



JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION PLAN

Adopted 1.8.2025

As an environmental nonprofit working to advocate for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and protect and preserve its watershed, it is our responsibility to lead with equity in all our programs and procedures. To that end, The Watershed Center has created a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Plan to ensure we are incorporating these values into our work. This plan is a starting point to build a lasting foundation for equitable work and will be evaluated and updated annually.

VALUE STATEMENT

We will take meaningful actions throughout the entire organization to become more inclusive and serve as better allies to communities fighting environmental and social injustice.

GOAL: LEARN

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- All staff and board members complete Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion training on an ongoing basis.
- All staff and board members commit to ongoing learning, questioning the status quo, and taking accountability for how we may benefit from and contribute to harmful systems.

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- Board and staff members complete a one-hour diversity training, followed by conversations around how this affects our work and how we can improve our efforts in environmental justice – June 2025.
- New Board and staff members are required to complete a one-hour diversity training during the onboarding process – ongoing.
- Gaps in our representations with respect to our supporters, volunteers, staff, Board, and communities we serve are identified – May 2005.

GOAL: ACT

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- Elect diverse Board members and hire a diverse staff.
- Actively work with staff to meet their needs (flexible scheduling, universal access to digital resources, accommodating special needs).
- Provide opportunities for tribal members to collaborate and engage with our Board and staff.



- Divest from harmful systems and share resources.
- Work towards embedding indigenous knowledge and practices into our programs and initiatives.
- Continually revisit the JEDI plan to hold Board and staff accountable.

MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

- Two additional Board members are elected who bring diverse perspectives to the organization, with an emphasis on engaging a member of a tribal nation – end of 2025.
- An element of indigenous knowledge or practice is incorporated into an existing program or initiative – end of 2025.
- The Board’s Executive Committee uses the JEDI plan as a guiding document, making recommendations to center JEDI values into our ongoing programs and initiatives – ongoing.
- New Board members and staff are empowered to share their ideas as the Board’s Executive Committee provides support and guidance for solidarity – ongoing.

GOAL: ENGAGE

STRATEGIC ACTIONS

- Respectfully engage in collaboration that supports just, reciprocal, and collective work.
- Build trust within our community and engage in intentional listening to build consensus through healthy deliberation.
- Engage tribal nations in collaborative projects.

METRICS

- Trust is built and partnerships are strengthened with organizations who support just, reciprocal, and collective work – ongoing.
- Internal policies, standards, and guidelines that continually guide our organization in how to engage justly and equitably are updated or created – ongoing.
- A tribal nation is engaged in one collaborative project – end of 2025.

BUDGET & IMPLEMENTATION

Allocating funds to this work will further solidify our commitment to incorporating the JEDI plan. The budget includes personnel time and potential consultant fees.

ANNUAL BUDGET

- \$7,500

OUR WATERSHED

To serve the diverse population of the Grand Traverse Bay watershed in a just, equitable, and inclusive way, The Watershed Center must be aware of this diversity and the issues in our communities. The Grand Traverse Bay watershed drains approximately 976 square miles and covers major portions of Antrim, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, and Leelanau counties. The Grand Traverse Bay region is home to more than 150,000 people, with population densities greatest in the Traverse City region, along the bay’s shoreline, and along the large lakes in the Elk River Chain of Lakes (Figure 1). Population growth puts tremendous pressure on the area’s water resources, leading to issues related to groundwater quality (Figures 2, 3), surface water quality (Figures 4, 5), and reduced wetlands (Figure 6a, 6b).

