

# Guest Speaker

**Dr. John Hartig**

*Great Lakes scientist turned nonfiction author working to inspire a conservation ethic and accelerate the sustainability transition.*

**Saving the Conservation Crescent**

Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy  
Annual Membership Meeting  
November 4, 2023





An aerial photograph of the Conservation Crescent area. The image shows a large, irregularly shaped green area (the Conservation Crescent) situated between a large body of water (the Chesapeake Bay) and a developed urban area. The green area contains a mix of forested land, open fields, and some structures. The water is a light greenish-blue color, and the surrounding land is a mix of urban development and open fields. The text "Saving the Conservation Crescent" is overlaid in white, italicized font across the center of the image.

*Saving the Conservation Crescent*




# Congratulations!



Thank you for all you do to preserve, steward, and understand the natural resources in Grosse Ile Township and surrounding area!

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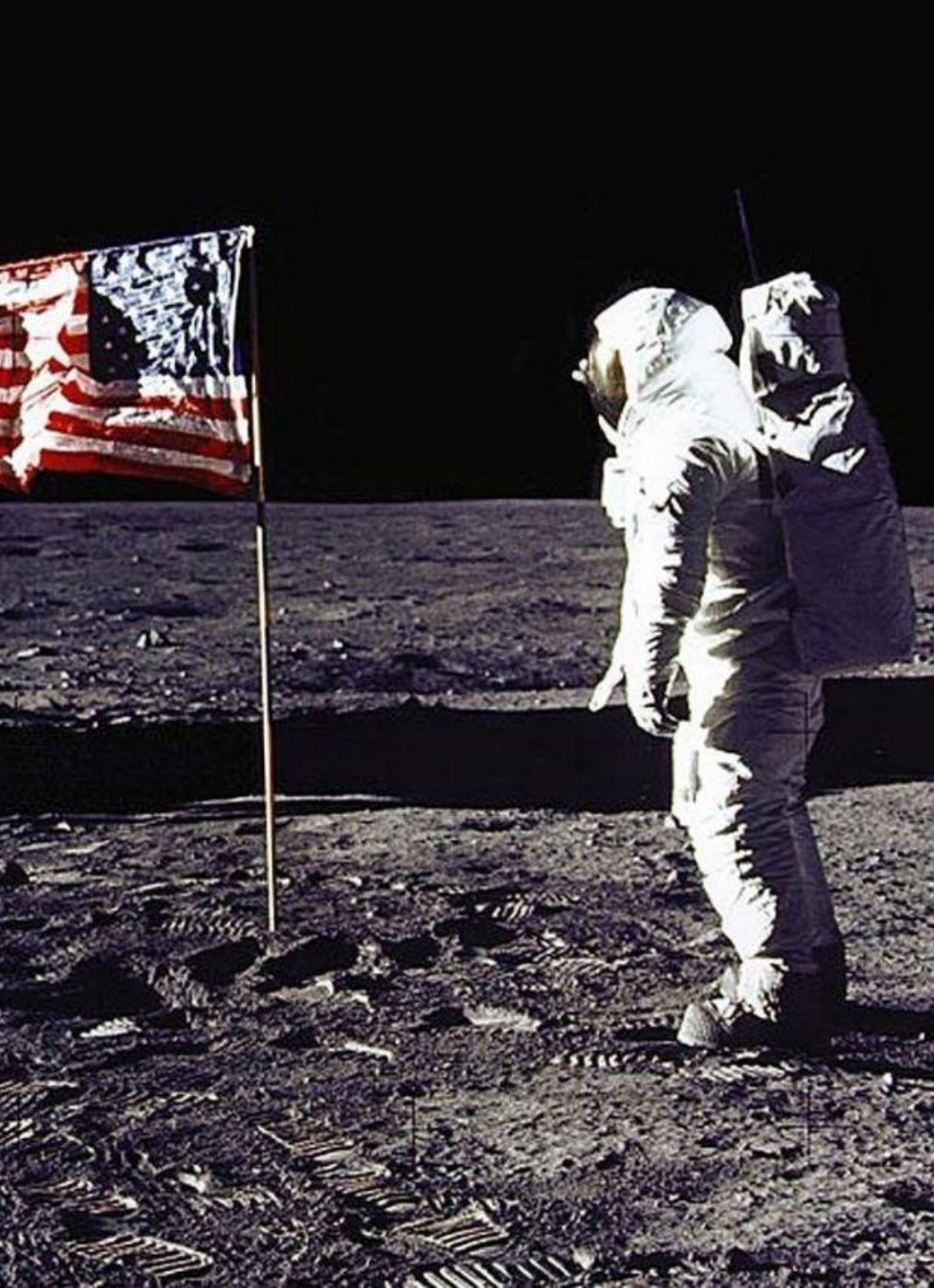
A pair of tortoiseshell glasses is shown from a top-down perspective, resting on a wooden surface. The lenses are clear and reflect a lush green forest scene with many thin trees. The background behind the glasses is a soft-focus green bokeh.

