



CONSERVATION ALMANAC  
*Tracking Investments in Protected Lands*

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## State Highlights in Conservation: Michigan

### Profile of State Program(s)

**Michigan Agricultural Preservation Fund:** The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Act of 1974 authorized a property tax incentive program that offers term enrollment for conservation of farmland protection, called “The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program.” The program consists of five methods for preserving farmland and open space temporarily and in perpetuity. Of the five, only the Agricultural Preservation Fund generates a funding source for the purchase of land, through a conversion fee: landowners enter into contract with the state to keep their land in farming, and in turn may receive state income tax credits. If a landowner withdraws their land from this program prior to the expiration of the term, s/he is charged a fee. This conversion fee provides grants to local governments for the purchase of agricultural conservation easements.

**Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund:** The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act was originally passed in 1976 and provides constitutional protection for the acquisition of land for public recreation and conservation purposes. Financial assistance is available to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) through the Trust Fund. The fund, which may not exceed \$500 million, is generated by the leases, royalties, and other fees collected for the extraction of non-renewable resources from state-owned lands. As stipulated by the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act (MNRTF) of 1985, at least 25 percent of annual expenditures must be made available for land acquisition. No more than 25 percent may be expended for public recreation facilities. The MNRTF Board of Trustees and the Grants Management office of the DNR

administer the program. Full text available in the Michigan Constitution, Article IX, section 35.

### Substantial State Investment

Michigan passed the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act in 1976, which provides constitutional protection for the acquisition of land for public recreation and environmentally significant lands. Financial assistance is available to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources through revenue generated by oil and gas leases. Since the act was passed, over \$1 billion of revenue has been created as of 2008, and on average \$29.4 million is dedicated for land acquisition each year.

### State Incentive for Local Conservation Funding

The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund Act authorizes financial assistance to local governments and the Department of Natural Resources through revenue generated by oil and gas leases. Local units of government must provide at least 25 percent of the project’s costs as a local match.

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality also conserves lands through a mitigation program, in which new lands are conserved and held by the Department as conservation easements. This land preservation activity is meant to offset development and other activities harmful to natural lands; no money is exchanged for the acquisitions. These easements are documented in the National Conservation Easement Database ([www.conservationaleasement.us](http://www.conservationaleasement.us)).

## Local Financing Enabled

With voter approval, Michigan local governments have the authority to use general obligation bonds or may increase property taxes to acquire land for parks and open space. Michigan municipalities and counties have passed a number of land conservation ballot measures. Of those, most have authorized a portion of their property taxes for land acquisition.

## Local Programs Included

Local conservation programs include:

- Ann Arbor Township, MI
- Ann Arbor, MI

Visit [www.landvote.org](http://www.landvote.org) for detailed information on these programs.

## Federal Partnerships

Federal agencies and programs that have conserved land in Michigan include:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Section 6 Grant
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. Forest Service – Forest Legacy Program (FLP)
- U.S. Forest Service – Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP)
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Grassland Reserve Program (GRP)
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)



The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

### The Conservation Almanac

A comprehensive database of land conservation and public conservation funding in America, the Conservation Almanac provides a context for assessing impacts of conservation and the growing conservation finance movement. The Almanac offers information on public dollars spent and acres conserved, details on local, state, and federal conservation programs, and geospatial mapping of conserved land.

Almanac data collection efforts focus on land conserved using public dollars; contributions funded by private and non-governmental organizations are not tracked comprehensively. Federal data is complete from 1998-2017. State and local data is complete from 1998-2011. In the tables and charts below, acres are allocated to each program proportionate to the size of the contributions to each acquisition. For example, if an acquisition had two contributions, and each program contributed equal dollar amounts, each program receives 50% of the acres. If you have questions or want to provide updated information, please contact Jessica Welch at [jessica.welch@tpl.org](mailto:jessica.welch@tpl.org).

