

# MICHIGAN Policy Priorities 2022



In a changing world, the concerns of nature are inseparable from the concerns of people. Growing threats to biodiversity, water quality and food supplies, a changing climate and other challenges make it increasingly clear that healthy natural systems are vital to our future, and the future of Michigan.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a global conservation organization, is committed to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends across Michigan, the Great Lakes and beyond. We have identified clear, robust goals that amplify nature's solutions—goals that support the resilience of people, communities and nature around the world and here at home.

This work is **ambitious**. It is also **necessary**. And it is absolutely **achievable**—when we work together.

The decisions of Michigan's leaders have an incredible impact on our shared progress toward a thriving future for Michigan. As a science-based, pragmatic and nonpartisan organization, TNC seeks to help policymakers make informed choices that sustain and protect the natural systems that are the foundation for Michigan's economy, security and way of life.

TNC looks forward to the collaborative effort ahead!

In 2022, TNC's priorities in Michigan include policy, investment and resource management decisions at the state and federal levels that assure all residents can benefit from efforts to:

- Safeguard Lands & Waters;
- Advance a Low-Carbon Future.



Helen Taylor  
State Director, Michigan

# SAFEGUARD LANDS AND WATERS

Here in Michigan, we live at the heart of one of the world's greatest freshwater regions. The thoughtful stewardship of lands and waters ensures they can continue to support an abundance of wildlife and provide vital services to people, from nature-based economies, to clean water, to the food systems we depend on.

## OUR GOAL: Improve Water Systems

**WHY?** Deteriorating water systems and wastewater infrastructure, public and private, can impact both the health of freshwater resources and the health of the residents who rely on them.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- Financial management solutions that help water utilities address their infrastructure needs.
- An affordable path for homeowners to upgrade private onsite water systems to avert impacts to freshwater sources.
- An equitable statewide drinking water assistance program that ensures all Michiganders have access to clean drinking water.
- Increased investment in green stormwater infrastructure to manage stormwater flows in urban areas.
- Authorization for local communities to establish utilities to oversee and fund stormwater management services and invest in infrastructure.

## OUR GOAL: Strengthen Coastal Communities

**WHY?** The spread of aquatic invasive species, declining fisheries and other threats compromise the vibrancy of the Great Lakes and the livelihoods they support.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- Policies and procedures to control aquatic invasive species and prevent the ecological and economic harm they cause.
- Investment in nature-based infrastructure that improves coastal resilience.

## OUR GOAL: Grow Climate-Smart Agriculture

**WHY?** As an intensive use of land, farming can increase the flow of sediment and nutrients to rivers, lakes and streams and reduce the amount of carbon stored in soils, undermining both water quality and long-term farm productivity.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- Support for farming practices that enhance soil carbon retention, reduce soil erosion, and protect clean water in our lakes and streams.
- New mechanisms for farmers to participate in emerging carbon markets.



TNC has joined a coalition of 40+ organizations, businesses and municipal leaders to call for more than \$4 billion of Michigan's American Rescue Plan funds as well as general fund dollars to be invested in water, broadband infrastructure, housing and economic development priorities. *Learn more:* [miroadmap.com](https://miroadmap.com)



TNC is a member of the national Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA), launched in 2020, which represents agriculture, forestry, conservation and environmental groups in an unprecedented collaboration on climate action. *Learn more:* [agclimatealliance.com](https://agclimatealliance.com)



Since TNC's Saginaw Bay initiative was started over a decade ago, the program has grown to directly impact 86,000+ acres of conservation through partnerships with 150+ farmers, keeping 6,800+ tons of sediment out of waterways and demonstrating the potential of soil health practices for the entire Saginaw Bay watershed. *Learn more:* [nature.org/saginawsoilhealth](https://nature.org/saginawsoilhealth)

# ADVANCE A LOW-CARBON FUTURE

Nature is our ally in managing the impacts of a changing climate and abating the negative impacts of greenhouse gas emissions. Conservation, restoration and improved land management can all help remove CO<sub>2</sub> from our atmosphere, increase carbon storage and build environmental resilience. When coupled with innovative technologies and emissions reduction strategies, we can address the challenges driven by a changing climate.

## OUR GOAL: Conserve Climate-Resilient Lands and Waters

**WHY?** Changing climatic conditions degrade and fragment habitat for plants and animals, affecting their ability to adapt and survive.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- The protection and improved management of connected lands and waters that help plants and wildlife adapt to climate impacts. *Learn more:* [maps.tnc.org/resilientland](https://maps.tnc.org/resilientland)

## OUR GOAL: Manage Forests Sustainably

**WHY?** With few financial incentives available to encourage sustainable forest management, we are not realizing forests' full potential for capturing significant quantities of carbon from the air.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- Support for sustainable forest management practices that access the full potential of Michigan forests to capture carbon and create carbon sinks.
- Increased opportunities for forest owners to participate in carbon markets.

## OUR GOAL: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**WHY?** While natural climate solutions can contribute up to a third of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions the world needs, we also need to change how we use and produce energy to meet emissions targets.

### MICHIGAN'S NEEDS:

- Accelerated investment in and use of clean energy.
- Investment in the development of carbon management practices.

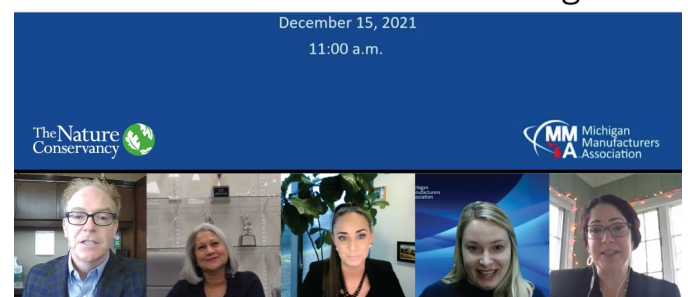


In 2022, TNC is launching the Family Forest Carbon Program for Michigan forest owners, in partnership with the American Forest Federation, to make carbon market incentives for sustainable forestry practices more accessible for forest owners with as few as 30 acres. *Learn more:* [familyforestcarbon.org](https://familyforestcarbon.org)



At TNC's working forest reserves, including Wilderness Lakes Reserve, the Two Hearted River Forest Reserve and the Slate River Forest Reserve, we demonstrate how Michigan's forests can be managed for increased health and resilience through practices that support biodiversity, carbon sequestration, sustainable economies and more. *Learn more:* [nature.org/michiganforests](https://nature.org/michiganforests)

## Sustainable Manufacturing



TNC and the Michigan Manufacturers Association, which represents nearly 1,700 member companies, have launched a series of practical seminars for Michigan businesses on lowering carbon emissions in production. *Learn more:* [mimfg.org/news-events/events](https://mimfg.org/news-events/events)



**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

**CONTACT TNC**



**Rich Bowman, Director of Policy**

Rich Bowman has been a TNC staff member since 2006. As policy director, Rich leads TNC's efforts to support policy that invests in the sustainable management of Michigan's land and water resources.

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