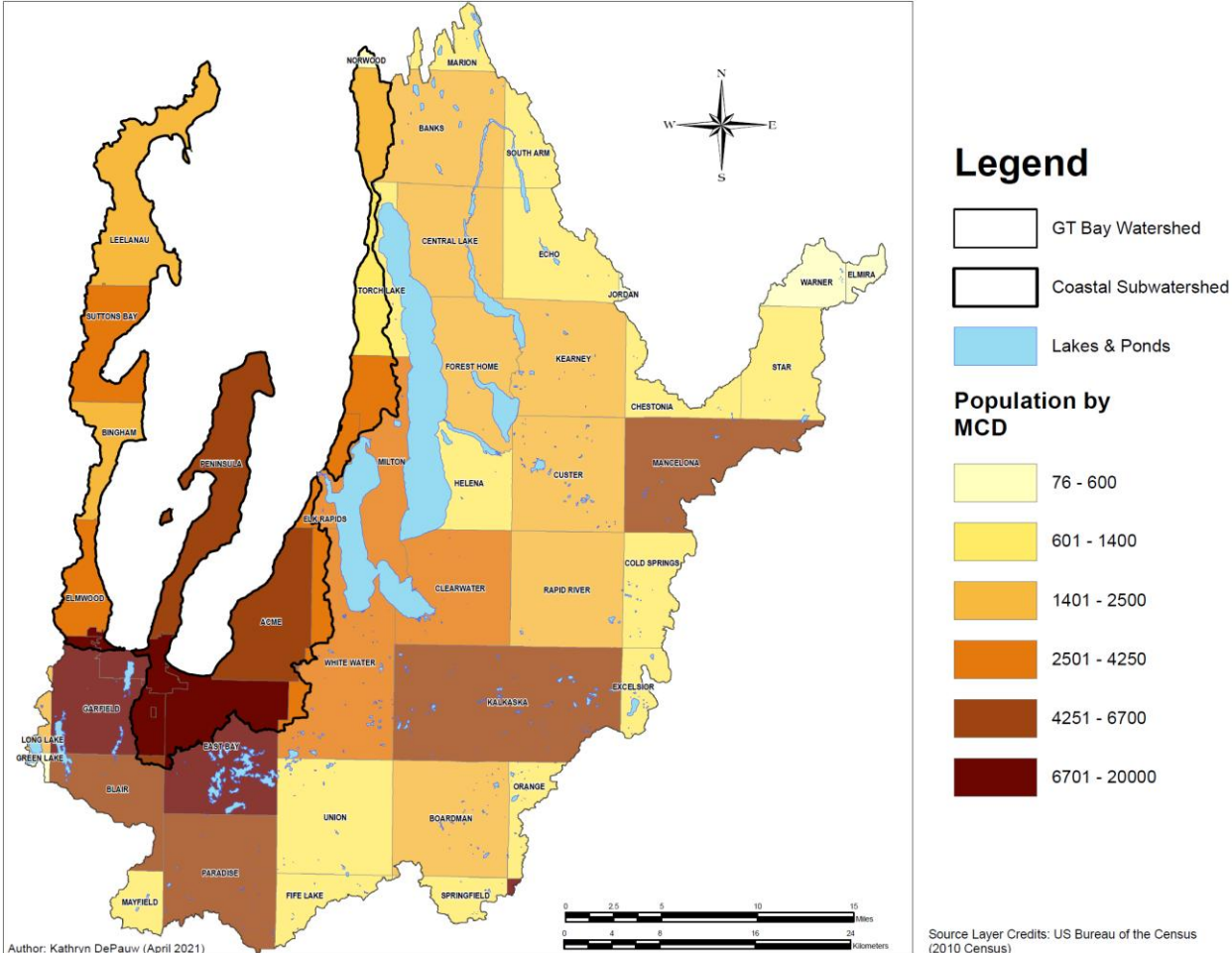


Figure 1: Population by minor civil division for the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.

