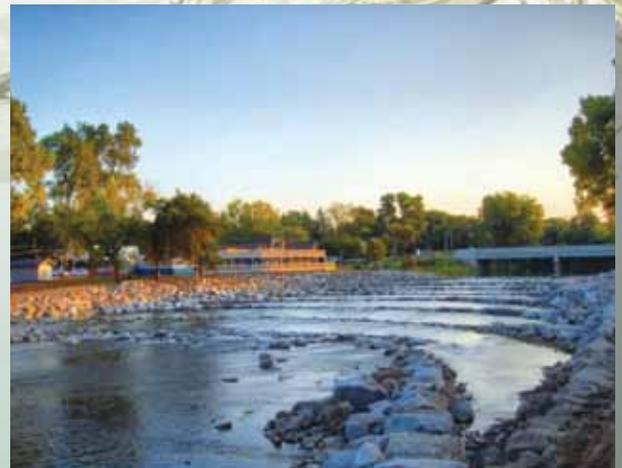
**Local Champion:** City of Frankenmuth

**Partners:** Cass River Greenways Committee, Vassar, Tuscola Township, Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund

**WIN Grant Award:** \$29,000

Built in 1863 to help power a grist mill, the dam’s original purpose no longer existed, maintenance and repair were no longer viable options, and the structure hindered fish passage to important upstream habitat.

An updated plan was needed to remove the dam and still maintain the water level of the Shiawassee River – to ensure the village’s ability to host its annual Chesaning Showboat Festival.



continued 

# Enjoy the Spray

## Combining a Spray Park and a Rain Garden

What's the best way to teach kids about the environment?

“Add water,” says Cathy Washabaugh, who chairs a committee to bring a spray park to Bay County’s Bay City State Recreation Area. Cathy and a group of volunteers from Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area are leading an effort to make the spray park the first of its kind for a Michigan State Park.

The Bay City State Recreation Area has more than a mile of Saginaw Bay shoreline and 2,800 acres of freshwater coastal wetland. The National Park Service has designated it as a National Registered Natural Landmark, with one of the best examples of a freshwater shoreline ecosystem in the U.S.

Washabaugh and the Friends of Bay City State Recreation want to make sure the region holds on

to its treasured designation. The group has been together for more than 16 years with a goal to identify ways to make the area more appealing, attractive and accessible to visitors.

### In the Spray

Not your typical spray park, this one will feature a rain garden, butterfly garden, learning opportunities, and other recreational activities. It will be located next to the community-built “Come Play by the Bay” playground and will have access to the regional trail system.

Slated for construction in 2011, this zero-depth play area will use a nature theme for the 16 above-ground water features and ground sprays,

including fun designs with frogs, cattails, fishing poles, and lily pads. The spray park will include textured, colored surfacing and a ground-mounted



LANDMARK PROJECT CONTINUED

Village planners, state and federal regulators, environmental groups, volunteers, and interested residents found their answer in river restoration.

The concept of river restoration involves developing ecologically sound solutions to restore a river to its original condition. In the case of the Shiawassee, the team settled on a set of natural rock rapids with resting pools where native species of fish can swim upstream.

activation unit, which will allow for independent play for children and families that have visual and physical disability challenges.

“A spray park is a cost-effective, safe, accessible alternative to a swimming pool,” Washabaugh says. “It’s also a good substitute for swimming in the Saginaw Bay, where water-quality and algae issues can keep people out of the water.”

In Midland County, Sanford Lake Park has seen a 38 percent increase in visitors since it opened a spray park in 2008. The Bay City group expects even greater numbers. And increasing park visitors increases the sustainability of the park.

### Water Conservation and Garden

With environmental stewardship a key consideration for the spray park, the Friends group tapped the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) to help with funding.

Key environment-friendly features of the park include a recirculation system to conserve water and a rain garden to collect and filter run-off – helping to clean out chemicals and pollutants before they enter the water system.

“WIN has been an important resource in our community for a project like this. WIN has a lot of credibility, and it was one of the early grantors. To have them partnering on this project has been instrumental in helping us raise additional funding.”

– Cathy Washabaugh, Friends of Bay City State Recreation Area

The park will also feature an attractive collection of native wetland plants and habitat, and a garden to attract butterflies. A walking path with signage will wind around the outside along an interpretive trail to provide educational information to visitors. ✦

**Local Champion:** Friends of Bay City State Park

**Partners:** Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Bay Area Community Foundation, The Dow Chemical Company Foundation

**WIN Grant Award:** \$25,000

Completed in 2009, the river restoration includes a 300-foot rock ramp structure with natural pools and riffles that allow for fish passage up and down the river.

“The restoration was a complete success. It turned out exactly the way we intended it to,” says Mike Nielson, project engineer at Wade Trim Engineering. “It is a wonderful example of a win-win-win for everyone involved. There was a lot of collaboration from



continued 

# Wind Power Boosts Education Power

## New Educational Program Trains Wind Turbine Trades

**W**hen students in Huron County think about farming, probably corn and cattle are the first things to come to mind. But today there is a new kind of farm cropping up – one that taps the power of wind.

Huron County is fast becoming a Michigan hot spot for this new breed of agriculture – with two wind farms and 79 commercial wind turbines. The Bad Axe-based Huron Area Technical Center (HATC) is taking advantage of the trend, with the help of the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN).

