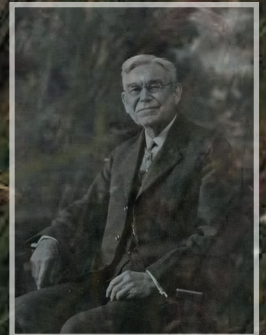
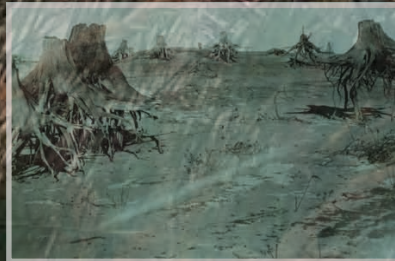


# The Michigan Conservation Trail:

*A Trip through Time and Place  
in the Protection of Michigan's Majesty*





Cover photo of *Lake Michigan grasses*, courtesy of Patricia Pennell.

Historical photos, courtesy of Archives of Michigan  
Photo of *Sleeping Bear Dunes*, courtesy of Elizabeth Harris  
Graphic design by Rose Homa

For over 100 years, Michigan conservation officers (originally game wardens) have helped enforce fish and game laws, and bait a few hooks.

Long recognized as a national and even international conservation leader, Michigan must commemorate and promote knowledge of its conservation history, making it vivid and meaningful to the state's citizens and visiting tourists. The Michigan Environmental Council, in partnership with the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, is creating a Michigan Conservation Trail.

With startup funding from the Americana Foundation, the Michigan Conservation Trail is a series of linked historic sites and associated promotional and educational materials. When completed, it will include state historical markers, brief biographies of Michigan's conservation pioneers, photos and drawings illustrating key landmarks and turning points in the state's conservation history, interactive features, and an annual observance of Michigan's conservation heritage.

The Michigan Conservation Trail emphasizes the following themes:

- **Citizen activism** has always been key in advancing the cause of Michigan's public health, air and water quality, fish, wildlife, forests and land.
- **Michigan's special place** on the face of the planet – among the world's largest freshwater lakes – gives it a special stewardship responsibility.
- **Bold leadership action** has helped rescue Michigan from resource destruction and gross pollution.



*The story  
of Michigan  
conservation...*

After the ruinous logging of the late 1800s, much of northern Michigan was a wasteland.

# Michigan's environmental "leaders" are the people

What makes Michigan's environment different from that of other states? Two things: its majestic natural beauty and its people who, through 170 years of state history, have been undaunted by successive waves of environmental destruction and have put Michigan on the map as a national environmental leader.



As the state's growth accelerated in the mid-1800s, loggers, market hunters and anglers, and others began consuming natural resources without thought of the future. Most destructive of all was the mining of the state's forests. In its hurry to make profit from the state's timber, the lumber industry eliminated 92% of Michigan's native forest by the 1920s, failing to replant trees and leaving ruined lands and logging wastes that resulted in tragic fires. After a fire that killed 29 people in 1908, a Detroit newspaper observed, "Man and the elements are combining to make this not only a forestless, but a valueless commonwealth...What a commentary is this on state officialdom. What utter neglect it shows of those things for which state officials are elected and appointed."

Sportsmen and early foresters clamored for reform and got it. The Michigan Sportsman's Association successfully championed legislation creating the nation's first state-paid game warden to halt the indiscriminate killing of wildlife. In 1901, the state's citizen forestry movement convinced the legislature to create the first forest reserves, starting Michigan toward its nearly four-million-acre state forest system.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the foe was gross pollution. Raw sewage killed citizens who drank from contaminated waters across the state. Oil and chemicals killed fish and wildlife. When thousands of ducks died on the Detroit River in the winter of 1948, the Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) brought the carcasses to Lansing and dumped them on the walkway to the Capitol (see photo to the right).



The public would not be stopped. As citizen protests multiplied and a new generation of environmental organizations sprang up in the 1960s and 1970s, Governor William Milliken and legislators responded with laws that became regional and national landmarks, including the Michigan Environmental Protection Act, the bottle deposit law, controls on phosphorus pollution and a wetland protection law. We see the benefits today in sparkling lakes and rivers and cleaner skies.

The challenges now are just as many and tough, including urban sprawl, invasive species like the zebra mussel, chemical pollution and the threat of Great Lakes water exports. Our state history is chock full of examples of heroic leadership by determined, sometimes lonely citizens and their organizations. It's the lesson of Michigan's environmental history, and it's the hope of our environmental future.