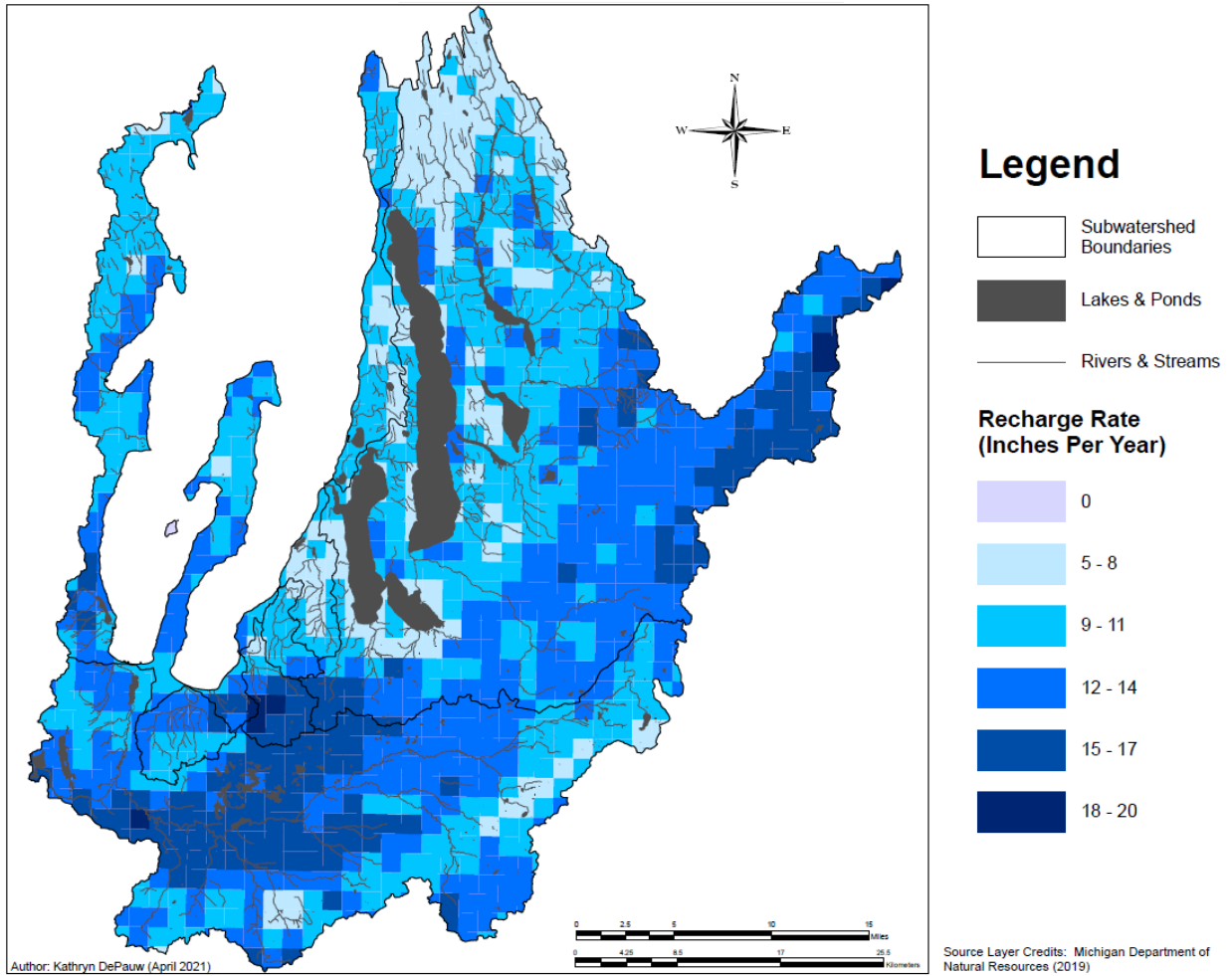
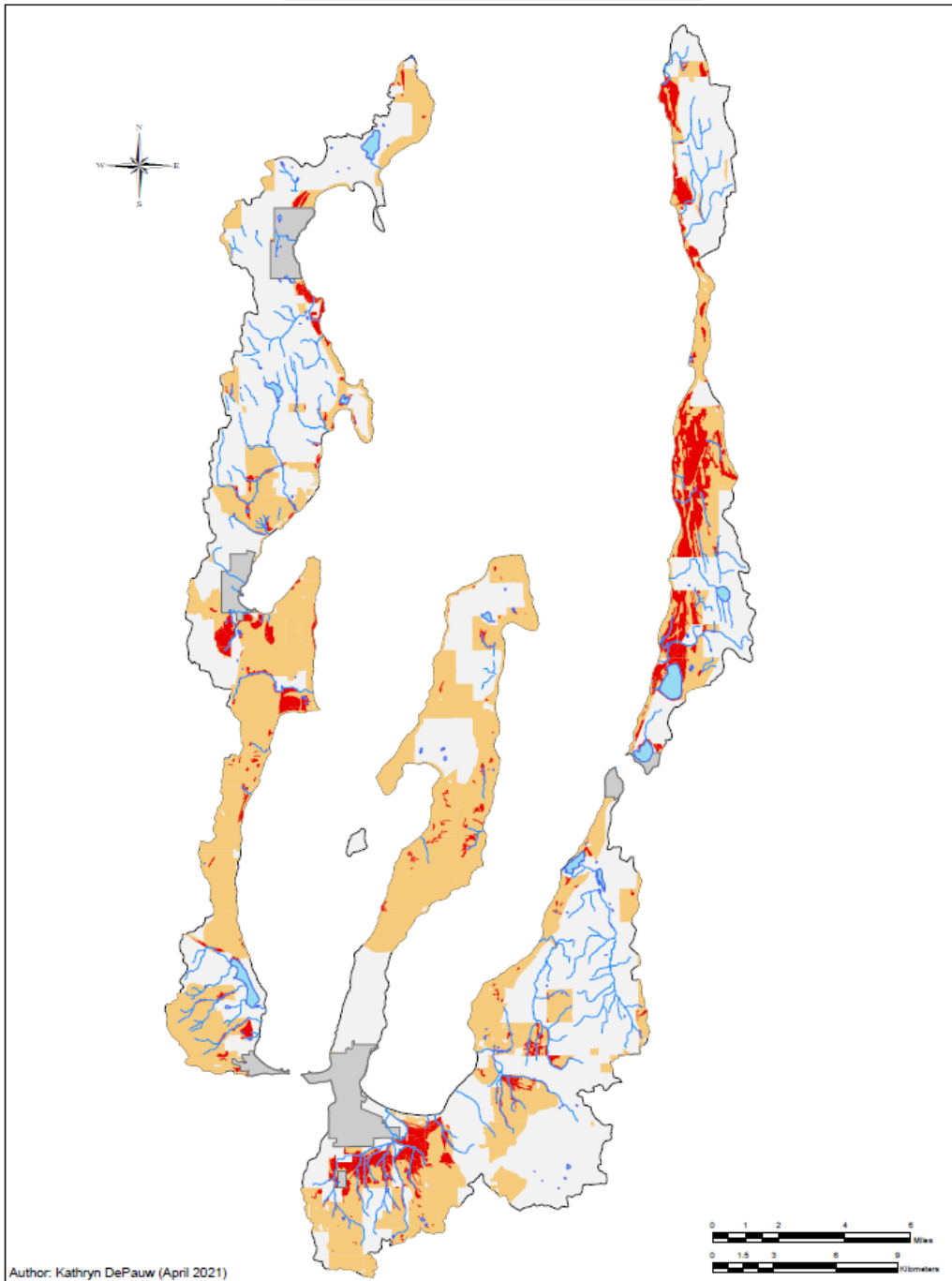


Figure 2: Groundwater recharge rates in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.



Layer Credits: US Bureau of the Census (2010 Census) and US Department of Agriculture, NRCS (gSSURGO 2019)

Legend







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|--|---|---|
|  Coastal Subwatershed |  Cities & Villages |  Low Drainage Soils (A/D, B/D, C/D, D) With 32+ Housing Units (Per Square Mile) |
|  Lakes & Ponds |  32+ Housing Units (Per Square Mile) | |
|  Rivers & Streams | | |

Figure 3: Areas at risk for septic pollution in the coastal Grand Traverse Bay watershed.

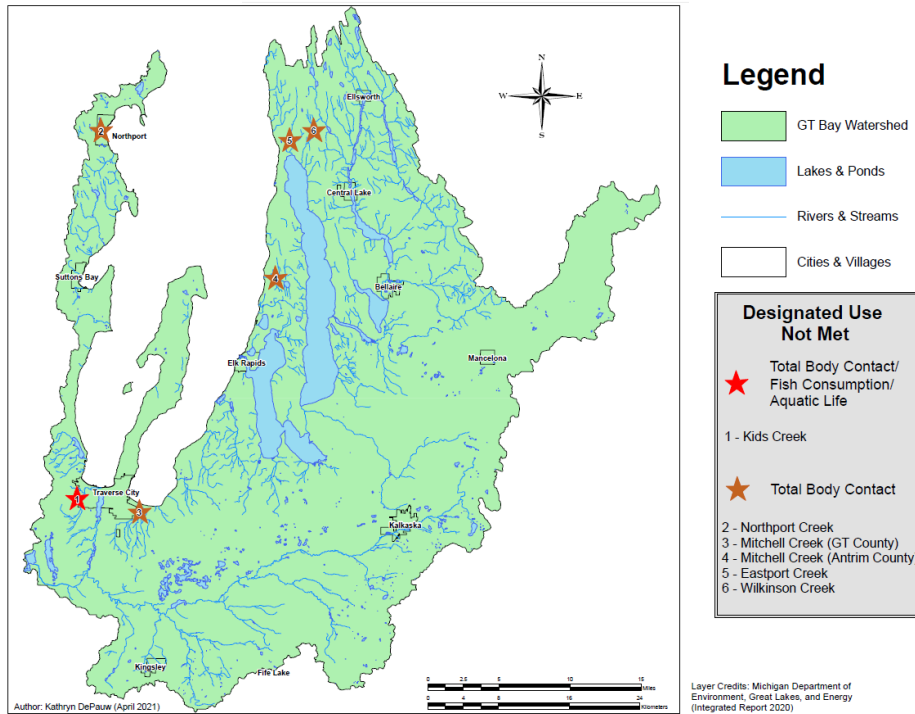


Figure 4: Designated use impairments in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.

