

Chapter 2 Watershed Concerns

2.1 Designated Uses in the State of Michigan

The ultimate goal of the Sault Ste. Marie area watershed project is to restore and maintain water quality to the level that it meets the *Designated Uses* for water as set by the State of Michigan as set by the Michigan's Environmental Protection Act (P.A. 451 of 1994, Part 31, Chapter 1).

Table 2.1 Designated Uses for Surface Waters in the State of Michigan

All surface waters of the State of Michigan are designated for and shall be protected for all of the following uses:

1. Agriculture
2. Industrial water supply
3. Public water supply at the point of intake
4. Navigation
5. Warm water fishery (some water bodies are also protected as a coldwater fishery)
6. Other indigenous aquatic life and wildlife
7. Partial body contact recreation
8. Total body contact recreation between May 1 and October 1

If a body of water does not meet the water quality standards established for a specific designated use, then it is considered in non-attainment¹. A bi-annually published listing of water bodies in Michigan that are in non-attainment can be found in Michigan Department of Environmental Quality's integrated report (MDEQ 2002). The St. Mary's River is on the list for water bodies requiring TMDL's (Category 5) (Combined Sewer Overflows, pathogens, FCA-PCB's, Fish Tissue-Mercury).

2.2 Water Quality Concerns

The Sault planning project began with the formal collection of water quality concerns (including the St. Mary's River²) from local technical advisors and stakeholders including representatives from Lake Superior State University, the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, Michigan State University Extension, USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, Chippewa/Ottawa Resource Authority, Sierra Club, and the Intertribal Council of Michigan. The group compiled perceived concerns and effects on the designated uses for water in the Sault Ste. Marie Area (Table 2.2.1). Afterward, in February 2005 the general public was invited to express their water quality concerns and provide direction for the project through participation in a steering committee. The group listed their concerns with CEMCD and that initiated the following inventory work. That meeting was followed by an initial steering committee meeting, where local citizens, state, federal and tribal personnel, regional planning agencies, local government officials, and representatives from local environmental groups met to further discuss details about water quality concerns and issues. The group also committed to working together to develop this watershed management plan. The following table lists the preliminary pollutant, source, and cause concerns

¹ The Sault Ste. Marie watershed project area is a subwatershed of the St. Mary's River, which is listed on MDEQ's Section 303 (d) Report list as impacted by mercury, PCB's (Polychlorinated biphenyls), and pathogens (Creal and Wuycheck 2002)

² The St. Mary River was identified in 1985 by the International Joint Commission (IJC) as one of 42 Areas of Concern (AOC) in the Great Lakes Basin. Areas of Concern were identified based on known impairments of beneficial water uses. The St. Mary's River was identified as an AOC as a result of problems associated with phosphorus, bacteria, heavy metals, trace organics, contaminated sediments, fish consumption advisories and impacted biota.

that set the stage for the watershed inventory, providing background direction for focused investigation.

Table 2.2 Watershed Concerns and Impacted Designated Uses

Watershed Concern	Threatened Designated Use
Hazardous waste from landfills, contamination sites, LUSTS, etc.	Public water supply (impaired), Aquatic life, Warm/coldwater fishery
Inadequately treated wastewater failing on-site septic systems (OSS)	Public water supply, partial and full body contact recreation
Soil erosion from construction sites, stream banks, and road embankments	Warm/coldwater fishery, Aquatic life
Degradation/loss of aquatic habitat	Warm/coldwater fishery, Aquatic life
Nutrient contamination from residential and golf course lawns	Warm/coldwater fishery, Aquatic life
Altered hydrology	Warm/coldwater fishery, Aquatic life
Polluted stormwater	Warm/cold water fishery, Aquatic life, Public water supply (Surface water intake)