

The Thumb Naturalist

October 2025, special edition

Supporting nature and naturalists of Michigan's Thumb region and adjacent Ontario

The Thumb Land Conservancy (TLC) has been working tirelessly to preserve and restore some of the most ecologically important natural areas in Michigan's Thumb region, using most donor dollars to expand, connect, and steward over 350 acres of rare habitat including dune and swale forests, lakeplain prairies, and wetlands, with the remainder being used for education.

With a focus on land acquisition, invasive species removal, native species propagation, and public access, the TLC is protecting threatened ecosystems while creating future recreational trails and nature sanctuaries for residents and visitors alike. From the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park to the Morley and

Loznak Sanctuaries, and efforts like Ramsar designation for the St. Clair River Delta, the TLC is safeguarding biodiversity and building a natural legacy. Our mission is clear: to protect and connect natural spaces across the Thumb, keeping them wild, accessible, and thriving for generations to come.

The TLC is a volunteer-driven organization focused entirely on land protection and stewardship. As we seek to expand our capacity to steward our preserves and acquire new land, please consider supporting us! Read on to discover how the TLC has been putting donor's dollars to work.

Saving Rare Places, One Acre at a Time

The Thumb Land Conservancy has spent over a decade building the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park—a growing network of preserves protecting one of the rarest ecosystems in Michigan. Stretching over three miles along Lake Huron's shoreline, this park safeguards ancient dune and swale forests and provides vital habitat for rare wildlife while creating a unique destination for nature lovers. Read on to learn more



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October, 2025

Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park

Fort Gratiot and Burtchville Townships, Saint Clair County

For over 10 years, the Thumb Land Conservancy has worked to create the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park, a group of mostly connected preserves now extending over 3 miles and approaching 500 acres along the shoreline of Lake Huron north of Port Huron. The Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park protects the largest occurrence of imperiled dune and swale forest from the Ohio border to Saginaw Bay; a complex of parallel sand ridges and muck wetlands deposited from about 4,500 years ago. This coastal dune and swale forest supports rare plant and animal species such as Purple-flowering Raspberry (the Lower Peninsula version of the Upper Peninsula's Thimbleberry), Yellow Lady-slipper orchid, Butternut, Eastern Hognose Snake, Blandings Turtle, Blue-spotted Salamander, and other uncommon species. The coastal forest is vital for migratory birds that move and nest along Lake Huron. The Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park is likely to become a major local recreational attraction and regional destination for birders, naturalists, and other visitors. When completed, the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park could include 800 acres and will include a 4.5-mile long trail connecting Fort Gratiot with the day-use area of Lakeport State Park.

The TLC has worked with the Saint Clair County Drain Commissioner, Fort Gratiot Township, Ducks Unlimited, and Presbyterian Villages of Michigan, among other partners, to expand, protect, and restore the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park. Funding partners have included The Carls Foundation, Consumers Energy Foundation, Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan, Community Foundation of Saint Clair County, Moore Family Foundation, Cargill Salt of

Saint Clair, Cargill, Incorporated, Ducks Unlimited, North American Wetlands Conservation Council, Bioregion Reparation Fund, SEMCO Energy Gas Company, and individual donors.

The TLC owns and stewards six preserves totaling 166 acres within the park, and has constructed about 2.5 miles of the planned 4.5-mile coastal trail. Stewardship work has consisted mostly of invasive shrub removal, like Common Privet, Tartarian Honeysuckle, and Japanese Barberry. The TLC is also attempting to propagate native plant species of the original dune and swale forest, including Tamarack, Northern White-cedar, Spikenard, and Yellow Lady slipper orchid.

The TLC is currently working to acquire at least three more critical parcels, totaling over 170 acres, in the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park project area to expand and secure the connectivity of the park and dune and swale forest as a whole. Without these parcels, it will be impossible to connect the south, middle, and north portions of the Southern Lake Huron Coastal Park.



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Loznak Sanctuary

City of Marysville, Saint Clair County

The TLC acquired the 11.5-acre Loznak Sanctuary in 2019 as a donation from landowner Richard Loznak of Loznak Real Estate Enterprises, LLC. The Loznak Sanctuary honors the memory of Charles and Elizabeth Loznak. The sanctuary is located adjacent to an industrial area along Wills Street in Marysville, east of Busha Highway in Marysville. Despite the impact of previous industrial use connected with World War II munitions production, the Loznak Sanctuary is covered by an impressive remnant of lakeplain prairie and patches of recovering young forest interspersed with the remains of concrete foundations reminiscent of monuments. Lakeplain prairie species on the preserve include Riddell's Goldenrod, Fringed Gentian, Northern Blazing star, Mountain-mint, Black-eyed Susan, Showy Goldenrod, Foxglove Beard-tongue, Nodding Ladies'-tresses, Yellow Lady-slipper orchid, Small Yellow Flax, Switch Grass, Oatgrass, and Michigan Special Concern Three-awned Grass. A unique plant species on the Loznak Sanctuary is Tall Boneset, a relatively recent arrival from the east coast via railroads, but uncommon and not recorded any closer than Monroe County. It is apparently not native to the region, but it is not invasive and attracts a lot of Monarch butterflies.

The Loznak Sanctuary is adjacent to the old Port Huron and Detroit Railroad line with an old rail spur running through the middle of the sanctuary. It is also adjacent to approximately 26 acres of unusual ridge and swale forest with an interesting alluvial origin along the Saint Clair River dating back almost 5,000 years ago. Historic aerial photographs and mapping show that, other than limited use of the property as part of a munitions factory, beginning and



Monarch butterflies in Loznak

ending with World War II, the land appears to have been generally undisturbed. A 1937 aerial photograph shows the Loznak Sanctuary and vicinity was completely vacant and part of a large swath of mostly open land along the Saint Clair River which may have been farmed briefly, but more likely grazed. Similar lakeplain prairie habitat in the Marysville area, where land use was not so intensive, serves as a refuge for plants remnant of original populations that existed prior to Euro American settlement. Michigan Threatened Sullivant's Milkweed, a rare lakeplain prairie plant found in only 8 southeast counties in Michigan, is known from several nearby locations in the Marysville area.

Much of the TLC stewardship work on the Loznak Sanctuary has been removal of invasive weeds across the preserve, including Callery Pear, Autumn-olive, Common Buckthorn, Spotted Knapweed, and invasive Phragmites Reed. We have also removed a lot of old fill debris across the prairie and constructed foot bridges over ditches made from the materials.

In 2025, the TLC is working to increase the number of prairie plants across the Loznak Sanctuary, and also to introduce new prairie species from local remnants in the Marysville area. Species of focus have included Indian Grass, Cord Grass, Yellow Lady-slipper orchid, Butterfly Milkweed, Fringed Gentian, Northern Blazing-star, Marsh Blazing-star, and Missouri Ironweed.

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Morley Sanctuary

Bangor Township, Bay County

Thanks to a Wetland Conservation Program grant provided by Ducks Unlimited and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, the TLC acquired the 113-acre Morley Sanctuary in 2025. The Morley Sanctuary consists of about 95 acres of imperiled lakeplain prairie along the south side of the Kawkawlin River, only a half-mile west of Saginaw Bay; one of the larger intact occurrences of lakeplain prairie that remained unprotected in the Bay City area.

Lakeplain prairie is a species-rich grass-dominated plant community on generally sandy soils near the Great Lakes shoreline, maintained by seasonal flooding, cyclical variations in Great Lakes water levels, and fire during dry periods. Saginaw Bay lakeplain prairie remnants provide habitat for many rare species like US Threatened and Michigan Endangered Prairie White-fringed Orchid, Michigan Threatened Sullivant's Milkweed, and Michigan Threatened Tall Green Milkweed. In Michigan, lakeplain prairie was historically limited to shoreline counties of the southeast Lower Peninsula, and now reduced to less than 1% of its former range. Much of the original lakeplain prairie occurred along the Saginaw Bay, and in the heavily developed Bay City area, long since eliminated by farming, drainage, and development.

About 8 acres of the Morley Sanctuary consists of wooded beach or dune ridges covered by large Black Oak, possibly with Hill's Oak hybrids, and a few White Oak, most appearing to be around 100 years old. A long, winding sand ridge with scattered oaks extending through the middle of the Morley Sanctuary is particularly scenic; a wild and windy peninsula with a great view of the adjoining prairie to the north, south, and east.



About 10 acres along the west side of the Morley Sanctuary is the former Detroit and Mackinac Railroad bed, now a paved rail trail. The trail provides excellent public access and connects with the nearly 2,400-acre Bay City State Park about one-half mile north. The Morley Sanctuary is also connected by a paved trail to the 415-acre Bay City Ecological Restoration property one-half mile east at the mouth of the Saginaw River.

The Morley Sanctuary even contains the remnants of an historic open-pit coal mine dating back to the late 1800s. An old railroad spur bed is still visible across the preserve where coal was hauled to the main track of the Detroit and Mackinac Railroad.

TLC stewardship on the Morley Sanctuary will include removal of invasive weeds, particularly Phragmites Reed and Glossy Buckthorn, hopefully prescribed burning to help restore the native plant community, and propagation of native lakeplain plants.

The TLC is working with Bangor Township on development of a parking area, trails, benches, information kiosks, pavilions, and a kayak and canoe launch to the Kawkawlin River.

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Dead End Woods Sanctuary

Fort Gratiot, Saint Clair County

The 17.6-acre Dead End Woods Sanctuary is the first preserve to be acquired by the TLC. It was donated to the TLC in 2008 by the Saint Clair County Drain Commissioner on the condition that we assume responsibility for the stewardship and monitoring required by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality under a wetland permit agreement. The Dead End Woods Sanctuary is one of the most floristically diverse forests in Saint Clair County. In addition to the usual native plants of mesic southern forest and hardwood swamp, such as Jack-in-the-pulpit, Marsh-marigold, Yellow Trout-lily, Wild Geranium, May-apple, Christmas Fern, Skunk-cabbage, and Red Trillium, there are several less common species such as Red Baneberry, Maidenhair Fern, Wild Leek, Wild Sarsaparilla, Spikenard, Richweed, Hazelnut, Spicebush, Moonseed, Cardinal Flower, Black Gum, Round-leaved Pyrola, Bluestem Goldenrod, Zigzag Goldenrod, New York Fern, Foamflower, several sedges, and Fringed Brome grass. The woods is also one of the few isolated havens where Eastern Hemlock is barely regenerating.

As with other TLC sanctuaries, our stewardship work has focused on invasive weed removal, particularly Garlic Mustard for the past 1 years. Garlic Mustard, in the Brassicaceae or Mustard Family, is a very tasty and nutritious plant, originally brought to North America from Europe as a culinary herb. However, it has spread to many woodlands, and left unchecked, can gradually fill in and displace native flora. We hand-pull it in May, just as the white flowers emerge, and also in early June as the seed pods begin to form. Being a biennial species, typically requiring 2 to 3 years to develop from a seedling to a mature seed-bearing plant before dying, removing it before it seeds eventually depletes

the seed bed. We have had very good success in all but eliminating Garlic Mustard from the Dead End Woods Sanctuary, but it has required a dedicated work force of volunteers and TLC board members every spring. There are still some patches of seedlings but we seem to have gotten most of the mature plants. We are now moving on to removal of small occurrences of invasive Multiflora Rose and invasive ground-cover from yards in the adjacent Old Farm subdivision, including Periwinkle, Pachysandra or Japanese Spurge, Yellow Archangel, and Carpet Bugle. These plants are not terribly widespread on the preserve, but there is a lot on the adjacent properties that will make long-term control a problem.



Dead end woods



The "DEW" crew - on their annual garlic mustard pull

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TLC Farm Headquarters

Flynn Township, Sanilac County

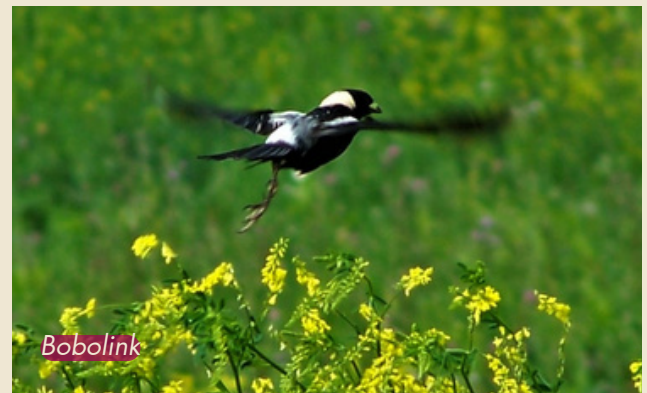
Work continues gradually to upgrade and improve the 73-acre TLC farm headquarters, otherwise known as “Bebezlund Farm”, located in the ecologically desolate wind-swept tiled barrens between Brown City and Marlette in southwest Sanilac County. In a 1-mile radius, there are only about 60 acres of forest; just 3% of the landscape. It is basically the same for about 10 miles around. There are only a few small woodlots in this area with any hardwoods, most consisting of very disturbed woodland too wet to farm and dominated by Silver Maple and American Elm.

If all goes well, one day the farm will be a TLC sanctuary, although it already is effectively. The 73 acres consists largely of old-field and crop land, with 30 acres of horse pasture. 10 acres of hay field, 21 acres of cropland with an organic field now fallow, 1 acre of woodland, a 0.5-acre pond and wetland shoreline, 6.5 acres of a county drain, road right-of-way, ditches, and farm lane, and 4 acres with a house, barns, barnyard, orchard, and other uses.

We normally delay our first hay cutting until August to allow young grassland birds to fledge, which most farmers consider absurd. A few summers, we have cut earlier to help control invasive Canada Thistle and Burdock, but having delayed our cuttings most years, we have supported a small population of Bobolinks and other grassland birds. Bobolinks are effectively ecological refugees of their native grasslands in the southern US which have been destroyed by agriculture. In addition to Bobolinks, the hay field and horse pasture support a fairly rich spring and summer bird community with Turkey, Screech Owls, American

Woodcock, Killdeer, Red winged Blackbirds, Tree Swallows, Barn Swallows, American Goldfinches, Eastern Kingbirds, Eastern Meadowlarks, Field Sparrows, Song Sparrows, and Brown-headed Cowbirds of course. Spring transients include Upland Sandpipers and Sandhill Cranes.

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Tiger swallowtail

The winter bird population is generally dismal with a mob of House Sparrows and sometimes a gang of European Starlings that hold conversation over morning coffee. American Goldfinches are one of the bright spots, along with a small group of Blue Jays that seem to have adapted to more open habitat and take advantage of bits of corn kernels that our pet pig, Peaches, doesn't eat. Others include only a few Dark-eyed Juncos, Mourning Doves, Northern Cardinals, Downy Woodpeckers, and rarely a Tufted Titmouse. Occasional American Crows and Screech Owls are heard in the distance. Flocks of Snow Buntings appear in late winter but are soon gone. There are other transients like Turkey Vultures, Red-tailed Hawks, sometimes a Northern Harrier, and in recent years, even an occasional Bald Eagle.

Living in farm land, you come to appreciate the very common species, and hope to provide a little support for the less common ones. It starts by mowing as little as possible to support insects, and particularly our beleaguered pollinators. The goldenrods and asters soon expand and give pollinators a critical end-of-the-season boost. Many insects are largely the base of the food chain for birds, amphibians, reptiles, and small mammals. Our plantings have included Common Sunflower, Common Elderberry, and Buttonbush, all of which draw and support pollinators. Planting trees also can help a lot.

We have planted Blue Spruce, Common Apple, crabapple, Eastern Red-cedar, Sugar Maple, Red-bud, and others. We have also let some of the wild things spread, like Gray Dogwood, Red-osier Dogwood, and Riverbank Grape.

Most of our weed control has been focused on trying to catch up with many years of neglect before we owned it, so weeds like Burdock, which leave you and your animals covered in burs, the insidious Canada Thistle, and ubiquitous Autumn-olive. While Box-elder is a native tree, it is quite weedy in habit. Left uncontrolled, the samara seeds drop on the winter snow and blow to the edges of buildings and across fields, where they sprout up and grow in profusion a few years later. And now we have new weeds that have moved onto the farm, including Phragmites Reed, Teasel, and Wild Parsnip.



Monarch caterpillar



Bumblebee

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Roots & Rivers: TLC's Next Preserves

Pinnebog River Acquisition

Huron County

With the help of a private donor, the TLC is working on a possible new preserve acquisition along the Pinnebog River in Huron County. We can't say much yet, but this would be a significant preserve and natural recreation area for the Thumb region.



Belle River Headwaters Acquisition

Lapeer County

The TLC is also working to acquire over 40 acres of a unique conifer swamp and shrub thicket complex located at the headwaters of the Belle River in Lapeer County. This is an isolated emnant of muck and peat soils in a former

glacial pothole lake, since covered largely by Tamarack and Northern White-cedar. The swamp and associated uplands potentially provide habitat for several rare species.



A Ramsar Vision for the Saint Clair River Delta

The TLC is leading an exciting initiative to nominate the Saint Clair River Delta as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, recognizing its global ecological value and urgent conservation needs. Spearheaded by Program and Stewardship Assistant Teddy Wiley, the

designation would bring critical awareness and funding to restore this imperiled 32,000-acre freshwater delta—home to rare wildlife, threatened plant communities, and a rich cultural heritage. Read on to learn more!

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Saint Clair River Delta Ramsar Designation

TLC Program and Stewardship Assistant New TLC Program and Stewardship Assistant, Teddy Wiley, is heading an effort to nominate the Saint Clair River Delta for designation as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands is one of the oldest modern global intergovernmental environmental agreements. It was negotiated in the 1960s by countries and non-governmental organizations concerned about the increasing loss and degradation of wetland habitat for migratory waterbirds. The treaty was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and became effective in 1975. A key provision of the treaty is to identify and place significant wetlands on a list of Wetlands of International Importance, also known as the Ramsar List. Criteria for listing include representative, rare or unique wetland types, and various aspects emphasizing the importance of biodiversity. The list includes an international network of wetlands which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits or services. There are now 2,400 Ramsar wetland sites across the world. Designation of the Saint Clair River Delta as a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance should provide additional funding opportunities and help motivate all stakeholders to better protect the delta's ecological character.

More funding is desperately needed to control invasive Phragmites Reed, among other invasive weeds, which has eliminated nearly all of the native vegetation and severely degraded wildlife habitat of vast areas of wetland along the Great Lakes. More complete control of invasive Phragmites would eventually lead to restoration

of the Saint Clair River Delta ecosystem as a whole. There are currently only four Ramsar wetlands in our general region, including the Saint Clair National Wildlife Area on the eastern shore of Lake Saint Clair, Humbug Marsh in the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge along the west shore of the Detroit River, Point Pelee National Park on the north shore of Lake Erie, and Long Point National Wildlife Area also on the north shore of Lake Erie. As for designated Ramsar wetlands in general, the US has relatively very few compared to other parts of the world.

The Saint Clair River Delta is located at the northeast corner of Lake Saint Clair at the confluence of the Saint Clair River and consists of Saint John's Marsh, Dickinson Island, Harsens Island, Seaway Island, Bassett Island, Squirrel Island, Walpole Island, and Saint Anne's Island. The delta is fed by the waters of Lake Huron where it eventually empties out into the shallow Lake Saint Clair. The delta's overall size of approximately 32,000 acres and location between two freshwater lakes makes it one of the largest freshwater deltas in North America and the only major river delta in the Great Lakes basin. Saint John's Marsh and adjacent islands are important ecologically because they provide

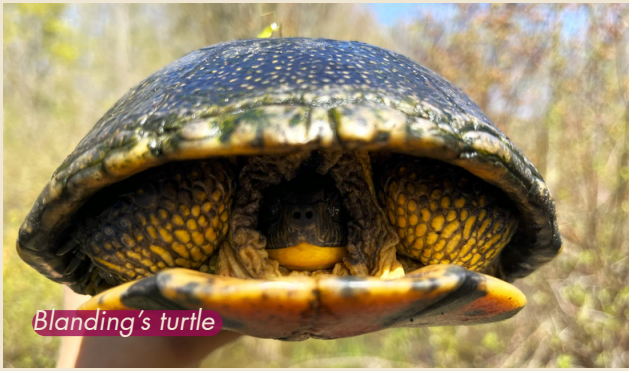
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critical habitat for a myriad of game and non-game species that depend on coastal wetlands such as ducks, geese, swans, reptiles, amphibians, mammals, and the many species of invertebrates and plants that support them. The delta is home to rare plant communities including Great Lakes marsh, lakeplain wet prairie, lakeplain wet-mesic prairie, and lakeplain oak openings. Lakeplain prairie historically covered most of the delta, a species-rich plant community that occurs on seasonally wet ground of glacial lake plains and similar formations.

Lakeplain prairie once covered 80% of southeast Michigan prior to Euro American settlement before it was cleared, ditched, and drained for agriculture. Any remaining patches were fire suppressed, becoming severely degraded and fragmented. Today, less than 1% of the original lakeplain prairie and oak opening communities remain and are ranked as imperiled globally and critically imperiled on a statewide basis by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory. Despite all this, the Saint Clair River Delta still contains high quality remnants of lakeplain prairie and oak openings. These communities are extremely diverse, with sometimes over 200 plant species occurring in a single remnant. Numerous rare species that depend on lakeplain ecosystems have been documented within the lakeplain prairie within Saint John's Marsh and adjacent islands. Rare animal species associated with the

the Saint Clair River Delta include: Michigan Endangered King Rail; Michigan Threatened Black Tern, Spotted Turtle, Leafhopper, Common Gallinule, Least Bittern, Eastern Fox Snake, Forster's Tern, and Common Tern; and Michigan Special Concern American Bittern, Marsh Wren, Blanding's Turtle, and Blazing Star Borer.

Rare plant species associated with the Saint Clair River Delta include: US Threatened and Michigan Endangered Prairie White-fringed Orchid; Michigan Endangered Gattinger's Gerardia, and Skinner's Gerardia; Michigan Threatened Sullivan's Milkweed, Small White Lady-slipper Orchid, Leiberg's Panic Grass, and Short Fruited Rush; and Michigan Special Concern Three Awned Grass, Gentian-leaved Saint John's-wort, Cross-Leaved Milkwort, and Tall Nut Rush.

The wetlands that make up the Saint Clair River Delta act like a giant sponge for the Great Lakes basin. Sediment deposition from the Saint Clair River is collected along the banks of the channels, which is then utilized by native vegetation and ultimately creates highly productive wildlife habitats. Excessive nutrients and other pollution discharged upstream of the delta are absorbed, assimilated, and remediated to some extent, improving the water quality of Lake Saint Clair and Lake Erie. Without the Saint Clair River Delta, flooding would become more damaging, water quality would diminish, and increased algal blooms would occur due to excessive nutrient loading. The Saint Clair River Delta is renowned for its recreational Smallmouth Bass fishing and waterfowl hunting, attracting hunters and fisherman from all over the state. The delta is also a popular birding designation for photographers and naturalists wanting to witness the thousands of migrating waterfowl.

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St. Clair River Delta area

The shallow bays that surround Dickinson and Harsens Island, known as the Saint Clair Flats, are one of the biggest boating designations in the world. Raft-Off, an annual event in the Saint Clair Flats, almost broke the Guinness World Record for world's largest boat tie-up ever in 2018, with about 3,000 boats tied up. The Walpole Island First Nation, known as Bkejwanong, "where the waters divide", includes Seaway, Bassett, Squirrel, Walpole, and Saint Anne's Islands. It is home of the Ojibwa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa tribes. These three tribes, along with the Mississauga, Nipissing, and Algonquin, are known as the Anishinaabe, or "the people". The Anishinaabe are all culturally related, speaking one language called Anishinaabemowin. The Anishinaabe people have always had a close connection to the land, animals, and water. In their culture, it is important to walk in harmony with the world, connected to all parts of the land, with no separation between sacred and secular. It's this reason why the people of Walpole Island have taken such good care of their land; making sure it is kept undamaged and productive for future generations to enjoy. Walpole Island's local economy is dependent on the bounty of the land. Hunting, fishing, and trapping is a multi-million dollar industry in their community. Sweet Grass, a lakeplain prairie grass, is a sacred plant and is still used for smudging, basket making, and braiding. Northern Wild-rice, and the less

common Michigan Threatened Southern Wild-rice, occur in the Great Lakes marsh of the Saint Clair River Delta and are also sacred plants collected for seed consumption.

Despite the significance of the Saint Clair River Delta and the countless benefits it provides, the delta's wetlands are still being lost at an alarming rate. Ever since Europeans began settling here, much of the surrounding wetlands have been drained and filled in to make way for agriculture and residential development. The remaining wetlands on the delta are extensively dominated by invasive Phragmites Reed. Lakeplain prairie and Great Lakes marsh on Saint John's Marsh and adjacent Islands are almost completely lost to invasive Phragmites. Lakeplain oak openings are being filled with invasive Japanese Barberry, Glossy Buckthorn, Common Buckthorn, and other invasive weeds. The State has made little lasting progress in the fight against invasive Phragmites Reed across the Saint Clair River Delta due to lack of funding, equipment, and staff. There does not appear to be a recent management plan that addresses the extensive Phragmites cover. We hope that with Ramsar designation, the Saint Clair River Delta can become great again through more recognition and funding opportunities.

In late 2024 and early 2025, the TLC revised and updated a Saint Clair River Delta Ramsar presentation, which Program and Stewardship Director Teddy Wiley has presented to Clay Township and others. To view the latest Make Our Delta Great Again presentation, click [here](#)



Phragmites

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\$100K Challenge Grant to build capacity that will provide future sustainability.

The TLC is thrilled to announce a \$100,000 challenge grant from The Carls Foundation to support worker pay—a generous opportunity we have until June 2027 to meet through additional donations. This milestone reflects how far we've come since our founding in 2008, now able to support a small but dedicated team thanks to recent gifts and the growing support of partners like The Carls Foundation. Read more here [insert link]



stewardship, with virtually no money spent on administration—our Board and Executive Director serve without pay, and our only paid workers are a small part-time team earning \$20/hour for hands-on conservation work. As we seek to expand our capacity to stewards or preserves and acquire new land, please consider supporting us!

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The TLC really needs your help to ensure that the organization is able to continue operating and fulfill our long-term mission. Please consider a one time generous donation to the TLC to help us match The Carls Foundation challenge grant or consider becoming a monthly supporter. For every dollar you give, The Carls Foundation will give the TLC another dollar. The TLC is a volunteer-driven organization focused almost entirely on land protection and



Click [here](#) to donate to the Thumb Land Conservancy

October, 2025

The Carls Foundation TLC Capacity Grant

The TLC was informed on June 20 that we have been awarded a challenge grant of \$100,000 from The Carls Foundation of Bloomfield Hills to help fund TLC worker pay. We will have until June of 2027 to raise a total of \$100,000 from other donors which The Carls Foundation will match 1 to 1. If we are successful, the TLC will have raised a total of \$200,000 by June of 2027, which will help ensure that we are able to continue paying our workers for several years.

The TLC did not pay anyone from our founding in 2008 until 2024, except for limited contract work. The TLC Executive Director is not paid and no one receives a salary. With a substantial donation in 2024 from the estate of Dottie Craig, our senior Board Member who passed away in late 2023, we began paying a small group of workers. Among our newest workers are Program and Stewardship Director Teddy Wiley and Stewardship Assistant Jake Defrain. Their work has increased our capacity and resulted in great progress in stewarding our preserves. But of course, our thanks also goes out to our Super Volunteer Connie Neese and her crew for their work on the Shorewood Forrest Southeast and Cunningham Connector sanctuaries, and also TLC Board Member Dan Rhein for all of his hard work on the Loznak and Bidwell sanctuaries.

A huge thank you to The Carls Foundation of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan for sharing our vision for the Thumb, a generally neglected region in terms of natural area protection.

William and Marie Carls established the Carls Foundation in 1961 to fund children's health and welfare. The Foundation added the preservation of natural areas in Michigan through land conservancies in 1995. Bill Carls immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1924 at the

age of 21. With his training and experience in European apprentice programs, he was readily employed with major industrial companies in Detroit. In 1945, Bill Carls started Numatics, Inc. in his garage. The company was headquartered in Highland, Michigan and became a leading worldwide manufacturer of industrial air valves. They had a plant in Sandusky, Michigan for many years.

The Carls Foundation has funded many land preservation projects throughout Michigan and in our region where few other foundations have. In 2020, they funded most of our purchase of the Bidwell Sanctuary in Burtchville, and in 2023, purchase of the Shorewood Forrest Northeast Sanctuary in Fort Gratiot. Years ago, The Carls Foundation funded acquisition of the Michigan Nature Association's Sharon Rose Leonatti Memorial Nature Sanctuary in Kimball Township near Wadhams, with a large population of Michigan Endangered Painted Trillium – *Trillium undulatum*. They have also funded the Six Rivers Land Conservancy in their efforts to acquire large parts of Anchor Bay Woods in New Baltimore adjacent to the TLC Gerrits Sanctuary in Ira Township.

If you've been reading our newsletters and annual reports, you know that the TLC is all about land acquisition and stewardship to protect our natural areas and provide opportunities for outdoor public recreation and education. Our Board of Directors and Executive Director are all volunteer. No one receives a salary. We currently have three contract workers that are paid \$20 per hour. Their work is focused on preserve stewardship and new land protection projects. The TLC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity. All donations are tax-deductible. Please contact the TLC if you have any questions.

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