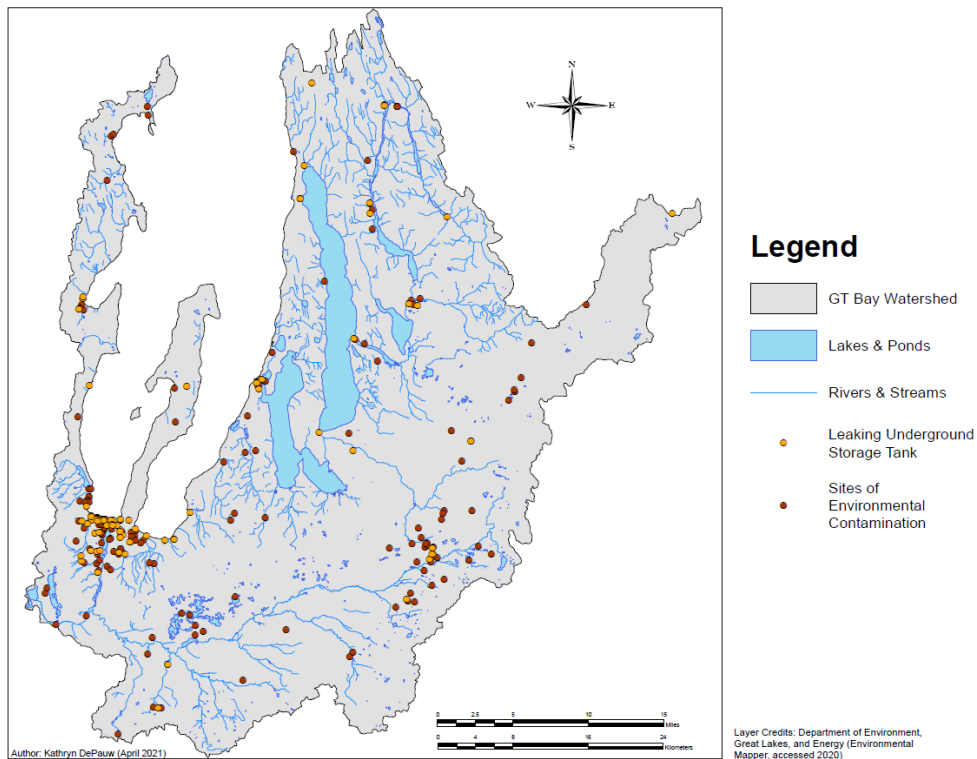


Figure 5: Remediation sites for environmental contamination and leaking underground storage tanks in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.