If you have ever planned a big project, you know how difficult the initial planning can be. People often describe this initial phase as “fuzzy” because it lacks a clear and compelling vision.





A clear vision is not a vague wish or dream, but a picture so clear and strong that it will help make the desired outcome real. For that reason, vision has often been described as “hope with a blueprint.”



Contrast the vision of “We will be a leader in space exploration” with “We will put a man on the moon in 10 years.” The latter is much clearer and more compelling!



A vision must be relevant, appealing, and engaging, and must be a picture that can be carried in the hearts and minds of all people.





# Examples

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- Building Detroit's New Waterfront Porch Called the Detroit RiverWalk
- Creating an International Wildlife Refuge
- Saving the Conservation Crescent or the Conservation Crescent is Protected so that All Species, including humans, can thrive

What a great way of visualizing a conservation goal as a crescent-shaped chain of islands, shoreline areas, and wetlands along the southern end of the Detroit River





The first time I heard of the Conservation Crescent was the late 1990s in the fight to save Humbug Marsh!







# Stony Island

- 52-acre uninhabited island now owned by the DNR
- In the early 1990s, it was threatened by development
- In the early to mid-1990s, the GINLC successfully advocated for \$750,000 from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to purchase and preserve this island



# Stony Island - *continued*



- In 2013-2018, Friends of the Detroit River and others championed an \$8 million habitat restoration project through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

# Boblo Island

- Nearly half of the southern end has been protected for conservation and outdoor recreation





# Sugar Island



- 29-acre island purchased by the Refuge in 2011
- \$18 million habitat restoration project championed by FDR and others (2017-2023)



Gibraltar Bay – 158 acres and one of Detroit River's most significant coastal wetlands



