

The Paw Paw River Runs Free Once More

In 2011, the spillway and diversion dams on the Paw Paw River just east of M-140 were removed. Along with the dam removals, the river channel was restored and the streambanks were planted with native shrubs and trees. This project was accomplished with collaboration and funding from local, state and federal government agencies, private businesses and non-profit organizations. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration provided major funding under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

PROJECT BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Cleaner water by reducing erosion and sediment pollution
- Improved safety for recreation (paddlers and fishermen) by removing the compromised dam structures
- Improved fish and aquatic habitat
- Enhanced movement of fish and aquatic life



Walleye (*Sander vitreus*)



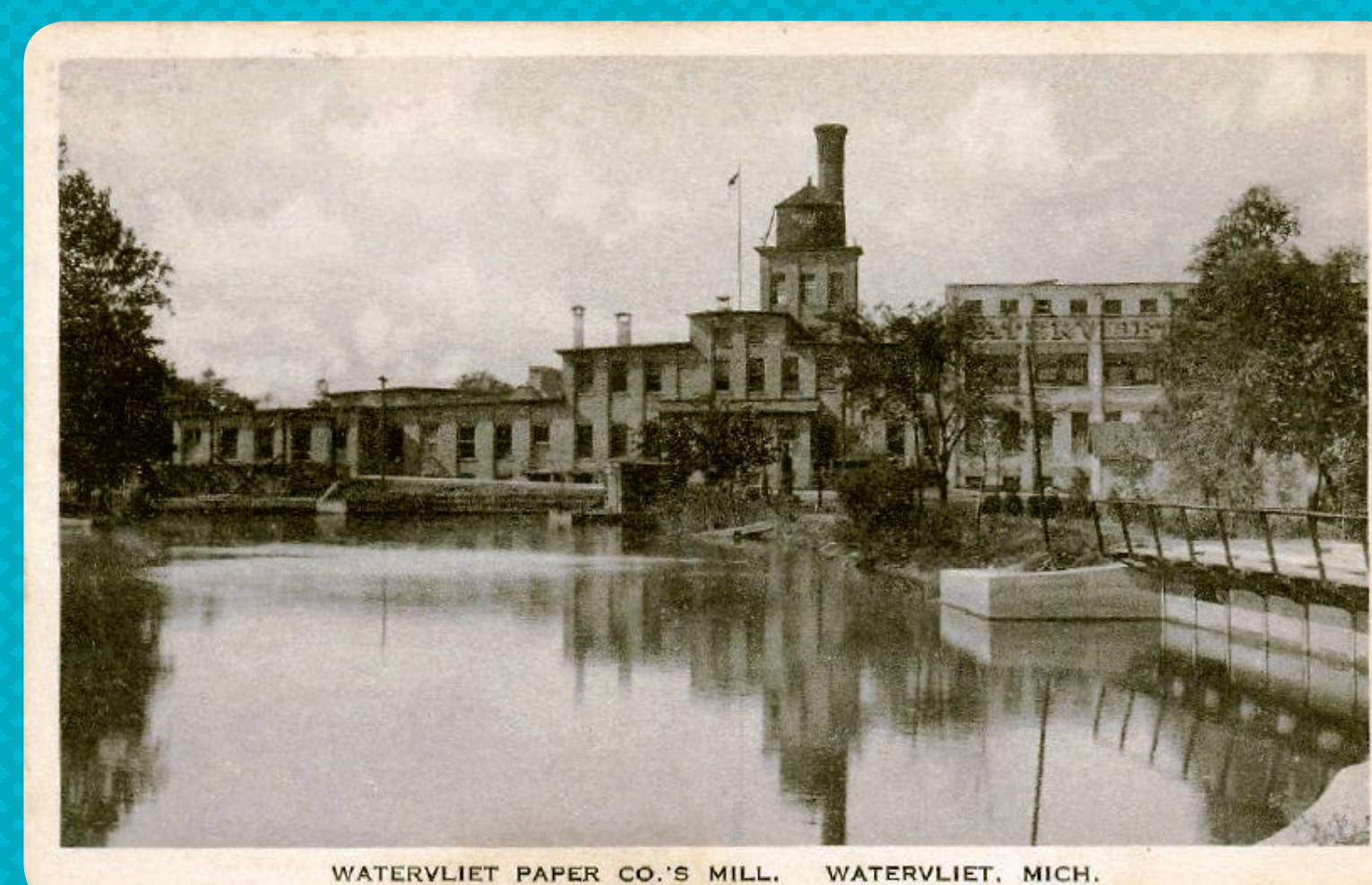
White Sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*)



Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*)

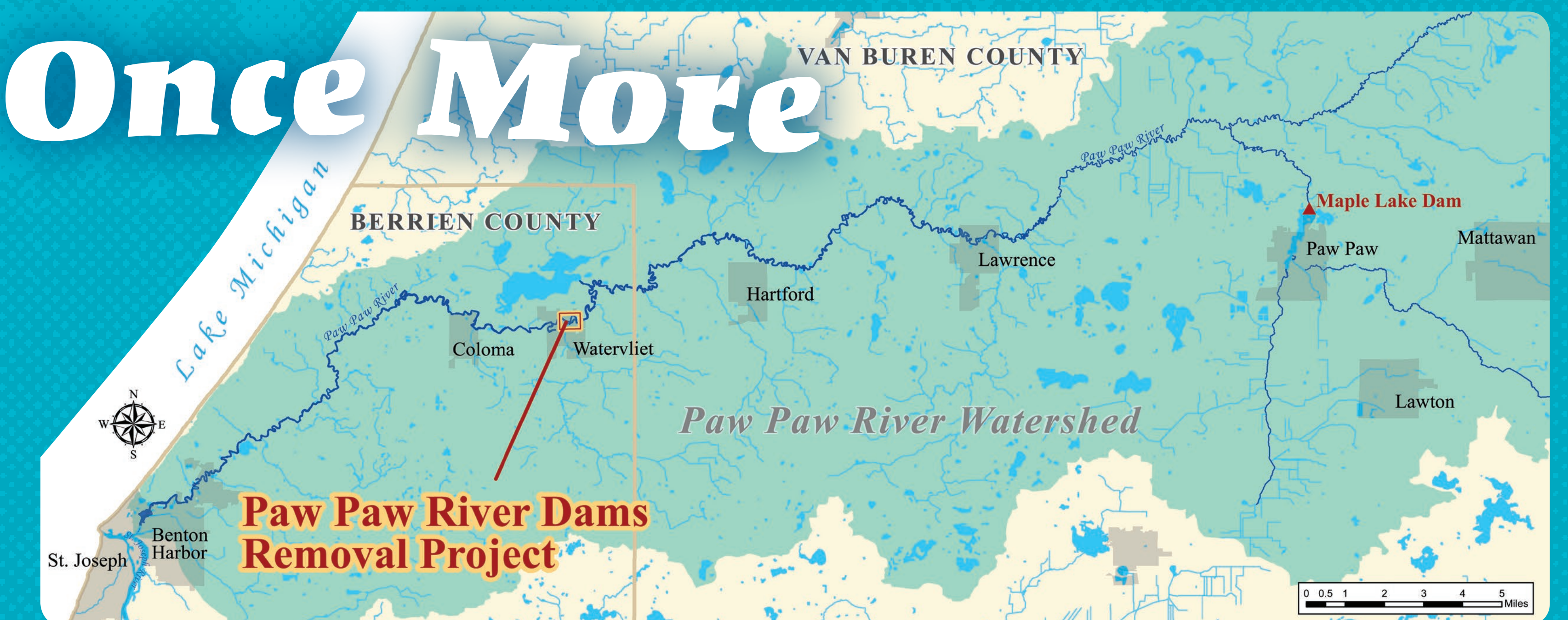


With over 40 native fish species including walleye and white sucker, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division and The Nature Conservancy consider the Paw Paw River one of the highest quality freshwater systems in the Great Lakes Basin. Removal of the dams benefited the fish community by improving habitat and allowing all species of fish and aquatic life to move upstream and downstream along the river.



Early postcard view of the Watervliet Paper Mill reflecting in the Paw Paw River.

These dams once provided significant economic benefit to the community. They were originally built to power saw mills and were later re-built for the Watervliet Paper Mill. After the closing of the mill, the dams fell into disrepair and the Berrien County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority acquired them and began searching for funding to remove them and restore the Paw Paw River. Now the communities along the Paw Paw River will benefit from improved fish habitat, water quality, public safety, and recreational opportunities.