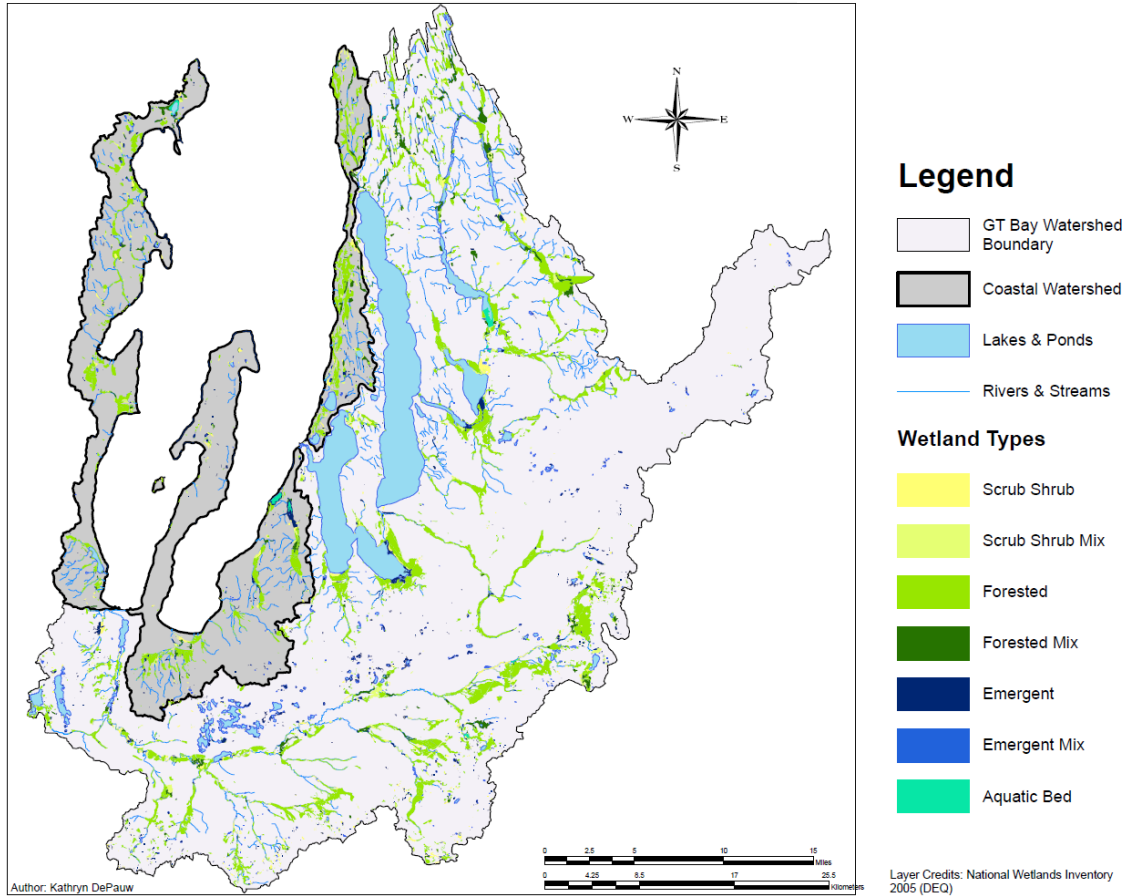
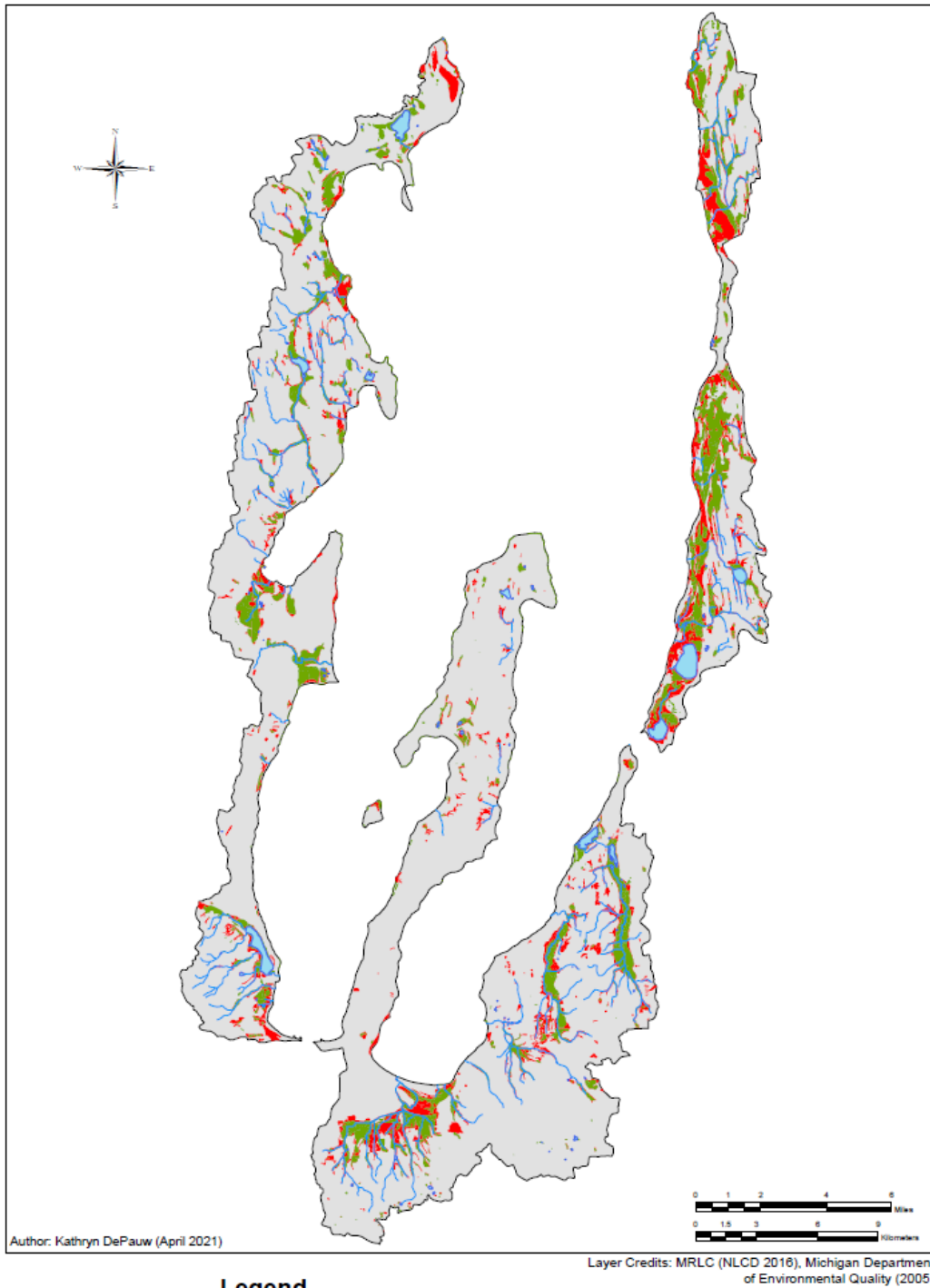


Figure 6a: Wetlands in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed.