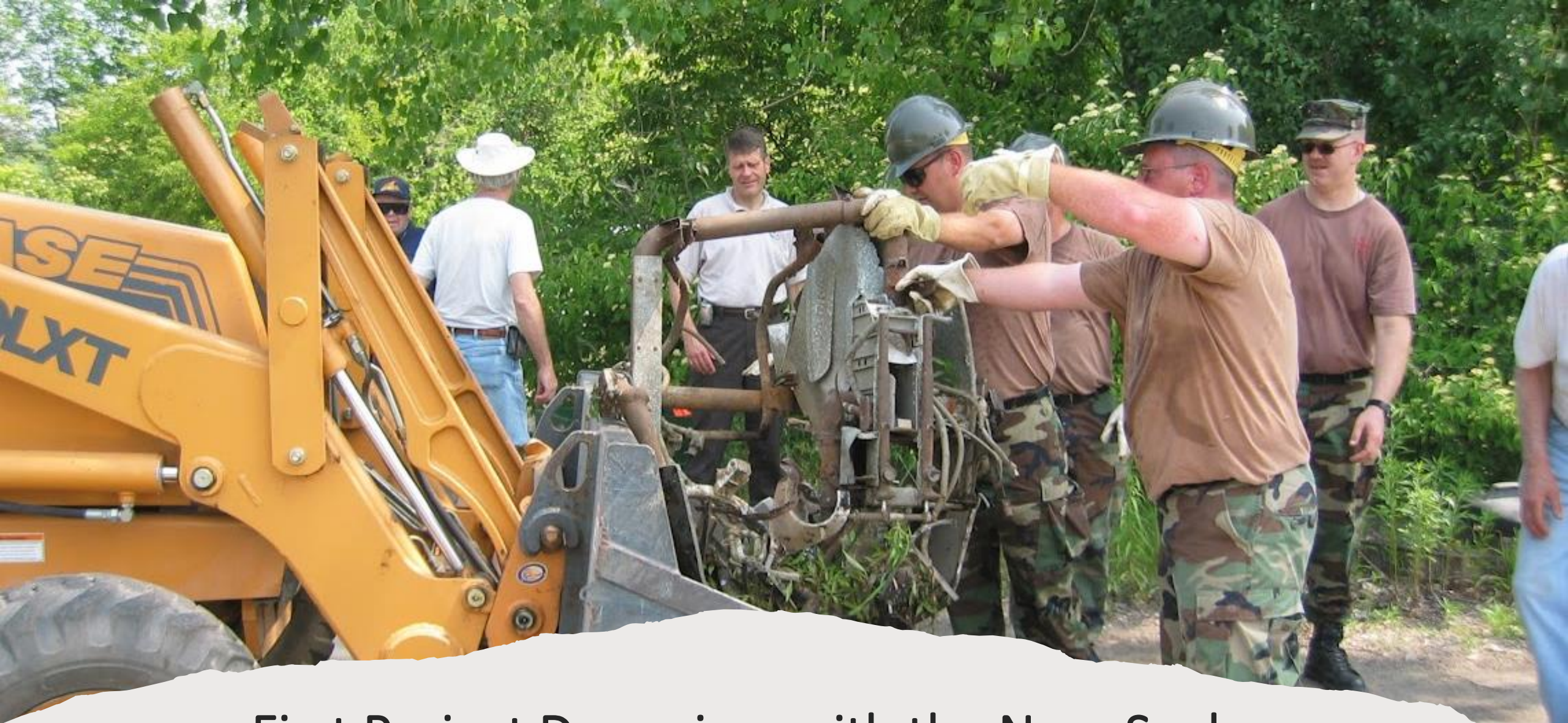


# Gibraltar Bay Unit – 41 acres

- Part of Naval Station Grosse Ile (1927-1969)
- Became part of the Public Health Service in the 1960s
- Transferred to U.S. EPA in 1972
- Stewarded by GINLC (\$80,000 shoreline restoration in 2003-2005)
- Transferred to the refuge in 2008







First Project Downriver with the Navy Seabees



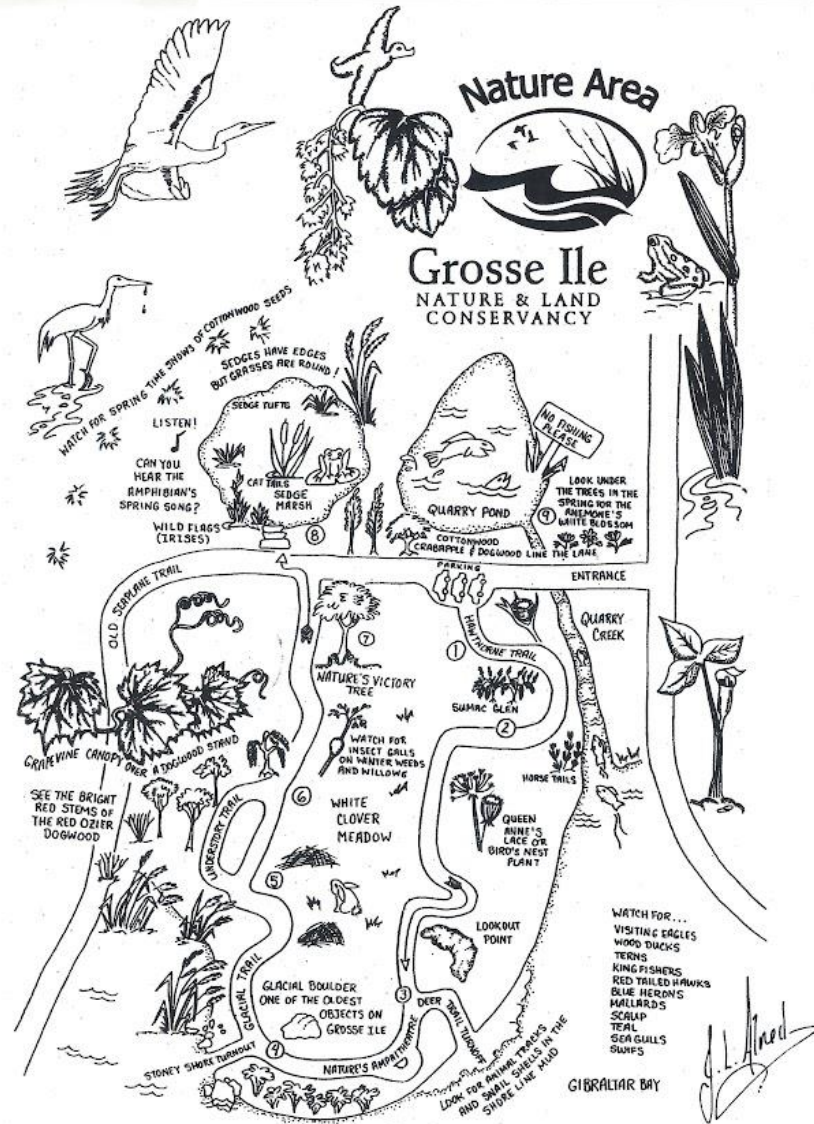
# Worked with the Navy Seabees, Nativescape, and the GINLC to restore a more natural shoreline



Before - 2003



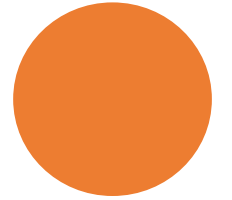
After - 2004





# Airport Natural Area

- Owned by Grosse Ile Township and stewarded by GINLC
- Debris left behind from Naval Station Grosse Ile has been removed and trails and decks have been constructed for visitors to enjoy this natural area
- Detroit Audubon has identified it as a “birding hotspot”



# Celeron Island

- 68-acre uninhabited island owned by the DNR
- FDR and others championed an \$8.4 million habitat restoration project in 2013-2020





# Calf Island



- 11-acre island acquired by the refuge in 2002
- Habitat consists of bottomland hardwoods, emergent marshes, and a shallow bar - ideal habitat for wild celery, an important food for waterfowl



# Humbug Marsh and the Refuge Gateway



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- 16 acres of wetlands restored - area has lost 97% of its coastal wetland habitat
  - 25 acres of upland buffer habitat restored
  - *Phragmites* controlled on 2.5 mi of shoreline
  - Invasive species controlled on 50 acres of upland habitats







First Project in the World  
to Clean Up an Industrial  
Brownfield Sufficiently to  
Serve as an Ecological  
Buffer for a Wetland of  
International Importance  
Under the Ramsar  
Convention





2,494 Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance throughout the world, 41 in the United States, and one in Michigan – Humbug Marsh





Bringing Conservation to Cities and Inspiring the Next Generation of Conservationists in Urban Areas Because That is Now Where 80% of All U.S. Citizens Live



Excellence on  
the Waterfront  
Award

2018 Honor Award




# Reflecting back:

Stony Island, Sugar Island, Calf Island, and Humbug Marsh and Island were all at one time threatened by development. Now they are saved as part of the Conservation Crescent!





