

YOUR GIFT WILL:

- Safeguard water quality in East Grand Traverse Bay, a major source of the region's drinking water
- Protect critical habitat in an area facing increasing development pressure, including a rare perched rich conifer swamp
- Preserve areas of the property with significant ecological, scenic 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

SUPPORT THIS PROJECT

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

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**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 NATURE PRESERVE Proposed Project

April 2025

Love the land. Pass it on. 

In East Bay Township, a forested ridge rises prominently above the surrounding landscape—the centerpiece of a 312-acre property identified as one of the region's highest-priority landscapes for protection. Known as "The Ridge," this ecologically rich land protects water quality, provides critical wildlife habitat and offers exceptional potential for recreation.

What happens in a watershed—an area of land where water flows into a common body of water—directly impacts the health of our water. The Ridge lies within the Mitchell Creek and East Bay Shoreline watersheds, both part of the larger Grand Traverse Bay watershed. Water flowing through this land directly feeds into the bay, the primary drinking water source for over 40,000 residents and countless visitors.

With 7,100 feet of stream frontage and 64 acres of wetlands, including two important headwater wetlands, The Ridge plays a crucial role in water quality protection. These wetlands act as natural filters—absorbing excess nutrients, trapping sediment and reducing pollutants—while also reducing erosion, mitigating flooding and providing essential habitat for diverse wildlife.

Among its many wetlands are rare and sensitive habitats, including areas of perched rich conifer swamp, listed as vulnerable in Michigan, and part of a remnant dune-swale complex unique to Great Lakes coastal embayment shorelines. The Ridge also hosts relic oak pine savanna—one of the rarest habitat types in the Conservancy's protected lands.

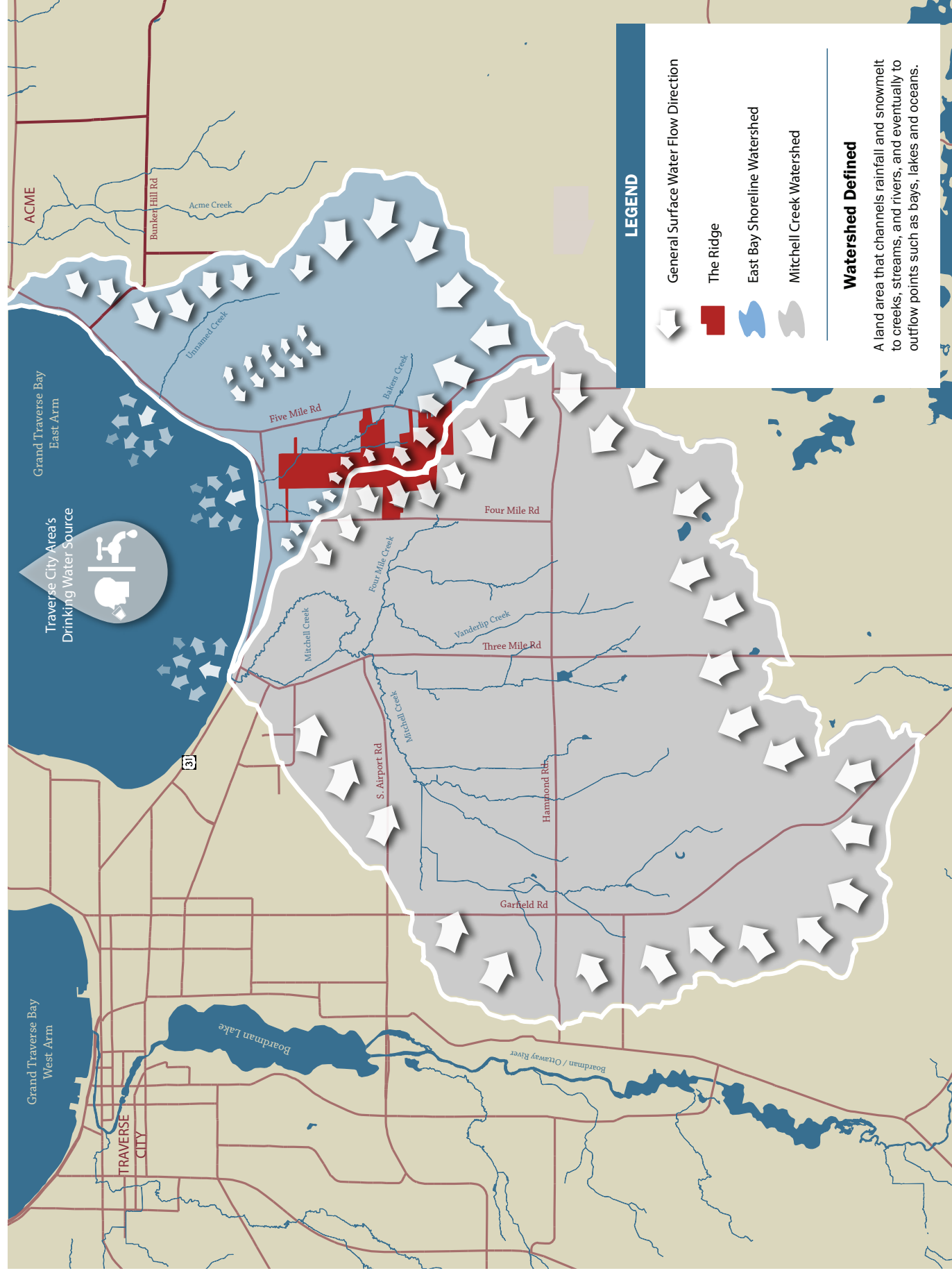
Early ecological assessments confirm the property's diverse wildlife, including species of special concern such

as the Wood Thrush and Red-headed Woodpecker, along with an active Bald Eagle nest. The proposed preserve also serves as a key link in a growing network of protected lands, adjoining the Mnaadendan Shkaakimiikwe Nature Sanctuary and located 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 Grand Traverse Bay and the surrounding area. From its peak, the property overlooks Old Mission Peninsula and downtown Traverse City, with views stretching as far as Charlevoix and Sugarloaf Mountain in Leelanau County on a clear day. Its varied terrain and proximity to the popular TART trail create exciting potential for an impressive trail system, establishing a significant recreational corridor from Traverse City.

A large-scale housing development was once planned for this site, with more than 1,100 housing units proposed. While conservation remains our priority, we recognize the region's urgent need for housing. To balance both of these needs, a committee of Conservancy board members and staff is exploring the potential of designating a small portion of the property that lacks significant conservation value for housing. A flat, previously disturbed, roughly six-acre area, which has access to existing water and sewer infrastructure, could support up to 30 units of much-needed housing. This balanced approach aims to help address a critical community need while ensuring that The Ridge's most ecologically significant areas remain protected.





WATERSHED MAP

PROJECT AREA MAP

