



## Friends of the St. Clair River

### Blue Water River Walk Self-Guided Tour

The Blue Water River Walk shoreline habitat restoration project along the St. Clair River began in 2010. For a century, Desmond Landing existed as a mile-long hub of industrial and railroad activity. When this brownfield redevelopment project was completed in June 2014, it became a beautiful, publicly-accessible shoreline with habitat for fish and wildlife and paved trails for pedestrians. Now that this shoreline is restored to its pre-industrialized function and form, the River Walk is safer and has more places for families to access the water in this urban landscape. Native plants are critical to this habitat project because they produce the most suitable habitat for native fish and wildlife and offer erosion protection for the shoreline. Unlike other river front parks in Port Huron, the Blue Water River Walk was designed for wildlife first and people second. If you have visited the Thomas Edison Parkway think about how that park compares to what you see around you currently.

#### **Lisa Harris Memorial Arch**

There are areas in and around the River Walk that are suitable for wildlife and others that are not. First, face west (your back to the river) and then turn east towards the river. Which of these areas is more suitable for wildlife? Why?

#### **Welcome Sign (Map)**

Who owns the Blue Water River Walk?

What were the three main components of the restoration project that began in 2012?

#### **Creating a Natural Neighborhood**

What caused the destruction of the natural shoreline?

List two features that were added to attract native wildlife:

- 1.
- 2.

## **The St. Clair River**

What is a watershed?

The water flowing in the St. Clair River comes from two countries, five states and three Great Lakes. Name them: (hint, use the watershed map on the sign)

Countries:

- 1.
- 2.

States

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Great Lakes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How does the restoration of the shoreline habitat benefit the watershed?

## **The Port Huron Carferry: Crossing the St. Clair River**

The ferry dock is a reminder of our region's history that thrived on shipping and railroads. The ferry dock is now a place where people can stop and enjoy the wildlife and scenery around them while reflecting on the impact that industry and humans have had on the environment. If you were designing the River Walk, would you have left these industrial relics? Why or why not?

## **Variety is the Spice of Life**

What is biodiversity?

Why is it important?

## **Tomorrow's Fish**

Describe the human activities that led to the destruction (loss) of fish spawning habitat.

Describe what has been done to mitigate these human impacts.

## **Stella the Sturgeon Statue**

Lake Sturgeon are the largest fish native to the Great Lakes. The Stella statue is about 3-4 times the length of the largest Lake Sturgeon. Scientists believe that the waters between southern Lake Huron and western Lake Erie (also called the Huron-Erie Corridor) support the largest self-sustaining Lake Sturgeon population in the Great Lakes. Lake Sturgeon stay near the bottom of the river and feed on small animals like crustaceans and insect larvae that live in the rocky substrate. Each year Lake Sturgeon gather underneath the Blue Water Bridges to spawn on the rocky reefs that have been restored in the river. Once the eggs hatch, the larval fish drift downstream and spend much of their juvenile years in the protective waters of the marshes where the St. Clair River flows in Lake St. Clair. Why do you think the Huron-Erie Corridor supports the largest self-sustaining population of Lake Sturgeon while populations in other parts of the Great Lakes have declined or require management to sustain them?

## **An Ancient Fishing Ground**

What tools did native people use to catch fish?

How did the tools change over time?

How did this change in technique lead to a decline in fish populations?

How is fish restoration connected to our local economy?

## Our Ancestors Plants

What is an invasive plant?

Why is it important that invasive plant species are removed and replaced with native plant species?

## Wrap up

The following is a Trip Advisor review from a visitor to the River Walk in August 2018. After your walk today, how would you respond to this visitor's review?

 Reviewed August 20, 2018  via mobile

### Needs some TLC

This was a great spot at first. Haven't been in a couple of years and was really surprised at how the weeds have overgrown in alot of areas almost to the point obstructing the view of the great pieces of art and sometimes the river itself. (Plays havoc on allergies too) I don't understand why the city doesn't have a better handle on this. Don't get ne wrong, it is still a beautiful walk. I enjoy walking from Pine Grove Park area to the Bluewater Bridges myself. Regardless, there is nothing like a walk along the St. Clair River in our beautiful town of Port Huron.

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**Friends of the St. Clair River**

Michigan's Thumb Coast watershed organization showing 40 miles of love to the St. Clair River since 2007

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