WE'RE NOT  
DONE YET

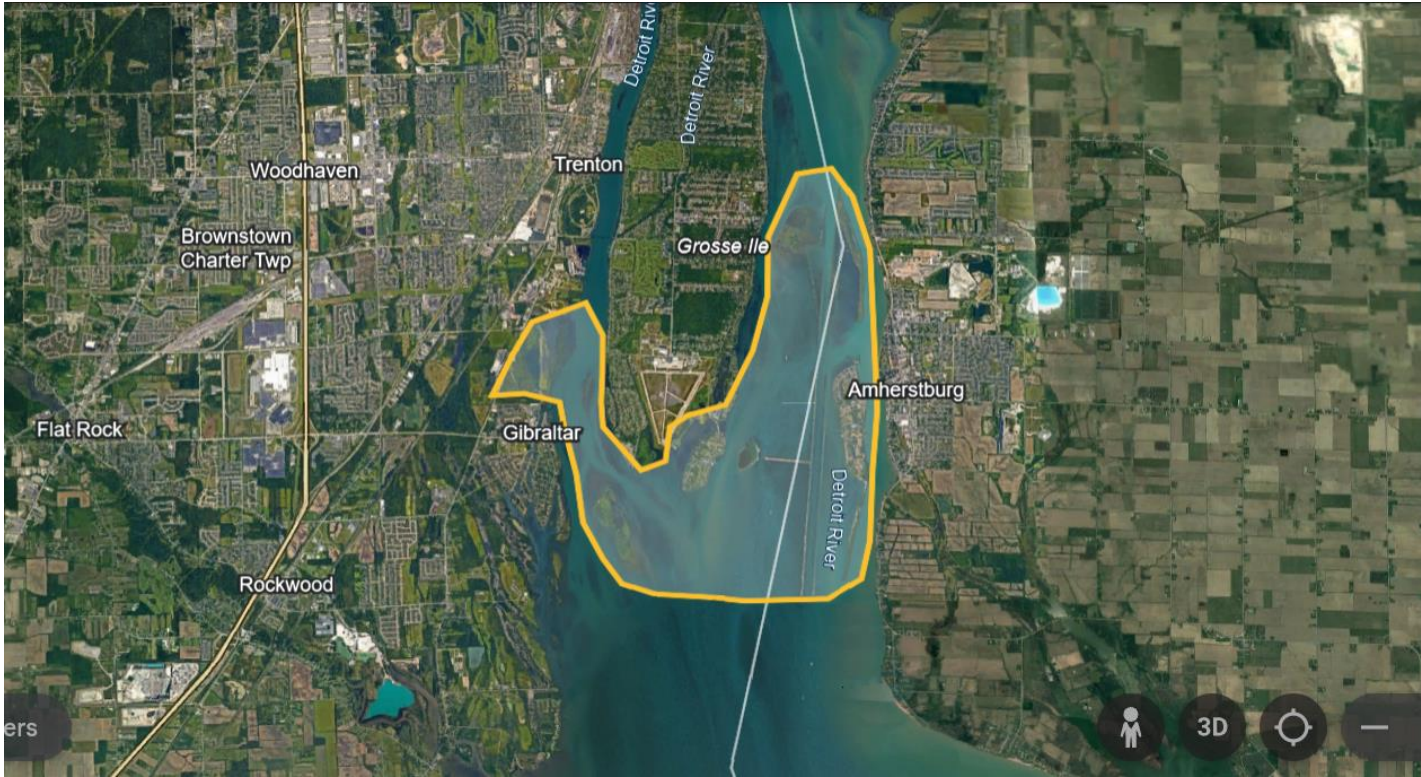


Maybe it is  
time to re-  
energize the  
Conservation  
Crescent!



Live, Work,  
and Play in the  
Heart of the  
Conservation  
Crescent!





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