## Heroes in Michigan Conservation

### Charles A. Garfield **reforestation pioneer**

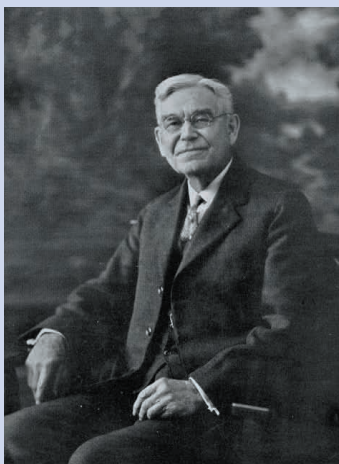


**Charles W. Garfield**  
1848-1934

“Some time it may be, our state shall be so ruled by men of vision and men of taste – sometime, it may be fondly hoped, our legislature shall have the leisure from the petty politics and the strident voice of the lobbyist and the crank to turn its attention to the State of Michigan – to renew its waste places with forest life – to make this peninsula, which is bound to shelter 10,000,000 of people, as beautiful as God intended it to be.” (From a pamphlet written by Charles A. Garfield, *A Little Talk about Michigan Forestry*, 1900)

Born in 1848, Charles Garfield, a longtime civic leader in Grand Rapids, had a long and distinguished career as a citizen activist in the cause of conservation.

Initially facing apathy among citizens and resistance from special interests, Garfield persistently advocated for the creation of a state forest system after ruinous fires and logging devastated the northern two-thirds of Michigan in the late 1800s. Under his guidance, the legislature established the first state forest reserves in 1901, helping lead to today's nationally significant state forest system, which supplies jobs, recreation and scenic beauty.



## **Edith C. Munger** Michigan Audubon Society conservation champion

“I was always keenly interested, in fact infatuated with all outdoor life, especially birds, wild flowers, and butterflies.”

(From “A Brief Sketch of Conservation Activities of Edith C. Munger, President of Michigan Audubon Society,” Edith Munger Papers, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan)

Born in 1865, Edith A. Munger of Hart was one of Michigan’s most stalwart early advocates for protection of birds and other wildlife as well as special places. She served as the president of the Michigan Audubon Society for 21 years and was a leading conservation educator.

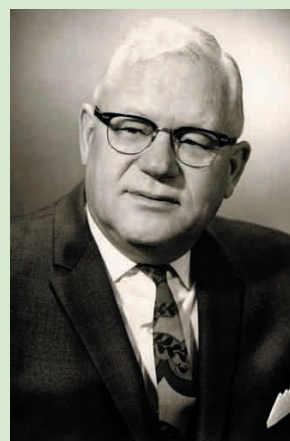
In 1914, she spoke in 36 locations to 86 groups and reached 11,359 people. In 1926, she estimated she spoke to Michigan audiences containing more than 84,000 people. In the 1920s, Munger made regular radio broadcasts on station WWJ in Detroit, reaching thousands of listeners. Munger’s most spectacular public and legislative success was a contest she launched to name a state bird. To honor the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Michigan Society in 1929, Munger worked with outdoor writers and the state Departments of Education and Conservation to promote the contest. Over 190,000 votes poured in, with the robin edging the chickadee by a vote of 45,541 to 37,155. She helped protect Lake Michigan shoreline parks and to protect some of Michigan’s disappearing wildlife.



## **Ralph A. MacMullan** director, Michigan Department of Conservation and Department of Natural Resources, 1964-1973

“The effects of this storing-up of pesticides in animals from the smallest to largest is not completely known, but gaps are beginning to be filled in. Man, for the first time in his history, has chemicals at his disposal that can completely alter his own food chain. By wiping out certain insects or minute sea-creatures he removes link after link in the very delicately balanced chain of life on which he depends...[T]here is enough evidence for us to be greatly concerned and to start bringing the unnecessary and widespread use of these persistent chemicals to a halt.” (From a column by Ralph A. MacMullan in *Michigan Natural Resources Magazine*, March-April 1969)

Born in Detroit in 1917, Ralph A. MacMullan is remembered as one of the fiercest conservationists ever to serve as Michigan’s chief of natural resources. MacMullan was a leader in the national fight to ban the toxic pesticide DDT after the discovery of widespread chemical contamination in Great Lakes fish and wildlife. Defying industrial opponents and others, MacMullan is credited with broadening public awareness of the interrelationship of the environment with human health and with putting his reputation and job on the line for the conservation cause.



# The Beginnings of the Michigan Conservation Trail



*The first three **proposed** sites on the Michigan Conservation Trail are:*

## 1 *The Detroit River*

Located at the new headquarters of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge in Trenton, this marker commemorates the history, development and environmental recovery of the 32-mile river. Home to Native Americans for thousands of years, the river suffered soon after intensive development began in the 1800s. By the early 1900s, its raw sewage pollution resulted in outbreaks of typhoid fever and cholera among those who drank its waters. Citizen demands for cleanup of phosphorus pollution of the Detroit River and the discovery of industrial mercury contamination in 1970 helped catalyze new pollution legislation and international agreements, including the 1972 U.S. Clean Water Act, and the 1972 U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. The combined influence of over 30 years of pollution control and prevention and habitat protection has been renewed natural reproduction of lake sturgeon and lake whitefish in the Detroit River and the recovery of peregrine falcons and bald eagles along its shores.



