

# *GRANT WILL IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF THE RABBIT RIVER WATERSHED BY WORKING WITH FARMERS TO DECREASE SEDIMENT LOADING*



Allegan Conservation District and Delta Institute have been awarded funding from the U.S. EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) to help farmers implement conservation practices on up to 4,500 acres of land in the Rabbit River Watershed for the purpose of reducing agricultural pollutants flowing into the watershed.

With a three-year grant in the amount of \$465,402, the Delta Institute and Allegan Conservation District will launch a program to help farmers in the watershed install best management practices (BMPs), including cover crop, exclusion fencing, filter strips, mulch-till, and no-till. This program will use a pay-for-performance approach which provides a financial incentive for farmers to achieve measurable improvements in water quality.

Delta Institute will lead the program design and implementation, and Allegan Conservation District will serve as the ‘boots-on-the-ground’ and work with landowners to reduce sediment loading by approximately 1,500 tons on agricultural fields. Other partners include Michigan State University, which will provide technical assistance, and the Michigan Farm Bureau, which will support outreach to landowners.

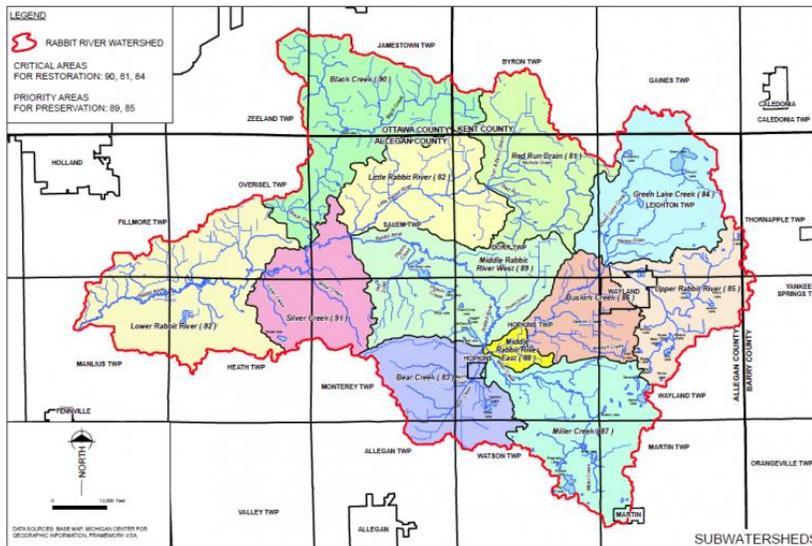
Incentives for landowners will include a one-time **Priority Area bonus of \$500** for land contracted into the program that lies within a high erosion risk area, a one-time **Early Adopter bonus of \$500** for producers who sign up within the first year of the project and agree to a three-year contract, and yearly performance payments of **\$150 per ton of sediment reduced** due to the implementation of BMPs.

Landowners can get same-day, on-the-spot estimates of their reimbursement if they implement conservation practices on eligible cropland.

“We are very excited to be working in partnership with Delta to improve the natural resources within Allegan County. This project will benefit agricultural farmers within the Rabbit River

Watershed while creating better habitat in our lakes and streams,” said Tori Harris, Watershed Technician of Allegan Conservation District.

“This project leverages Delta’s past experience working with farmers on a pay-for-performance approach to improve water quality across the Midwest, and we’re thrilled to partner with the Allegan Conservation District to bring this approach to the Rabbit River Watershed,” said Bill Schleizer, Delta Institute CEO. “Building cooperation among upstream farmers, researchers, and downstream harbor stakeholders will help to make meaningful strides in improving the ecological health of the entire watershed in the long-term.”



Preliminary planning for the project is underway with work expected to begin January 2018.

*Allegan Conservation District is dedicated to helping landowners wisely manage the natural resources of Allegan County. For more information about Allegan Conservation District or the Pay-for-Performance program, visit [www.allegandc.org](http://www.allegandc.org), call at (269) 673-6940, ext. 5, or email [tori.harris@macd.org](mailto:tori.harris@macd.org).*

*Delta Institute collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest. Delta is currently working to build a new food economy oriented around healthy land and people, and we do this by creating mechanisms that: help farmers improve their practices, direct investment into regenerative farming techniques, and maximize environmental and social outcomes. Visit online at [www.delta-institute.org](http://www.delta-institute.org).*

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