

## INTRODUCTION

Starting with its official formation in 1979 (the same year the Goemaere-Anderson Wetland Protection Act was originally passed) the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council has focused on wetland protection. In 1987, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council published the first edition of *Michigan Wetlands - Yours to Protect: A Citizen's Guide to Wetland Protection*. That guidebook was the compilation of experiences gained during a three-year wetland protection project focusing on the Northern Michigan counties of Charlevoix, Emmet, and Cheboygan. In 1992, the second edition of *Michigan Wetlands* was published.

Since then, while continuing its wetland protection work in Northern Michigan, the Watershed Council has initiated and coordinated the Great Lakes Wetlands Policy Consortium and served as the coordinating body of the Michigan Wetland Action Coalition (MWAC). The Consortium, a bi-national group of environmental and conservation organizations, was instrumental in developing policy recommendations to increase wetland protection at all levels of government in the United States and Canada. As a direct result of the Consortium, MWAC was initiated and has served to form a network of individuals and organizations to promote wetland protection in Michigan. In the decade since MWAC was formed, individual citizens and conservation and environmental groups have advocated for maintaining a strong wetland protection program. At the same time, substantial modifications have been made to state and federal wetland protection programs.

This edition of *Michigan Wetlands - Yours to Protect: A Citizen's Guide to Wetland Protection* builds on past efforts and translates the experiences gained into a tool that will serve to empower citizens across Michigan to get involved in wetland protection. The guidebook has been completely revised and expanded. With chapters that focus on the range of wetland protection activities from education to reviewing permit applications, there is valuable information here to assist concerned citizens, local governments, conservation organizations, landowners, and others in their efforts to initiate and implement wetlands protection activities.

This guidebook has been “published” in two forms—the print copy you have in front of you and a web-based version. The print copy provides you with an easy-to-use guidebook that you can take into the field or hand to a neighbor. The web-based version provides all the information in the book, plus the most recent updates on laws and additional appendix materials. The web-based version has been designed to be easily down-loaded so you can print out copies of chapters or graphics for your wetland protection purposes.

The Watershed Council hopes that you find the information presented here useful in your efforts to protect wetlands in your backyard and throughout Michigan. If you find that you need more information, consult Appendix A, Michigan Organizations Involved in Wetlands Protection, and contact one of the organizations that serves your geographic area, or contact the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council for information about how you can get involved in the Michigan Wetland Action Coalition.

Good luck in your efforts to protect Michigan's wetland resource. In addition to the benefits you will enjoy, the future generations of Michiganders that benefit from the functions and values of Michigan's wetlands will appreciate your efforts.

