

**Blog contributed to the Michigan Municipal League's blog.**

# **DTE Energy Foundation's Grant: Invest in Water Now for Generations to Come**

By Morgan Schwanky

The DTE Energy Foundation granted \$1 million to [The Nature Conservancy](#) to fund a variety of projects that will aid the maintenance of Michigan's natural resources, help continue to fund a fellowship program, advance urban environmental initiatives, and help educate communities. The projects that this grant will fund are great examples of Community Wealth Building through its sustainability pillar. The Foundation has been funding The Nature Conservancy (TNC) since 2011, which has allowed them to advance a variety of sustainability efforts, with this latest grant that will be carried out over the course of the next three years.

The Nature Conservancy's mission statement is to conserve the land and waters on which all life depends. The Great Lakes provide a great sense of pride for Michiganders, as well as our many lakes, rivers, streams and more. These vital resources need to be protected in order for us to sustain a future in which many generations to come can live and thrive within. Access to water is vital for all. It is the source in which we use to hydrate our bodies, help grow our food, sustain marine life, cleanse ourselves and our food, and so much more. A large proportion of the funds from this grant will be aiding in environmental projects that involve water. Below are some details on those projects.

## **Wetlands Revitalization**

Parts of this grant will help fund revitalization of wetlands at the Erie Marsh Preserve, which represents 11 percent of the remaining marshland in southeastern Michigan. A portion of this latest grant will allow TNC to finish [this initiative](#) that was started in 2011 with the goal to restore to restore 946 acres of highly degraded wetlands. The wetlands in Michigan are sometimes overlooked in comparison to our many lakes, rivers, and other bodies of water in which we enjoy and value. But wetlands provide a home to a variety of species, many of which are endangered, as well as spawning areas for fish, and to aid in controlling invasive species.

## **Fisheries**

The grant will also aid in starting an experimental effort to [restore](#) the whitefish populations in the western and northern parts of Michigan. TNC will partner with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians, and the [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#). Through research, testing egg rearing methods at tribal hatcheries, and surveys, they will assess which rivers will best help restore the whitefish populations for Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. The rivers planned for assessment at this stage include: the Muskegon River, the Jordan River, the Carp River, and the Bear River.

## **Healthy Cities**

The aforementioned projects are focused on the sustainability of more rural based resources. The third project related to water is specifically geared for Michigan's urban setting. The Healthy Cities program will work with the Eastern Market community in Detroit to develop green stormwater infrastructure, which will positively impact their water quality. Additionally, the program will establish a residential repair program, and provide residents with the educational resources they need. The program also will develop a community engagement plan that will guide the long-term support for the community. TNC notes that cities are growing at a fast rate. They predict that [by 2050, two-thirds of the population will live in urban areas](#). Having programs like Healthy Cities will ensure that as communities grow there is infrastructure already in place to help communities continue to thrive and use their natural resources to the best of their abilities.

Environmental investments such as these, and many more, are crucial to creating places where people want to live. Building this harmony between our built and natural environments is the way to achieve their sustainability in the long run. Taking care of our natural resources touches many aspects of our life, as well as our health and the health of our planet. Conserving, restoring, and educating communities about natural resources will allow us to build strong, thriving communities. The investments that TNC are using to help create a positive effect on our environment also cross over into the Public Health and Infrastructure pillars of Community Wealth Building.

Michigan's largest natural resource is our water, and it must be protected and maintained. For our health, and for the health of our state's future, we need to take the steps to ensure it will continue to be a natural resource for the generations to come.

Read the DTE Energy Foundation's full press release [here](#).