WIN awarded a grant to help the Technical Center purchase two styles of small wind turbines, similar to those used to generate energy in residential



settings. Students are learning how to install, operate, and maintain the turbines as part of the electrical trades program. With the new turbines installed at the HATC, students have direct and immediate access to hands-on learning and experimentation.

“When we learned the wind farms were coming to our county, we wanted our students to have a chance to be trained in commercial and residential wind turbines,” says Clark Brock, director of career/technical education at HATC.

HATC built a tower so students would have direct access to the technology. Eventually, the plan is for two larger turbines to join the two residential-sized turbines as part of a Small Wind Generator Learning Center.

### LANDMARK PROJECT CONTINUED



Before

funding agencies, local governments, and volunteers. We were all on the same side of the rock – pushing together until the project was done.”

Nielson notes that the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) was the first funding organization to step forward. “WIN was most definitely the catalyst. After they got on board, it wasn’t long before the doors for other funding started to open,” he says.



“Our Electrical Technology Program now includes a wind energy component,” says Brock. “This is part of the curriculum – to learn about alternative energy.”

### First for Michigan

Launched in the fall of 2009, this is the only technical center program of its kind in the state. The group also received an Alternative Energy Training Program grant from the Michigan Department of Education for this program.

The Technical Center has formed a partnership with Delta College, which is in the process of building a curriculum on commercial and industrial wind turbines. Technical Center students may eventually be able to earn college credits toward an associate’s degree as a wind turbine technician.

“To give the students a future in wind energy is pretty incredible,” says Jeanette Hagen, former development manager with John Deere’s Michigan Wind 1, the wind park in nearby Ubyly. “I think this

“Obviously we’re excited in Huron County about going green. As we can educate more people about alternative energy – like wind energy – we hope this gets more people excited about being good stewards of the environment. Like WIN, we believe in looking for more sustainable energy sources.”

– Clark Brock, Huron Area Technical Center

is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. There will be a lot more jobs in the future, and these students will be geared to the technology.”

And as Harbor Beach senior Aaron Pfaff says, this is just the kind of hands-on learning students need. “After all, alternative energy is the future,” he says. ✦

**Local Champion:** Huron Area Technical Center

**Partners:** Thumb Electric Cooperative and the State of Michigan

**WIN Grant Award:** \$18,500

The rock ramp design creates the water impoundment needed for the showboat festival, improves the river’s aesthetics, and provides for greater recreational opportunities.

As important, the project opened up 37 additional miles of river habitat upstream, allowing for fish passage and connecting habitats that have been fragmented for almost 150 years because of the dam. The team stabilized the river channel, erosion issues



continued 

# Fish School

## Researching the Success of Rock Ramps for Fish Passage

Students and researchers at Central Michigan University (CMU) in Mt. Pleasant have a new research project – one that will tell an important story about spawning walleye and lake sturgeon.

The purpose of the research is to determine if a new rock ramp has been successful at allowing fish to pass through for spawning in a 73-mile stretch of the Cass River that runs through Frankenmuth.

The fish passage project is part of a statewide effort to restore self-sustaining fish populations by enhancing fish passage over existing dams. By installing the rock ramp, the Frankenmuth stretch of river, plus many more miles of the river’s tributaries, will be opened upriver for fish.

### Rock Ramp

The natural-looking rock ramp calls for material to be placed immediately downstream of the dam, creating a gradual slope that does not require a separate bypass for fish passage. The rock ramp allows non-jumping fish to pass through notches within the rock/weir structures.

Although walleye and lake sturgeon are the fish targeted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, numerous other species are expected to use the rock ramp.

“This is one of the tributaries where the habitat is critical because the Saginaw Bay is dominated by walleye,” says CMU’s Brent Murray. “Walleye have a huge economic impact.”



### LANDMARK PROJECT CONTINUED

*There was a lot of collaboration ...  
We were all on the same side  
of the rock – pushing together  
until the project was done.*

– Mike Nielson, Wade Trim Engineering

were addressed, and infrastructure upstream from the dam was protected.

“The rapids themselves create a new environment or ecosystem for wildlife,” says Nielson. “There’s habitat available there now that wasn’t previously – for spawning fish and freshwater mussels, for example. This project sets the stage now for removing the next upstream barrier.” 

## Before and After

The construction of the rock ramp presents an ideal research opportunity. While fish passage projects have been implemented in several areas across the Great Lakes region, this site will represent only the third time that a rock ramp has been used in Michigan. It will also be one of the largest projects of its kind in the Great Lakes.



The WIN investment will support on-the-ground analysis of how well these structures pass fish and will provide early data on the success of fish spawning above the dam.

“This research project builds into larger research questions that are basin-wide,” says Murray.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be joining CMU researchers and students on this project – providing staff and financial support as available. ✦

**Local Champion:** Central Michigan University

**Partners:** Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

**WIN Grant Award:** \$30,000



*This project wouldn't be anywhere without WIN. WIN has provided critical funding to launch us into research funding for a larger project. This is a recurring theme for WIN. They get things started and then things can create an energy of their own.*

— Brent Murray, Central Michigan University

## WIN Funding Process

WIN follows a unique, interactive process for awarding grant funding for projects and initiatives. Throughout the community-based review process, individuals from many organizations take part by reviewing project applications and offering their expertise on a variety of topics.

WIN awards grant funding twice each year; there are no grant deadlines. If you have a project to submit for funding consideration, contact WIN at (989) 892-9171 for an application.



For more information about WIN, visit [www.saginawbaywin.org](http://www.saginawbaywin.org) or contact:

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