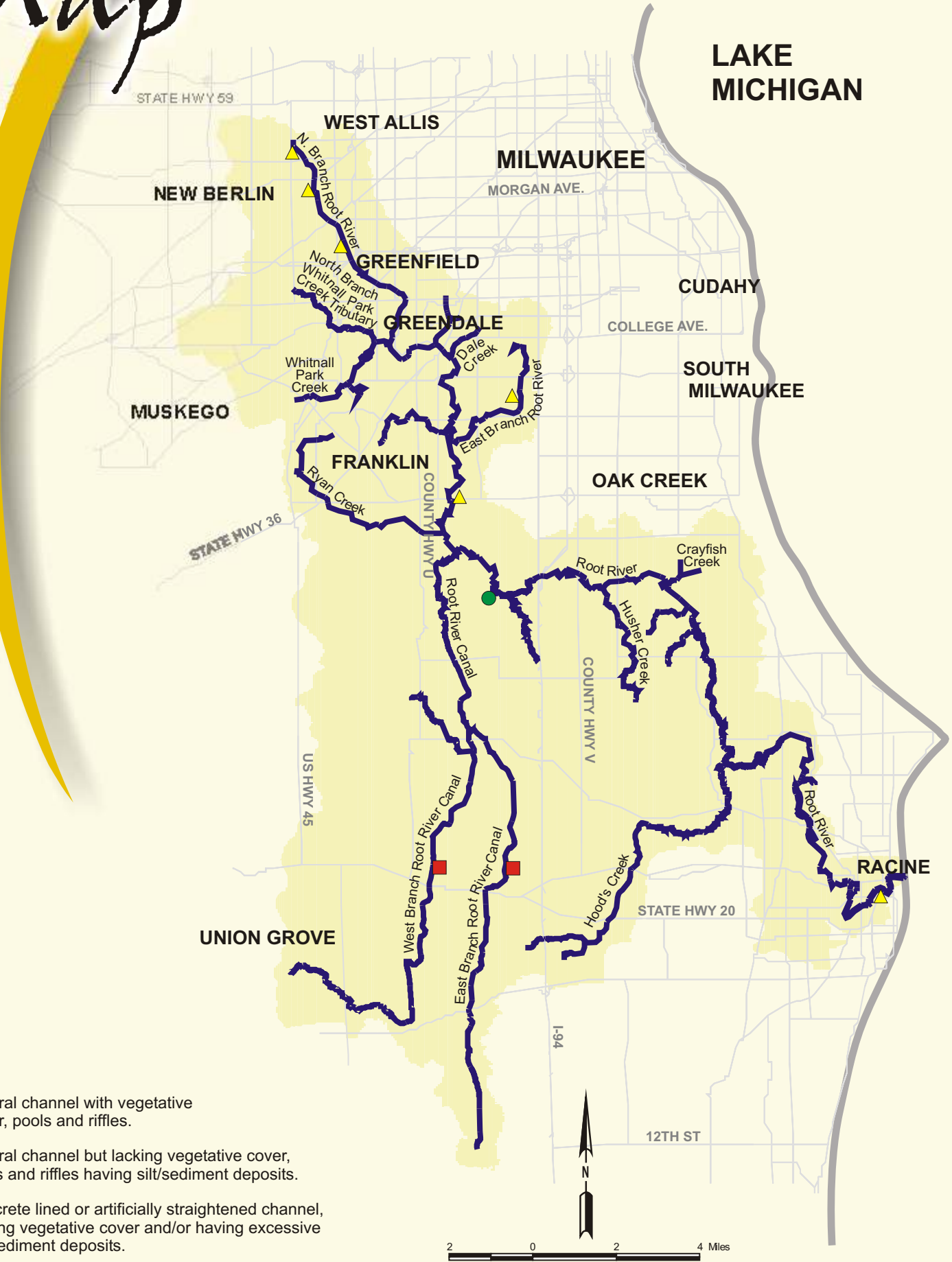


Root River Watershed

Habitat Map



LAKE MICHIGAN

- Natural channel with vegetative cover, pools and riffles.
- ▲ Natural channel but lacking vegetative cover, pools and riffles having silt/sediment deposits.
- Concrete lined or artificially straightened channel, lacking vegetative cover and/or having excessive silt/sediment deposits.

Habitat

According to the U.S. EPA, a typical city block generates seven times more runoff than a woodland area of the same size. "Hard surfaces" (impervious) such as roadways, parking lots, roof tops, etc... prevent water from naturally penetrating (infiltrating) into the ground.

An important element of a waterway is the condition of the *habitat*. Good quality habitats are necessary to achieve balance and diversity in the aquatic ecosystem. Your fishing days will be numbered if the habitat quality of the small plants and animals that fish eat begins to disappear.

Unfortunately, the breakdown or loss of many habitats is caused by human activities. Multiple activities that affect our waterways include: urbanization (the construction of residential, commercial and industrial developments, roadways, and supporting infrastructure), the loss or filling of wetlands, removal of forested land cover, poor agricultural practices and water diversions, such as damming and channelizing. Of these, urbanization (the physical growth of cities, towns and villages) within the watershed appears to be one of the greatest contributing factors that affects water quality and quantity and aquatic habitat.

Characteristics of Good Habitat

- **Stable natural banks.**
- **Natural vegetative cover and tree canopy that provides stream shading.**
- **Streambed not heavily covered over with silt and muck.**
- **Diverse stream structure that has riffle areas and pools for fish refuge.**
- **Wide vegetated buffer area along waterway that filters out polluted stormwater runoff.**



East Br. Root River Canal



Whitmill Park lagoon and falls

Habitat Stats

Much of the natural habitat in the Root River Watershed has been replaced by either urban development or agricultural cultivation practices. Many of the tributary streams within the watershed have been straightened or deepened to provide drainage. Additionally, considerable sections of the Root River and its tributaries have accumulated substantial silt deposits that cover suitable fish spawning habitat and impede flow.

With human activity comes an increase in hard (impervious) surfaces (i.e., rooftops and roadways). Hard surfaces increase runoff, pollutants, and the risk of flooding. Flooding can damage streambeds and banks, causing the river's natural channel to become unstable. Past attempts to manage flooding in the Root River Watershed led to stream beds and banks being channelized (straightened and deepened). This process eliminated habitats within and along waterways. As a rapidly urbanizing watershed, the Root River Watershed contains many streams that have been ditched and straightened; however, recent efforts have been initiated that include creating stormwater runoff rules and conservation of open land in the Root River Watershed.