



The watershed contains about 7,000 miles of rivers and streams and 175 inland lakes; it touches 22 of Michigan's 83 counties and has a population of 1.4 million. Land use ranges from natural areas to intensive agriculture and industrial settings. Most industry is centered in the urban areas of Flint, Saginaw, Midland, and Bay City. Half of the watershed's land is devoted to agriculture.

### WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS?

Human activities have polluted the waters of the Saginaw Bay and its tributaries, causing contaminated sediments from toxic discharges, excessive nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen runoff from farms and residences, soil erosion, and sewer overflows. This pollution has resulted in significant loss of recreational opportunities, natural habitat, and fish and wildlife populations, as well as fish consumption advisories. Because of this, the Saginaw River and Bay were listed as an Area of Concern by the International Joint Commission, the resource management agency created by treaty between the U.S. and Canada.

### WHAT IS BEING DONE?

Things are improving! A Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was developed in 1988 to outline federal, state, and local actions to address these problems. A 1994 RAP update documented that more than two-thirds of the 101 initial cleanup activities had been at least partially implemented and identified new actions to advance the cleanup effort. Private industry and government have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to reduce toxic discharges to the air or water and to correct sewer overflows.

### WHO IS THE PARTNERSHIP?

The Saginaw Basin Alliance and the Saginaw Bay Watershed Council merged in 1995 to create the *Partnership for the Saginaw Bay Watershed*. The *Partnership* works with government and the private sector to facilitate coordination and public involvement in the wise use and restoration of the Saginaw Bay's impaired natural resources. It also coordinates public involvement and comment for the Remedial Action Plan and for encouraging efforts to implement the RAP's recommendations.

The Board includes representatives from local government, agriculture, education, business, industry, environmental organizations, and the general public and conducts monthly public meetings to address water quality issues throughout the watershed.

### WHERE ARE WE NOW?

In 2001, a second RAP update concluded that the RAP process has been successful in identifying key issues for restoring the ecosystem of the Saginaw River and Bay and that significant remedial actions are being taken. Stakeholders are optimistic that these valuable natural resources can be enhanced and maintained into the future. Recent activities include:

- Dredging contaminated sediments in the Pine and Saginaw Rivers
- Protecting more than 8,000 acres of coastal wetland habitat in the watershed
- Providing nearly \$177 million for agricultural conservation and water quality protection on 45,000 acres

These and other activities will help further restore and protect the Saginaw Bay watershed for current and future generations.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Join the *Partnership for the Saginaw Bay Watershed* to learn more and participate in restoration activities.
- Support community efforts to develop a watershed-based plan to address storm water runoff.
- Join and support local land conservancy efforts.
- Participate in community collections of hazardous household supplies, e.g., cleaners, paints, solvents, etc.
- Participate in local recycling efforts.
- Support state and federal programs that target cleanup efforts in the watershed.

### JOIN THE PARTNERSHIP

The *Partnership* relies on its members for financial support. We invite individuals, organizations, educational institutions, local governments, and businesses to become *Partnership* members. Each member receives:

- A quarterly newsletter, *Watershed News and Views*
- A membership certificate
- Periodic issue updates
- Access to educational and research material
- The satisfaction of helping restore a unique national treasure