Protecting Worth

PROTECT AND PRESERVE

Why should we protect and preserve marshes? Our coastal marshes are unique to the Great Lakes and are considered rare and in danger. When the wetlands are lost, it’s not just the diverse plant and animal life that we lose. Marshes also provide valuable services.

AT YOUR SERVICE

Coastal Marshes are important for...

PEOPLE

- They help reduce floods by absorbing and storing water like a sponge.
- They improve our water quality and drinking water by filtering and cleaning the runoff.
- Marsh plants and microorganisms use extra nutrients like phosphorous and nitrogen to grow, removing them from the water. These excess nutrients can cause problems like algae blooms if they remain in the water.
- Plants found in marshes help anchor the soil in place, which stops land from eroding and absorbs waves.
- According to the EPA, marshes are so good at cleaning polluted water, people are now building systems that work like wetlands to treat used water from farms, parking lots and sewage plants.
- Coastal marshes have long provided food and recreation for people.

ANIMALS

- Many raptors like hawks use wetlands to rest, nest and feed.
- Some animals spend their entire lives in marshes, while others use them for certain purposes like raising young – which is crucial to their survival.
- Animals also use the marsh for protection, hiding from predators. Others use them as hunting grounds.

VANISHED!

Marshes have disappeared at an alarming rate in the region. Nearly 85% of the Lake St. Clair marshes have vanished since the mid-1800s. On the American side of the lake, this figure is closer to 95%, making it even more important to protect the wetlands that are still here, like those found at Lake St. Clair Metropark, St. John’s Marsh (near Algonac), Harrison’s Island and the St. Clair Flats.

WHERE ARE THEY GOING?

Pollution, runoff and sedimentation (build up of a solid material like soil in a place where it wasn’t before) have taken their toll.

- Many have been filled in for development.
- They’ve been broken up into smaller pieces, reducing their ability to function.
- Invasive species are pushing out native species and changing marsh ecosystems.

PROJECT AREA

The marsh restoration project area includes Lake St. Clair Metropark, areas of Harrison Township and St. John’s Marsh in Algonac.

Are you surprised at all the services marshes provide to humans and animals?

1873 HABITAT

1973 HABITAT

1873 HABITAT

1973 HABITAT

Marsh

1873 HABITAT

1973 HABITAT

Non-marsh

1873 HABITAT

1973 HABITAT

Urban

1873 HABITAT

1973 HABITAT

Marsh Restoration: This project is a cooperative effort of Huron Clinton Metropolitan Authority, Michigan Sea Grant (University of Michigan and Michigan State University), Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Ducks Unlimited, Harrison Township, and the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. Additional partners include the St. Clair Flats Wetlandowners, Inc. and the St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission.