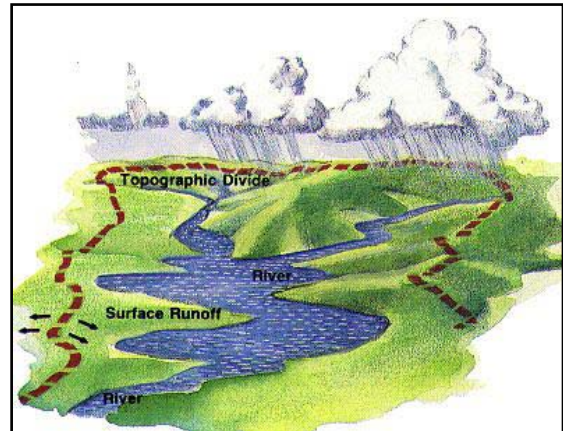


CHAPTER 2 INTRODUCTION

The Grand Traverse Bay area is one of the premier tourist and outdoor recreation regions in the State of Michigan. Its natural resource base and beauty contributes significantly to the quality of life enjoyed by year round residents, which accounts for the area's continued growth and prosperity. However, with the rewards of economic achievement come the telling signs of environmental degradation. The same resource base that contributed to this region's desirability as a place to live and work is now under considerable pressure from continued development.

The watershed contains major parts of four counties and more than 50 municipalities and townships. In order to maintain the quality of the resource, local governments, concerned citizens, and numerous agencies all need to work together towards a common goal – protecting the Grand Traverse Bay and its watershed from further environmental degradation.

How does the quality of water in this area affect us individually, and why should we care? These are questions that environmental agencies have been dealing with for years. How can we get people to care and learn about their water quality and consider how their individual actions may affect it? The answer is simple; our lives are tied to water by many different threads. The primary thread is that humans need clean, drinkable water to live. The drinking water that we rely upon may become contaminated by a number of chemicals and pollutants (like fertilizers, pesticides, and gasoline) that we and others use everyday and don't think about. Additionally, new and emerging issues involving pharmaceuticals and other medical wastes in water supplies are just beginning to be researched.



The Grand Traverse Bay watershed itself is defined as the area of land that captures rainfall and other precipitation and funnels it to Grand Traverse Bay.

What about the water and watershed that we recreate in? Healthy ecosystems are why people love to live here. Many people live in the Grand Traverse Bay region because of the numerous forms of recreation it provides. But, if pollution is unchecked and degradation of this natural resources continues, many of the activities enjoyed by residents and visitors alike will be in jeopardy. Contamination of streams, lakes, and the bay from numerous sources may lead to unsafe swimming and blooms of aquatic plants, which are an annoyance to swimmers and boaters. Recreational fishing is also impacted by water pollution; many inland lakes already have fish consumption advisories due to heavy metal contamination. Other forms of recreation that many of us enjoy on a daily basis are at stake as well, including swimming, kayaking, canoeing, and even hiking.

A public telephone survey conducted in Summer 2002 reveals that 60% of the people living in the Grand Traverse Bay region don't know which watershed they live in. Many don't even

know what a watershed is. However, most people in the area use water for recreation, inherently tying them to this precious resource. It is imperative that residents and visitors become educated about the watershed, know what is impacting the resource, and are educated on what can be done to help make the Grand Traverse Bay watershed a place where they want to live and come back to time and time again.

In September 2001, The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay received a watershed management planning grant for the Grand Traverse Bay watershed from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). The grant and awarded funds were authorized by Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act and were used to develop this protection plan for the Grand Traverse Bay watershed. A subsequent Section 319 grant was awarded in 2004 to update the plan and include additional information according to newly implemented EPA requirements.

The protection plan summarizes existing water quality conditions in and around the bay while also outlining the major watershed pollutants and recommendations on how to reduce the impact and amount of pollution entering the system. The plan provides a description of the watershed including such topics as bodies of water, population, land use, municipalities, and recreational activities; summarizes each of the nine subwatersheds to Grand Traverse Bay; and outlines current water quality conditions in the bay. Additionally, water quality threats were identified and prioritized and efforts to address these issues were researched, developed, and prioritized. This 2005 revised plan includes additional information on pollutant sources and concentrations, load reduction estimates of various BMPs, measurable milestones to guide implementation progress, and a set of criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation efforts.

More information on the development process and project evaluation from the initial project to develop the protection plan (December 2001-2003) is contained in Appendix A and B, respectively.

The intent of the protection plan is to assist area watershed groups, lake associations, local governments, volunteer groups, and many others in making sound decisions to help improve and protect water quality in their area. It provides recommendations on how to reduce water quality degradation and protect our valuable resource, the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.