



# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

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The Shiawassee NWR Partners for Fish and Wildlife (PFW) Program has been restoring habitat since 1987. The program provides restoration expertise and financial assistance to private landowners, Tribes, and other conservation partners that willingly restore fish and wildlife habitat. All private landowners, Tribes and local governments are eligible for the program. Program participation is voluntary and project implementation is based on fish and wildlife benefits. The PFW Program is unique in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) because it allows the fulfillment of the Service mission to be completed on non-federal lands.

Over 70% of the land in the United States is in private ownership. The cooperation and participation of private landowners is imperative to fulfilling the Service's mission which is "to work with others, to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

## Restoration Assistance

The Shiawassee NWR PFW biologist is responsible for 17 Counties of the Saginaw Bay Watershed. In 2015, the biologist, Michelle Vander Haar, volunteered for a detail position as Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director (DARD) for Science Applications for four months. This brought about many new opportunities for the refuge and the PFW program but it also meant that there were very few restoration projects completed. The 2015 budget was only \$36,500 which is about half of the normal amount in previous years. Four Cooperative Agreements were initiated or continued in 2015, three of which were to restore wetland and treat invasive species. The fourth agreement was a partnership developed with Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy to restore pollinator habitat and perform outreach on Monarch butterflies. Landowner Agreements were completed for a Schoolyard Habitat project at Frankenmuth's List Elementary and for 130 acres of invasive Phragmites treatment at Flynn Township Park in Sanilac County.



**List Elementary Schoolyard Habitat**  
Photo credit: Michelle Vander Haar, USFWS

## Technical Assistance

Restoration assistance is just a portion of the PFW program's success. The program biologists also provide Technical Assistance (TA) to other State and Federal agencies, non-profit organizations, watershed groups, and more. This assistance is not reported to Congress but is essential to the growth of the PFW program and the implementation of the Service's mission.



Restored floodplain wetland of Pool 1A project  
- Photo credit: David Peters, USFWS

As a member of the Shiawassee NWR staff, PFW biologist, Michelle Vander Haar, assists with many projects and responsibilities for the refuge. In 2015, Michelle continued providing input on the relocation of Pool 1A levee, coordinated communication with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, assisted

with prescribed fire, provided management input on FmHA easements and performed Acting Refuge Manager duties. Michelle assisted with coordination efforts to begin control of invasive Phragmites on Charity Island, managed by SNWR, and continues to work with Saginaw Valley State University - Saginaw Bay Environmental Science Institute, to research on the island.

In 2015, Michelle participated as a team member on many local, state and USFWS regional teams. She is a member of the Michigan Stream Team, Michigan Invasive Species Coalition Core Team, Saginaw Bay Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (previously Cooperative Weed Management Area) Steering Committee, USFWS Great Lakes Biologist Network and the Upper Midwest and Great Lakes LCC FWS Advisory Team. She participated in the local Pheasants Forever Cooperatives created through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Pheasant Restoration Initiative, the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative, Partnership for Saginaw Bay, Saginaw Bay Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network. Michelle also worked with several school groups teaching them about schoolyard restoration and stream health and gave several presentations about the PFW program.

Michelle annually participates on the Technical Advisory Committees of watershed planning groups for priority watershed including the Kawkawlin River, Cass River, Rifle River, and Bad River and continues to support implementation of watershed plans as a Steering Committee Member on the Cass River and Cedar River.

The previously mentioned detail as Deputy ARD of Science Applications was an opportunity for Michelle to increase knowledge and become a better leader for USFWS. This detail provided the chance to get involved in the National Climate Team, the Climate Adaptation Network, and the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, and provide input on communication, process and prioritization for the regional Science Applications program. This also provided an opening for Michelle to become involved with the UMGL LCC Coastal Wetland Working Group which is working on a Landscape Conservation Design for Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands from Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie.

## Monitoring

Monitoring is an annual activity conducted according to Partners for Fish and Wildlife Policy. Each restoration is to be inspected at mid-contract or 5 years after completion. All 2010 projects were inspected with the help of a seasonal intern. This information was entered into HABITS, the national PFW database, and includes pictures, wildlife present and habitat quality.



**A sample of sites restored in 2010**

Photo credit: Audrey Dickenson, USFWS