

YOUR GIFT WILL:

- Safeguard areas of the property with significant ecological and recreational value while considering creative approaches for managing other portions with less conservation value
- Provide the opportunity for a high-quality trail system in East Bay Township, which could become part of a significant recreational corridor from Traverse City to the Vasa Trail
- Protect critical habitat in an area facing increasing development pressure, including a rare perched rich conifer swamp
- Permanently preserve scenic views of Grand Traverse Bay and the surrounding landscape
- Safeguard water quality in East Grand Traverse Bay, a major source of the region's drinking water

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

The total project cost and fundraising need: **\$11,092,252\***

*Thanks to a generous supporter, donations for this project will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$20,000.*

**Contact:**

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*\*The current fundraising goal for this project may be impacted by several factors that are yet to be determined, such as the size of the property, its ownership, and stewardship needs. As these details are finalized, the total funding needed may change.*

*In the event that fundraising support for a project exceeds the original project fundraising goal, the Conservancy will allocate the overage to purposes that the Conservancy determines further its mission, such as organizational costs, to protect additional land, or to care for the long-term stewardship of protected land.*



## THE RIDGE Proposed Project

December, 2024

Love the land. Pass it on. 

In East Bay Township, a forested ridge rises prominently above the surrounding landscape, the centerpiece of a unique property that could soon join the area's growing network of protected lands. Known as "The Ridge," this roughly 312-acre property is among the region's most critical landscapes identified for protection, featuring tremendous ecological significance, water quality benefits, and potential for passive recreation opportunities.

The Ridge is situated within the East Bay Shoreline and Mitchell Creek watersheds, which are part of the larger Grand Traverse Bay watershed. A watershed (or drainage basin) is an area of land where all water—whether from rain, snowmelt or other sources—flows toward a common body of water. What happens on the land directly impacts the water's health, and stressors from development, climate change, invasive species and pollutants pose increasing risks to our water quality.

This property plays a crucial role in safeguarding water quality in Grand Traverse Bay, the primary source of drinking water for over 40,000 residents. The Ridge contains over 3,300 feet of shoreline along Bakers Creek and a tributary that originates on the property, both of which flow into the bay. Meanwhile, protecting the property's steep, forested slopes from development helps ensure the flow of rainwater and snowmelt is slowed, reducing flooding by allowing water to be gradually absorbed. This process also helps reduce harmful runoff, erosion and sedimentation that can degrade water quality.

In addition, the land includes about 64 acres of wetlands that naturally filter water as it travels through the watersheds. Among these wetlands is a unique perched rich conifer swamp, a habitat listed as vulnerable by the State of Michigan due to its restricted range, rare occurrence and recent, widespread decline.

