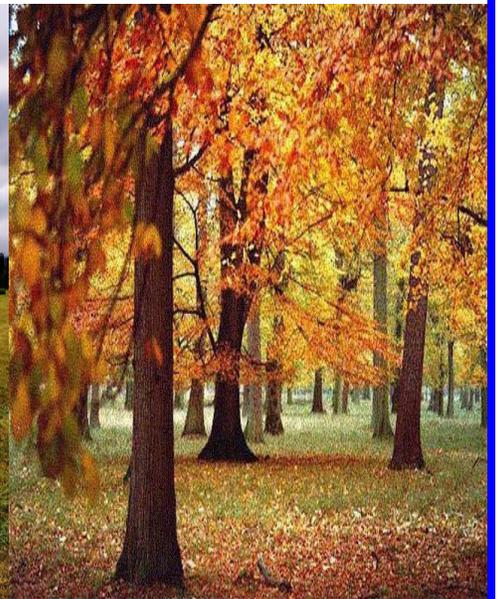


PROTECT THE PLACES WE LOVE IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN



There are 688,000 acres of land (1,075 square miles) in Berrien and Cass Counties.

These lands feed our families and our spirits.

The *wetlands* that are used by wildlife and protect our groundwater, the *forests* we hunt in and use for recreation, and the prime *agricultural lands* that are the base of our economy all deserve to be preserved.

By preserving the land we most value, we maintain our high quality of life in southwest Michigan.

**Southwest Michigan
Water Quality
Coalition**

www.swmpc.org/water.asp

What Can I Do?

Top 5 Reasons to Preserve Your Land for the Future

- 1. Protect Drinking Water:** Whether your drinking water comes from groundwater or from Lake Michigan, preserving land that recharges the quantity and quality of your water is important.
- 2. Preserve Open Space:** Protecting undeveloped parcels of land, including farmland, exceptional scenic vistas, forested areas, or beaches/shorelines – will provide wildlife habitat and ensure enjoyment by future generations.
- 3. Conserve Wetlands:** Wetlands are crucial for floodwater protection! Billions of dollars in property damage are saved annually because wetlands buffer storm water, absorb floodwaters and filter water pollutants.
- 4. Protect Rivers and Lakes:** One of the biggest threats to our inland lakes, streams and Lake Michigan is storm water run-off. This is rainwater that runs off paved surfaces and collects pesticides, motor oil, pet wastes, and garbage along its path. By leaving key property undeveloped we can provide places where storm water can be absorbed and filtered, reducing the contamination of our water resources.
- 5. Safeguard Wildlife Habitat:** Good land management and wise development will ensure the diversity and number of native plants and animals, including game animals and endangered species.

Conservation Options for Landowners

Adapted from Conservation Options: A Landowner's Guide, published by the Land Trust Alliance and available at the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, (269) 324-1600.

Land Protection Options	Description	Results	Potential Tax Deductions*
Conservation Easement	Legal agreement between a landowner and a land conservancy or government agency permanently limiting a property's uses. Can be very flexible accommodating the landowner's needs and wishes.	Important features of the property protected by a conservation organization. Owner continues to own, use, and live on the land.	Income Estate
Outright Land Donation	Land is donated to the land conservancy.	Organization owns, manages, and protects land.	Income Estate
Donation of Land by Will	Land is specifically designated for donation to the land conservancy.	Organization owns, manages, and protects land.	Estate
Donation of Remainder Interest in Land with Reserved Life Estate	Personal residence or farm is donated to the land conservancy, but owner (or designated others) continue to live there, usually until their death.	Organization owns remainder interest in the land, but owners (others) continue to live on and manage land during their lifetime subject to a conservation restriction.	Income Estate
Bargain Sale of Land	Land is sold to the land conservancy below fair market value. It provides cash, but may also reduce capital gains tax, and entitle you to an income tax deduction.	Organization owns, manages, and protects land.	Income Estate

*Amount of income and estate tax deductions depend on a number of factors, contact a tax professional.

If you have any questions, would like more information, or would like to better understand your options, contact the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy at (269) 324-1600 (www.swmlc.org) or Chikaming Open Lands at (269) 469-2330 (www.chikamingopenlands.org).

keep it **BLUE**
 only rain in the drain

www.swmpc.org/water.asp