Legend






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|---|--|
|  Coastal Watershed |  Current Wetlands |
|  Lakes & Ponds |  Wetland Loss |
|  Rivers & Streams | |

Figure 6b: Wetland loss in the coastal Grand Traverse Bay watershed (pre-settlement-2005).

DISPARATELY IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

Michigan’s Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy created an interactive tool ([MiEJScreen](#)) that identifies a variety of stressors and demographics within communities that may impact environmental conditions or the public health of residents (Figure 7). The MiEJScreen overall score (scale from 1-100) is made up of four categories: exposures, environmental effects, sensitive populations, socioeconomic factors. A census tract with a high score is one that experiences a combination of various stressors and potential increased vulnerability than census tracts with low scores. The Grand Traverse region includes overall MiEJScreen scores as high as 47, with the highest scores identified in the Traverse City area. Additionally, the Grand Traverse Region includes Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) scores as high as 62 related to the tribal lands located in Leelanau County (Figure 8).

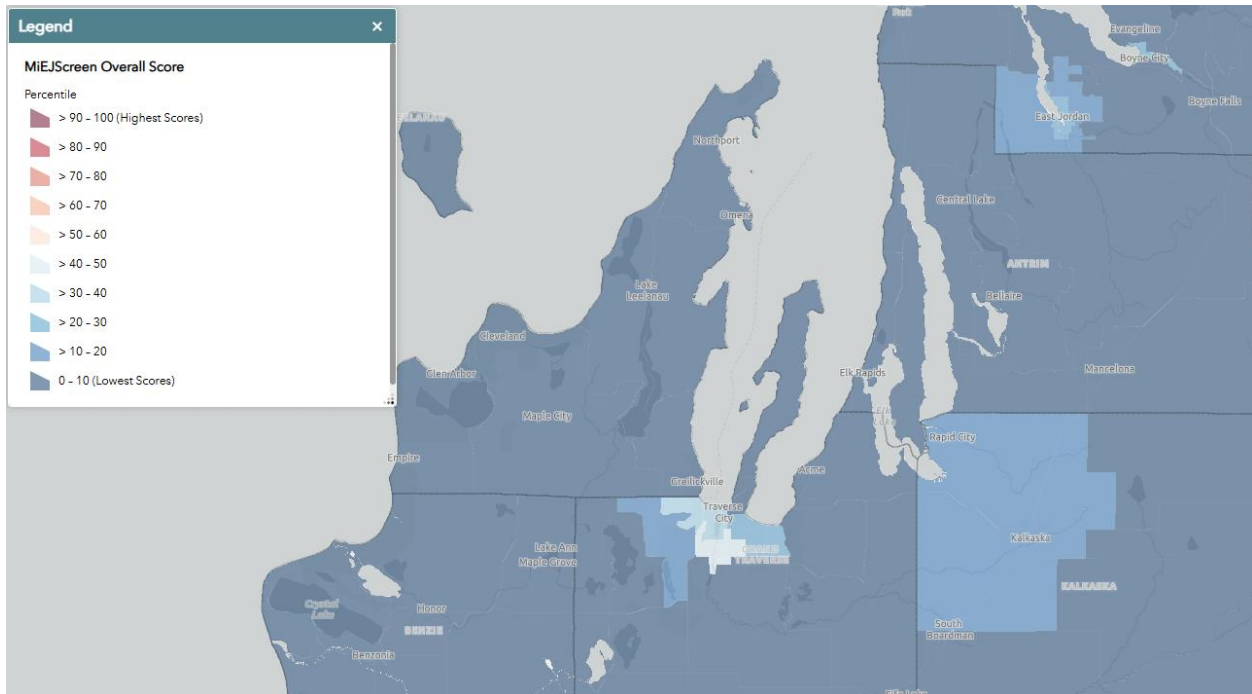


Figure 7: MiEJScreen overall score for the Grand Traverse region.