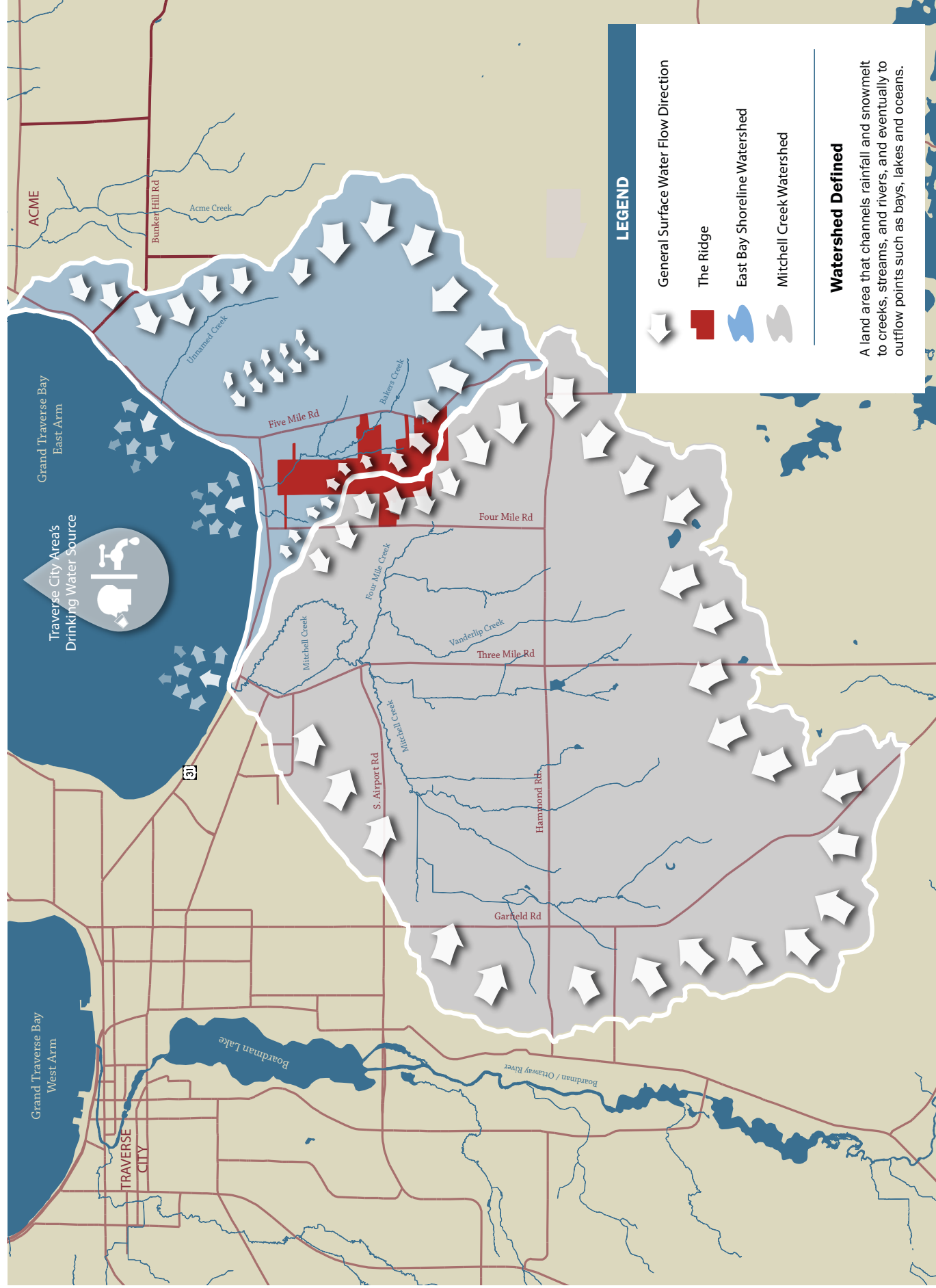
While flora and fauna surveys are ongoing, early assessments of the property have discovered diverse wildlife. This includes species of special concern such as the Wood Thrush and Red-headed Woodpecker, as well as an active Bald Eagle nest. The property also serves as a vital link in a larger ecological corridor connecting nearby protected lands. It is adjacent to the Mnaadendan Shkaakimiikwe Nature Sanctuary and near the Holiday Woodlands Natural Area, Mitchell Creek Meadows: The Don and Jerry Oleson Nature Preserve and the George and Ada Reffitt Nature Preserve.

Beyond its ecological significance, The Ridge offers breathtaking views of the surrounding region. From its peak, the property overlooks Old Mission Peninsula across Grand Traverse Bay as well as downtown Traverse City. On a clear day, it is possible to see as far as Charlevoix to the north and Sugarloaf Mountain in Leelanau County. Its varied terrain and proximity to the popular TART trail open the potential for an impressive trail system, creating a significant recreational trail corridor from Traverse City to the Vasa Trail.

Recently, a large-scale housing complex had been planned to be constructed on the property, which could have resulted in over 1,700 housing units. While conservation remains our primary focus, we recognize the region's urgent need for housing. To balance these important community needs, the Conservancy has formed a committee of board members and staff to carefully consider the possibility of setting aside a small portion of the property, which lacks significant conservation value, for housing.







WATERSHED MAP

PROJECT AREA MAP

