

## Interpretive Project Grant at Work: Wildflower Walkway at Chippewa Nature Center

Chippewa Nature Center (CNC) recently updated their Wildflower Walkway pathway to be a more accessible space with a 4-foot-wide paved path, patio with flexible seating, and a power-assisted door opener. While this work opened the space to more people, the construction of these elements impacted the wildflowers that had been growing in the space. CNC received an Interpretive Project Grant with the goal of enhancing the native wildflower plantings and developing and installing two interpretive panels. During the spring of 2023, volunteers and CNC's natural resources technician planted over 150 new wildflower plugs. By fall, CNC interpreters and the marketing team produced two interpretive signs highlighting the year-round benefits of native wildflowers for wildlife and the importance of flood plains in flood control. Since the re-opening of the Wildflower Walkway, the space has been enjoyed by visitors in all seasons. CNC is looking forward to the coming growing season when the site will be in full bloom from the bloodroots and Virginia bluebells of spring through the asters of late fall.





**Natural Flood Control**

**Floodplains help reduce the impacts of flooding**

You are standing on the high bank of the Pine River, which originates in Pilecock County and flows into the Chippewa River just downstream from here. Like many rivers in the Saginaw Bay Watershed, its flow rate and depth vary greatly based on the season and recent precipitation.

During a dry summer, the river here is no deeper than your knees, but during a flood, it becomes very deep and fast.

As you look at the forest and fields across the river, notice that they are at a much lower elevation than where you are standing. During flood events, this floodplain becomes a river bottom and provides space for the extra water before it flows downstream and empties into the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron.

Floodplains slow the flow of the water, allowing some sediment to drop out and decreasing the intensity of downstream flooding. The trees and other plants growing in the floodplain are adapted to having occasional "wet feet" and thrive with the extra nutrients that are deposited during floods.

Floodplains help to mitigate local flood events, providing a critical ecological service. CNC manages more than 900 acres of floodplains, helping to protect downstream ecosystems and communities.



*Collection of the Chippewa River and Pine River floodplains, 1990s*

**Slowing the Flow at Home**

As more buildings, roads and parking lots are constructed, rainwater runs into rivers more quickly causing increased flooding. Here are some actions you can take to help slow the flow of rainwater into rivers.

- Use a **rain barrel** to water gardens, fill bird baths, or wash the car.
- Create a **rain garden** where downspouts empty. Check out the rain garden in front of the Visitor Center for inspiration.
- Consider using **permeous pavers** instead of concrete or asphalt for driveways and patios.
- Plant a portion of your yard with **native plants**. Their deep roots help rain water soak into the ground rather than run across the surface into storm drains or culverts.



*Black-eyed Susan*



*Goldenrod*