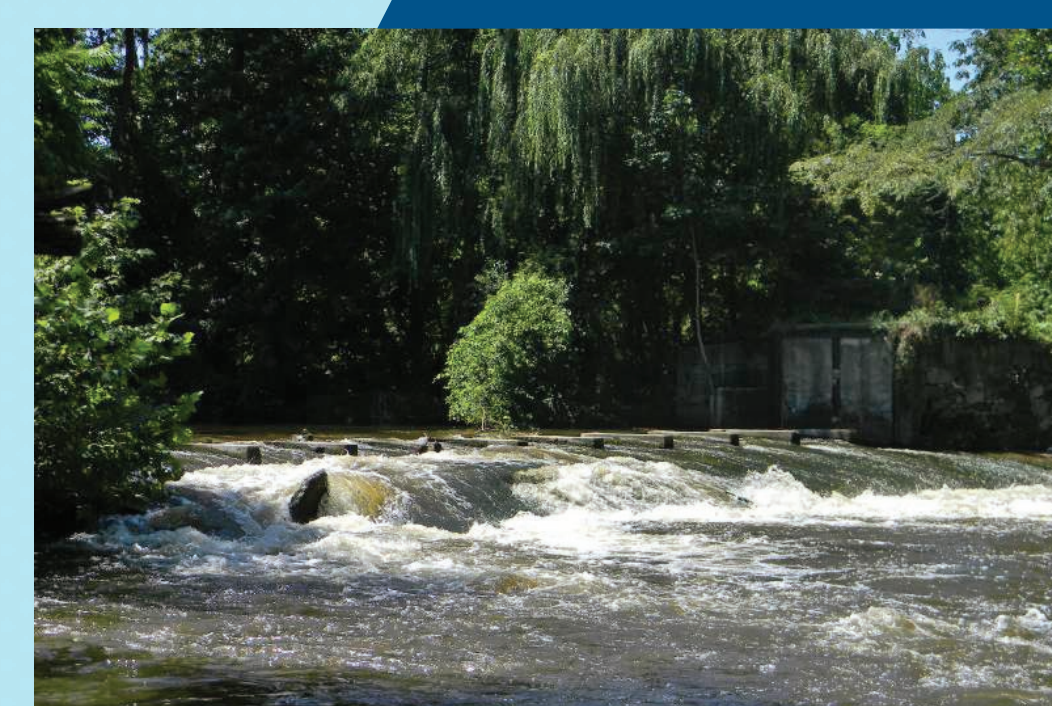


The Paw Paw River is now running free from Maple Lake (Village of Paw Paw) to Lake Michigan. Restoration of this area connected over 100 miles of river and streams!