[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

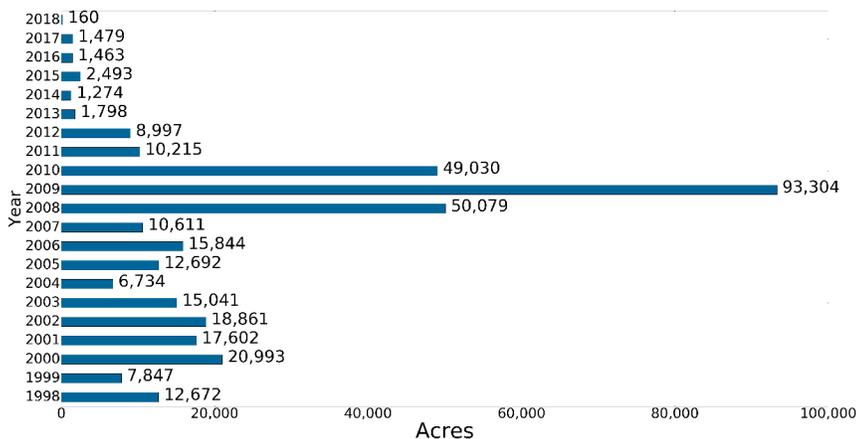
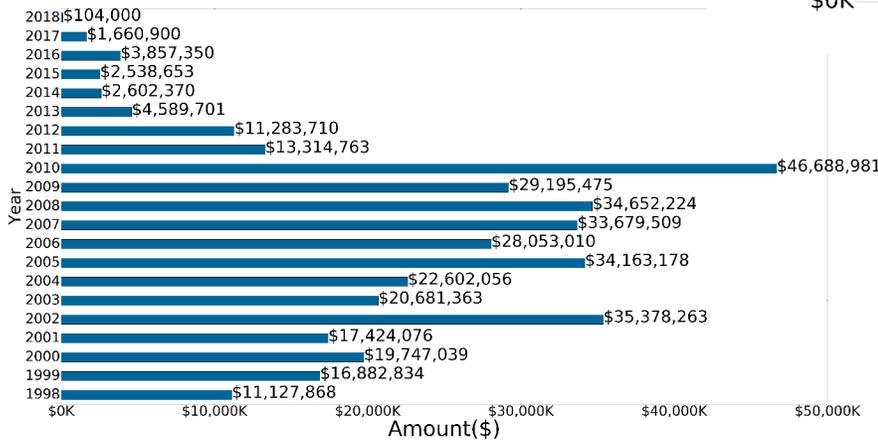
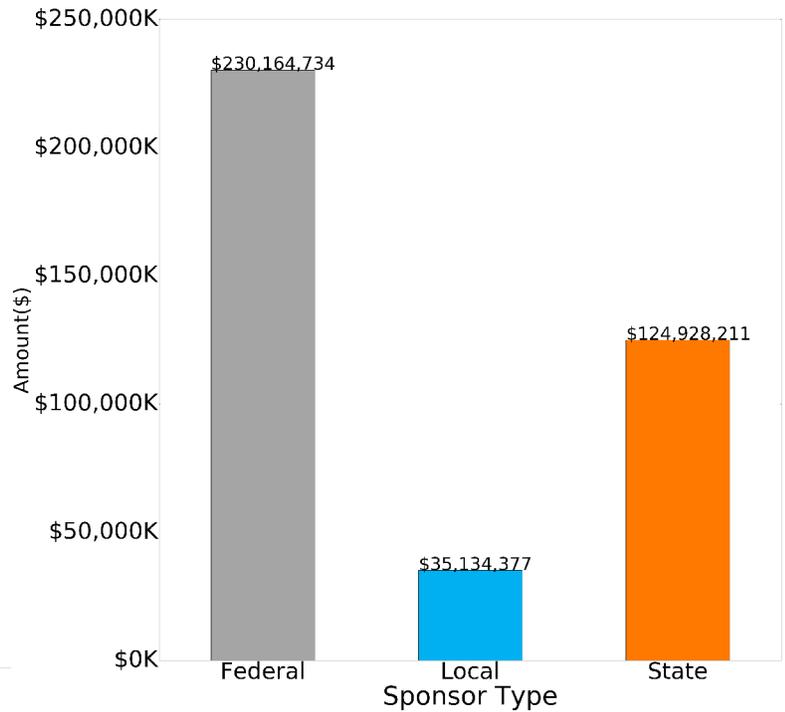
[www.conservationalmanac.org](http://www.conservationalmanac.org)

# State Conservation Report Michigan



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The data in the Conservation Almanac track the impacts of public spending on land conservation. Created by The Trust for Public Land, the Conservation Almanac brings those data together along with state policy profiles, current conservation finance news, and an interactive map, to provide a powerful online tool.