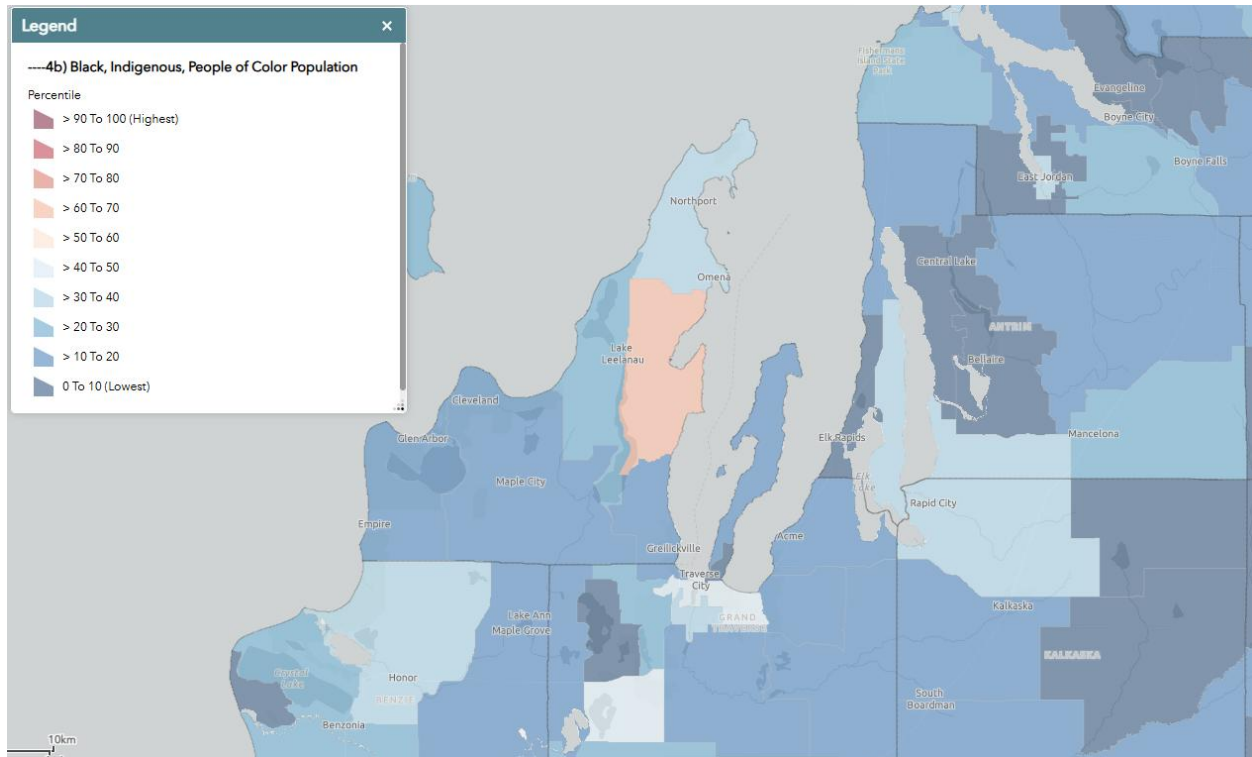


Figure 8: MiEJScreen Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) population score for the Grand Traverse region.

OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION

The most applicable example of working to help BIPOC and disparately impacted communities with watershed-related issues is our partnership with the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB). This partnership encompasses various restoration projects and advocacy related to water quality in our watershed. Specific examples include:

- **Boardman-Ottaway River Network:** TWC and GTB are part of the Leadership Team for this network dedicated to the preservation, protection, restoration, cultural significance, and sustainable use of the Boardman-Ottaway River and its watershed. Currently, TWC and GTB are part of an Action Team working to create a scorecard for the river that defines a healthy river from an environmental, social, cultural, and economic perspective.
- **Beach cleanups:** As part of a Trash Free Waters grant, TWC engaged GTB to host beach clean ups throughout the grant period. After the grant ended, GTB continues to use our equipment and host beach cleanups on tribal land.
- **Mitchell Creek Conservation Partners:** TWC and GTB are part of a network of conservation organizations dedicated to the protection and restoration of Mitchell Creek. Currently, TWC is partnering with GTB to work with municipalities in the watershed to identify gaps in water and wetland protections and provide recommendations for improvement, as well as work with them to implement our recommendations (as part of a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the Bureau of Indian Affairs).



DEFINITIONS

JUSTICE

Dismantling systems of oppression and privilege that create systemic disadvantages and barriers to people's ability to access resources and opportunities or based on which people experience systemic mistreatment. Where equity is about reapportioning or redistributing resources so people can access opportunities, justice is about dismantling barriers to those opportunities.

EQUITY

Constitutes being fair and impartial and ensures everyone is given equal opportunity to thrive; this means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person can access an opportunity.

DIVERSITY

Understanding and acknowledging that environmental nonprofits can be described as a body of ethnically and racially different groups of people represented in the community and workplace. Diversity is the differences between us based on how we experience the systematic advantages or barriers to opportunities. How do we make it possible to have every person represented fairly within our organization?

INCLUSION

Understanding, recognizing, celebrating, centering, and amplifying the perspectives, voices, values, and needs of the different groups of people represented in the community and workplace who experience systemic barriers, mistreatment, or disadvantages based on their identities to ensure they feel a sense of belonging. Working towards an on-going and organization-wide willingness to learn how to create and sustain an inclusive environment, making sure all voices are heard.