RIVER RESTORATION PROCESS

BEFORE



Spillway Dam



Educating the public about fish monitoring



Collecting the fish for monitoring

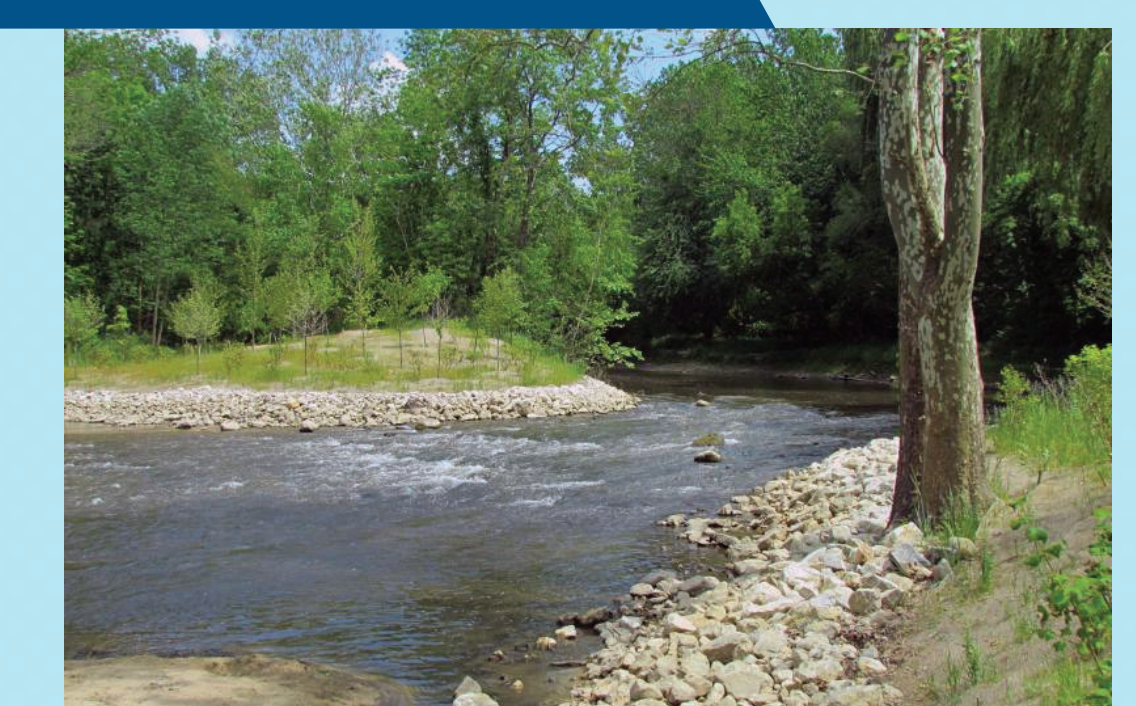
DURING



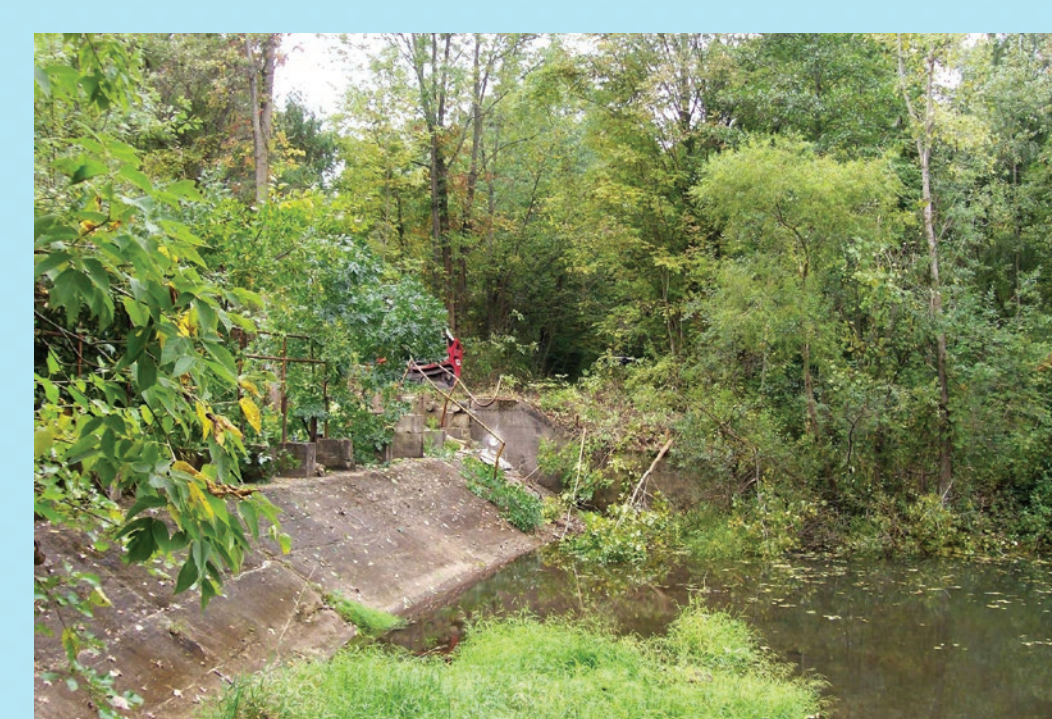
Diversion Dam removal



Spillway Dam removal



Restored Mill Race, former Spillway Dam



Diversion Dam



Educating the public about the project



Marking the fish for monitoring



Diversion Dam removal



Spillway Dam removal



Restored Historic Channel, former Diversion Dam

Funding provided by:



For more information on this project visit:
www.swmpc.org/watervlietdam.asp