


# Elkhart Lake Area

## Preserving a glacial watershed



The Elkhart Lake Area in Sheboygan County is known primarily for the area's beautiful lakes, wildlife habitat preserves, recreational opportunities, and its rolling glacial terrain of the northern reaches of the Kettle Moraine. The quaint and charming Village of Elkhart Lake welcomes many visitors to the area as a long-time vacation destination. This scenic region also adds to Wisconsin's rural farming economy along with a weekly downtown farmer's market.



■ Priority Conservation Site  
■ Lake Michigan Watershed Boundary

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### Ecological Significance:

Glacially formed Elkhart Lake, north of Crystal Lake and Little Elkhart Lake, consists of two kettles. At 119 feet in depth, Elkhart is Sheboygan County's largest kettle moraine lake and the state's fourth deepest. Much of the lake's beauty comes from the heavily wooded, mature cedar trees and shrubs that line its shoreline. Elkhart Lake is sited next to a system of wetlands. Perched just to the northeast, the Broughton Sheboygan Marsh Park and Wildlife Area, rated *Excellent* in conservation significance, consists of 14,000 acres of land and surface water, of which about half are publicly owned by Sheboygan County or the State of Wisconsin along the Sheboygan River as it flows easterly to discharge out to Lake Michigan. The Marsh is professionally managed for wildlife, fish, and forestry by the Wisconsin DNR and adjoins the Ice Age National Scientific Reserve. La Budde Creek to the east is a State Fishery Area and the Kettle Moraine State Forest Northern Unit lies just to the southwest.

### Potential Threats:

The watershed of the Elkhart Lake Area has long been considered quite good yet there's increasing pressure to lake ecosystems from nutrients, pesticides, herbicides, and manure runoff from nearby farming operations, leaking septic tank systems and nearshore overland runoff, as well as increasing pressures from recreational boating, shoreline vegetation clearing, and replacement housing from small cabins to larger year-round structures. A potential threat to surface waters and wetland areas is the invasion of exotic species that are not native to the area that are able to outcompete and harm native species. Another potential threat to this landscape is the fragmentation of existing habitat areas and farm

fields needed for groundwater recharge, caused by extensive rural housing development. Pressures for more development, and local concerns over the protection of groundwater, have resulted in increased demands for more protection and scientific study. Fortunately, local lake organizations like the Elkhart Lake Improvement Association and Crystal Lake Rehabilitation District, along with Glacial Lakes Conservancy members and others have been working to study and monitor water quality, educate residents and visitors about lake issues, and advocate for measures to protect the region's ecosystems.

### Current Activities:

The Elkhart Lake Area has been identified as *Conservation Priority Site* by Glacial Lakes Conservancy. Glacial Lakes Conservancy has completed projects in the area and is available to work with more willing landowners and other partners who wish to engage in land conservation practices while keeping the land private.

*Glacial Lakes Conservancy is a private, non-profit land trust serving Sheboygan ▪ Manitowoc ▪ Kewaunee ▪ Calumet ▪ Fond du Lac Counties providing enduring solutions for land conservation in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan Basin*



Elkhart Lake in autumn colors