

## What Is The Watershed Plan?

A community-driven effort, work began in 2006 to develop the **Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan**. Over 50 individuals, organizations, agencies, and businesses signed the PLWF Partnership Agreement; in 2008 the plan was approved by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. It has five specific goals:

- 1 **PUBLIC HEALTH** - To ensure that water is free of pathogens and/or toxic chemicals;
- 2 **AQUATIC ECOSYSTEM** - To protect the integrity of essential habitats;
- 3 **Water-Based Recreation** - To protect and enhance recreational opportunities;
- 4 **Natural & Cultural Assets** - To invest in land-based resources that preserve, enhance and promote the watershed;
- 5 **Local Management & Implementation Institutions** - To establish mechanism that provide sustained local leadership and community engagement to implement the plan.

## What You Can Do To Help . . .

- Plant native vegetation along streams, waterfront and in yards. Use safe shoreline landscaping practices.
- Use compost and other natural soil enhancers in gardens and lawns. Avoid using fertilizers and pesticides - especially along shorelines.
- Understand the role that wetlands play in keeping the watershed viable. Protect them and contribute to efforts to do so.
- Dispose of chemicals, paints, oils and other toxic substances safely and according to local ordinances.
- Join and contribute to the Watershed Council. Participate in strengthening the organization to assure the wise use and enjoyment of the watershed for now and for future generations.

**Portage Lake  
Watershed  
Forever**

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Manistee County  
community foundation



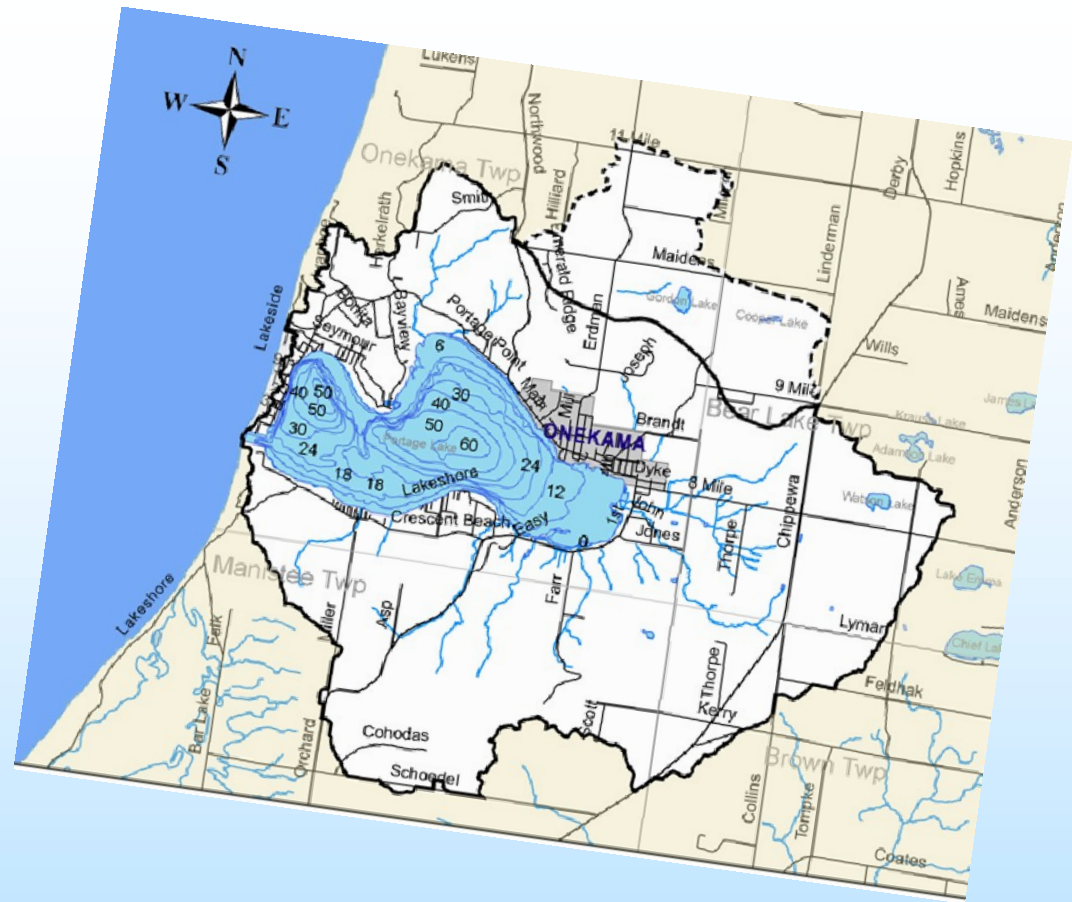
**Portage Lake  
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## Facts About Our Watershed

The Portage Lake Watershed covers 24.6 square miles and includes parts of Manistee, Bear Lake, Brown and Onekama Townships as well as the village of Onekama.

Portage Lake has a surface area of 2,116 acres — 13.4% of the total area of the watershed. It is a natural lake formed by glaciers and fed by 22 streams. In two areas, its maximum is up to 60 feet with an average depth of 19 feet.



## Why Do Watersheds Matter?

**Everyone lives in a watershed.** We depend on the water that flows through watersheds for everything from drinking water to farming to recreation. Consequently, it is important that we understand how what we do has a significant impact:

- Rainwater that flows across paved roads and parking lots before reaching a stream is likely to warm up and pick up heavy metals and oil from the pavement. Warm or polluted run-off will degrade habitat for fish and insects in Portage Lake and its feeder streams.
- Animal waste and bacteria from yards or livestock can wash downstream to the lake and other areas in the watershed and lead to beach closures and other health concerns.
- Fertilizers used on lawns and farms can also run off into nearby streams and storm drains. The nutrients in fertilizers can trigger algae blooms in the lake and reduce oxygen levels for fish and other marine life.
- Conserving wetlands and natural vegetation along the lake and streams helps filter some of the run-off and protects water quality throughout the watershed.

For more information about the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan, events and activities, how to help, options to donate and links to related information, go to <http://onekama.info/watershed/>