*One sign of the Detroit River's recovery is a thriving walleye fishery. This angler caught a 13.5-pound walleye on the river in April 2006.*

## 2 *The Kirtland's Warbler, Mio*

Located in the heart of Kirtland's warbler habitat in Mio, this marker celebrates a bird species whose identity is linked with the state itself. The Kirtland's warbler is a bird whose global summer breeding range is limited to the jack pine forests of northern Michigan. It is listed as an endangered species under federal and state law. From an all-time modern low of 167 nesting pairs in 1974 and 1987, the summer population of this beautiful but fragile species rebounded to more than 1,500 pairs in 2006. The recovery of the Kirtland's warbler is testimony to sustained habitat restoration work by federal and state agencies and private bird conservationists.





### ③ *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*

Located in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, this marker honors the work of one of Michigan's foremost conservationists, E. Genevieve Gillette (1898-1986) [see inset above]. For more than 50 years, she helped to give the public access to priceless areas of great scenic beauty and environmental importance. The first female graduate of the landscape architecture program at Michigan State University, Gillette worked tirelessly as a volunteer, advocating for the purchase, protection, study and public enjoyment of local, state and federal parks. She played key roles in the creation or protection from development of Hartwick Pines, Ludington, Tahquamenon Falls and the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness, among many other parks. She strongly advocated for the creation of the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. She has often been called the "Grand Lady" of Michigan's parks.

#### **More Trail site information**

Submit your questions, nominations for sites on Michigan's Conservation Trail and other thoughts to:

Michigan Conservation Trail  
c/o Michigan Environmental Council  
119 Pere Marquette, Suite 2A  
Lansing, MI 48912

e-mail: [davemec@voyager.net](mailto:davemec@voyager.net)  
<http://www.mecprotects.org>



# Michigan Conservation Timeline

- 1837** – Michigan becomes a state.
- 1859** – Fish stocks already depleted in Lake St. Clair and Detroit River; first state fisheries regulations enacted.
- 1867** – Lumbering boom begins; legislature establishes committee on tree-planting.
- 1875** – Michigan Sportsman’s Association mobilizes for controls on fishing and hunting to protect vanishing game, becoming first organized citizen conservation lobby.
- 1878** – Last significant roosting of passenger pigeon in Michigan. Estimates of market hunting kill at Petoskey range from 1.5 million to 1 billion.
- 1887** – Michigan becomes first state to create post of paid game warden.
- 1888** – Legislature creates Independent Forestry Commission to propose forest policy. Over 95% of state’s virgin forest is eventually cut, yielding \$2.5 billion to private interests, but little of it has been replanted.
- 1904** – Michigan Audubon Society forms to protect wildlife.
- 1908** – Massive forest fires gut northern Michigan, killing dozens, and spark public cry for forestry reform.
- 1909** – Legislature creates Public Domain Commission (forerunner of DNR) to manage forests, fish and game.
- 1919** – Legislature creates state park commission and begins state park system.
- 1918** – International Joint Commission reports on gross pollution of boundary waters, including Detroit River, notes cholera/typhoid deaths from drinking Great Lakes water.
- 1921** – Legislature creates Department of Conservation to replace Public Domain Commission.
- 1929** – Internationally known author James Curwood of Owosso campaigns against “political influence” in conservation policy. After Curwood’s death, legislature removes appointment of Department of Conservation director from governor and transfers to Conservation Commission.
- 1930s** – During Depression years, state receives millions of acres of tax-reverted northern Michigan land to further expand forest holdings.
- 1937** – Responding to legislative attack on the independence of the Department of Conservation, Michigan United Conservation Clubs forms and successfully protects powers of Conservation Commission.
- 1945** – Conservation Director P.J. Hoffmaster and Ironwood businessman Raymond Dick successfully fight off lumber interests to preserve Porcupine Mountains as a state park.
- 1948** – Massive duck kills on Detroit River due to oil and chemical pollution cause public outcry.
- 1949** – Legislature toughens water pollution law and creates Water Resources Commission, but pollution intensifies.
- 1965** – After outcry from citizens about soot and choking air pollution, legislature passes pollution control law and creates Air Pollution Commission.
- 1966** – Department of Conservation fisheries director Howard Tanner unleashes “coho madness” with introduction of salmon to Lake Michigan, creating a new constituency for cleanup of water pollution.
- 1968** – Voters approve \$335 million clean water bond. West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC) forms.
- 1969** – After three-year fight, under prodding from Conservation Director Ralph MacMullan, Michigan becomes first state to ban most uses of DDT.
- 1970** – Michigan Environmental Protection Act and Great Lakes Shorelands Act become law.
- 1972** – Inland Lakes and Streams Act becomes law.
- 1976** – Voters approve deposit on beer and soda containers after industry kills bill in legislature.
- 1977** – State passes tough limits on phosphates in laundry detergent to clean up Great Lakes.
- 1979** – Michigan passes strong Wetlands Protection Act.
- 1980** – Michigan Environmental Council forms.
- 1984** – Voters approve proposal to put Natural Resources Trust Fund in state Constitution to prevent raids on land acquisition funding.
- 1985** – Governors sign Great Lakes Charter to stop diversions.
- 1988** – Voters approve \$800 million environmental and recreational bond.
- 1998** – Voters approve \$675 million pollution cleanup and recreation bond.
- 2002** – Voters approve \$1 billion clean water bond by a margin of 60%-40%.