

St. Clair River Watershed Description

Michigan's Thumb Coast - St. Clair County



The St. Clair River basin is unique in its geography. The St. Clair River carries Great Lakes water 40 miles from Lake Huron to Lake St. Clair forming the international boundary between the United States and Canada. The American side of the St. Clair River includes seven watersheds that span St. Clair County. The river boasts the largest threatened Lake Sturgeon population in the Great Lakes, has ten islands six of which are land of the Canadian Walpole Island First Nation, forms the largest fresh water delta in North America known as the St. Clair Flats, and provides 11 million gallons of drinking water daily to 60% of the county's residents.

With Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding exceeding \$21 million, tremendous progress has been made in restoring the river's Area of Concern status since 1987. The river began with 10 impairments, 8 of which have been restored to a healthy condition. Restoration of the *Beach Closings* impairment was made possible by reducing pathogen sources through infrastructure improvements separating 48 of 49 Combined Sewer Outfalls, elimination of illicit discharges, and creation of green infrastructure projects at a municipal's riverfront beach.

A historic milestone was achieved with completion of 12 projects along the St. Clair River shoreline to restore habitat for fish and wildlife, including several threatened and endangered species. The projects showcase 5,000 feet of shoreline softening and enhancements, 3,000 feet of tributary restoration, fish nursery habitat, invasive species removal, 3 acres of wetland restoration, and 6 acres of fish spawning reefs at 3 sites on the river's bottomland.

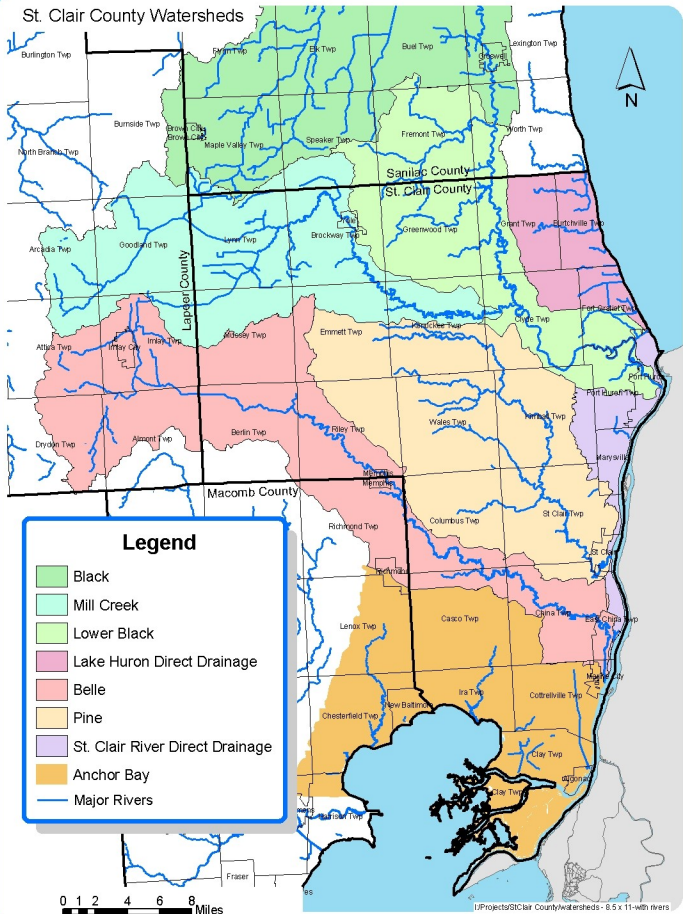
Recent studies looking at PCBs, mercury and other contaminants in tree swallows, fish, bald eagles and mink indicate populations are no longer being adversely impacted by legacy chemical pollution, leading to the restoration of the *Bird and Animal Deformities & Reproductive Problems* impairment.

Aimed at increasing recreation opportunities, the Blueways of St. Clair program provides over 150 miles of water trails and 45 public water access points across the watershed. The most popular water trail, the 10-mile Island Loop, received the designation of Michigan's first National Water Trail. In addition to 17 water trails, St. Clair County has 8 ADA universally accessible kayak launches on 5 different bodies of water.

Priorities for the St. Clair River and its watersheds include to fully restore the Area of Concern status, protect the river's drinking water from industrial spills, secure funding to implement watershed management plans, and raise awareness and stewardship of our water and land natural resources.



St. Clair County Watersheds



Legend

- Black
- Mill Creek
- Lower Black
- Lake Huron Direct Drainage
- Belle
- Pine
- St. Clair River Direct Drainage
- Anchor Bay
- Major Rivers

