

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

project flash

## Michigan Partnerships Receive \$100,000 for Wetlands Projects

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$100,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for **two projects** in **Michigan**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

### Hutchinson Property on Lake Leelanau Narrows Project

The Lake Michigan shorelines of **Leelanau County** in **Congressional District 4** are popular destinations for recreation *and* for residential development. With a mission of conserving the county's land, water, and scenic character, Leelanau Conservancy (Conservancy) has established several preserves and natural areas in the county's coastal areas to protect wetland habitats crucial to resident wildlife and to **Mississippi Flyway** migratory birds. When the Conservancy learned of an opportunity to expand its Lake Leelanau Narrows Preserve (Preserve) through the acquisition of a neighboring parcel, it, of course, was interested. The Hutchinson property—a 43-acre parcel with 850 feet of undeveloped shoreline—contains the same ecological values as the Preserve.

The property's wetland communities are some of the finest remaining in the county. The parcel's entire shoreline is prime waterfowl nesting and brood-rearing habitat, laden with numerous plant species documented to be important sources of food for waterfowl. Mallard, American black duck, and wood duck are species commonly seen about the parcel. The parcel's first-order spring creek offers ideal habitat for Michigan monkeyflower, a federally listed endangered species currently found at only 12 sites in Michigan. Additionally, the littoral-zone component of the property provides critical spawning habitat for important game fish species: northern pike, smallmouth bass, and walleye.

If this site is not protected, it almost certainly will be developed. The Conservancy has secured an option to purchase the parcel and will use its **\$50,000** grant and **\$350,000** in matching funds to purchase the property. With this acquisition, the Preserve will encompass 60 acres of valuable wetlands and protect some 2,350 feet of shoreline.

The Conservancy encourages people to visit the Preserve, where one can gain a better understanding and appreciation of wetland communities and the contribution they make to sustaining healthy wildlife and plant populations and to improving water quality. The Conservancy's efforts with this project also help to advance the habitat conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Joint Venture**.

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### **Pigeon River Protection Project: Busch Acquisition**

To date, the Little Traverse Conservancy (Conservancy) has conserved a significant amount of habitat along the Pigeon River in **Cheboygan County** in **Congressional District 1**, but its vision is grand—it still has work to do. Lying between where the river exits Pigeon River State Forest and where it empties into Mullett Lake is a 200-acre parcel with approximately 6,600 feet of frontage along the river: the Busch Tract. It is the largest privately held parcel in the area that is not yet protected from development.

This river corridor includes outstanding wildlife habitat: forested lands and wetlands associated with the river. The river widens as it passes through the Busch property, providing adjacent shallow-water and marsh areas that transition into wetland forests and uplands further from the river's banks. The river's shallow pools offer emergent vegetation—a favorite of ducks—adjacent to faster moving water.

**Mississippi Flyway** waterfowl observed using the property's habitats during migration include species such as Southern St. James Bay Canada goose, American black duck, ring-necked duck, lesser scaup, greater scaup, mallard, bufflehead, and common goldeneye. Wood ducks nest in the abundant snag trees along the river and raise their broods in the river's shallow pools and associated wetlands. Hooded mergansers also have been known to nest in natural cavities on the property and use the river for rearing young. Nongame species stalk through the wetlands and flit through the forest: American bittern, American woodcock, Canada warbler, golden-crowned kinglets, and golden-winged, magnolia, and yellow-rumped warblers, to name a few. It is highly probable that well over 70 species of passerines use these habitats during migration.

In protecting this habitat the Conservancy will help to maintain the biodiversity of this amazing area. To allow people to enjoy the wonders of the river's habitats, as well as the wildlife, the Conservancy may develop a limited nature trail system, allowing public access for birding, hiking, outdoor education, and hunting.

The Conservancy is joined in this effort by the Harris Family Foundation and several anonymous contributors. Together, they added **\$1,450,000** to their **\$50,000** grant to achieve their conservation goal. Their work also advances the habitat conservation goals of the **Upper Mississippi River & Great Lakes Joint Venture**.

For more information on this project, contact Tom Lagerstrom, Little Traverse Conservancy, [toml@landtrust.org](mailto:toml@landtrust.org), (231) 347-0991, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.