

Southwestern Michigan Commission

Regional Planning Agency for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties

January, February, March 2005

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT SHORT COURSE

Protecting water quality means more than cleaning up one lake or river - it means looking at *all* the surface and groundwater bodies that flow together into one watershed. Marcy Colclough of the Southwestern Michigan Commission recently coordinated a Watershed Management Short Course, March 3 - 31, 2005, at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan to present relevant information on this topic.

Thirty seven people, including local officials, students, builders, developers, farmers, and residents concerned

with water quality and land use issues participated in the program.

Presentations were given by twenty four speakers and sixteen exhibitors addressing watershed science, the local history of water use, land use impacts on water quality, and how to access local tools and resources to protect lakes, streams and rivers. There was

also a bus tour of local watersheds with a lunch stop at the Acorn Theater in Three Oaks.



The course was well supported by many agencies and partners including: Berrien County's Michigan State University Extension office, St. Joseph River and Galien River Conservation Districts, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Berrien County Drain Commission and Health Department and Planning Department, Partnership for MEANDRS, Berrien/Cass League of Women Voters, Four Flags Tourist Council, Galien River Watershed Project, The Nature Conservancy, Tri-State Watershed Group, and the Van Buren Conservation District.

Other sponsors who helped with funds and support of the program included: Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Chikaming Open Lands, The Conservation Fund, Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber, Wightman & Associates, Saulk Trails RC & D Council, and Chef Thyme of Niles who did an outstanding job providing delicious food for every session.

In addition to opportunities to learn about watershed issues and water quality, there was also time to network with others in southwest Michigan facing similar challenges in protecting water quality and managing growth and development.

Marcy Colclough, course coordinator commented, "*This program gave people a great opportunity to learn about their water resources and how land uses can affect them. The information didn't come from some far away place, it was local, relevant, and useful to citizens and decision makers in Berrien County*"

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SWMC HIGHLIGHTS THE CITY OF WATERVLIET

The City of Watervliet has been aggressively addressing many of its local and regional priorities. Last year, the City received SWMC's 2004 Graham Woodhouse Award for intergovernmental cooperation in reclaiming the site of the former Fletcher Paper Mill along the Paw Paw River. The site required environmental clean-up to become a potential community asset. Through resourcefulness and diverse partnerships, the site contamination has been mitigated and the site is being marketed as an extremely viable development site.

Downtown Development

In 2005, the City will embark on two major downtown improvement projects supported in large part by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program. This program will contribute \$249,000 to the City's downtown improvement projects due to the creation of 15 new jobs and a \$5.7 million investment by the private sector. The projects will include the relocation of power poles, the extension of downtown lighting, enhanced landscaping, the expansion of a downtown automobile dealership and the construction of a new mixed-use structure with commercial space on the first floor and residences on the upper floor at the former Judd Lumber site. The Watervliet DDA was instrumental in the redevelopment of this site by purchasing the property and selling it below market value to a developer using TIF (tax increment financing).

Water Resources

Watervliet has also successfully sought assistance to improve the reliability of its local water system and overall water quality. The USDA awarded the City a \$2.5 million loan through the Water and Waste Disposal Direct Loan Program. In addition, the City has a wellhead protection program to protect groundwater and recently received a \$48,000 grant from MDEQ (Michigan Department of Environmental Quality) to abandon the commercial wells located near the old paper mill site along the Paw Paw River.

The City's interest in water quality extends to the entire Paw Paw River Watershed. The City has explicitly expressed its support for the development of a Watershed Management Plan. In April, the SWMC submitted a proposal to the MDEQ to develop that Management Plan.

Further evidence of the Watervliet interest in cleaner and healthier waterways can be found in yet another successful grant. A \$32,000 grant from the Great Lakes Commission will help showcase three innovative practices in urban storm water management. These

practices include a porous pavement parking lot, a rain garden, and a vegetative buffer strip to protect the banks of the Paw Paw River through reduced storm water runoff and sedimentation. The porous pavement parking lot has been located in a site that is an ideal spot to support those who seek to fish, hike, or visit local parks. The project will also include interpretive signage to increase the community awareness of the "green" development techniques. On April 26, Watervliet was visited by MDEQ and EPA officials to showcase the new urban storm water demonstration site.

Recreation

Across the Paw Paw River from this storm water demonstration site, the City will be installing a skate park, fishing pier, and canoe launch at Hays Park. These improvements will elevate Hays Park as a regional recreation destination. Funding is from local sources and a \$42,300 grant from Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

The SWMC has enjoyed its partnerships with the residents and leaders of Watervliet and congratulates them on their innovation and creativity!

YOUR NEWSLETTERS

There are 289,820 people living in the 87 cities, villages, and townships of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties! As regional planners, the news in each of these municipalities is of great interest to us. We are also interested in the most up-to-date information about our affiliated agencies, partners, and organizations.

So, if possible, please consider adding the Southwestern Michigan Commission to your mailing list - we would greatly appreciate receiving your newsletters and announcements. **THANK YOU!**

Watervliet is currently developing six community improvement projects utilizing grant funds totaling \$371,300, private investment funds of \$5.7 million, and a USDA loan of \$2.5 million.

SWMC PRESENTS ANNUAL AWARDS

GRAHAM WOODHOUSE AWARD

The Southwestern Michigan Commission announces the selection of Bangor's *Black River Cleanup Project* as the winner of the 2005 Graham Woodhouse Award for Intergovernmental Cooperation.

During the Commission's April 19, 2005 meeting on the Dowagiac campus of Southwestern Michigan College, the award was presented to Larry Nielsen, City Manager of Bangor, and David O'Donnell of the Michigan



John Egelhaaf and Larry Nielsen

Department of Environmental Quality by James Sayer, SWMC Chairman.

According to Larry Nielsen, who accepted the award representing the City of Bangor, "This project spanned seven years and required tremendous coordination and timing between many state offices, engineers, the contractor, and the local

community. In spite of layers of paperwork and the difficulties of coordination between agencies, let alone the usual challenges that arise during construction, this project has been a success! It has meant much to our community and future generations." Although they were unable to attend the presentation, Carol Heffernan of MDEQ, Janelle Williams and Paul Shen of MACTEC, and Timothy J. Homrich of Homrich, Inc. were cited for their perseverance and energy throughout the project.

WELCH-LACKY AWARD

Mr. Donald Ryman has been selected by the Southwestern Michigan Commission to receive the Welch-Lackey Leadership Award for 2004.

Chairman James Sayer presented Mr. Ryman with the award at the Commission's April 19, 2005 meeting. Ryman was selected by the members of the Commission for exhibiting a sense of service, leadership, and intergovernmental cooperation.

Mr. Ryman serves the Commission board in his capacity as a Berrien County Commissioner representing the 11th District. He is an active participant in Commission meetings as well as several ongoing Commission

projects. Mr. Ryman plays a vital role in the Niles Area Transportation Study (NATS) which governs the use of transportation funds for the Niles Metropolitan area and has been an active participant on the US-12 Heritage Route Council.

John Egelhaaf, SWMC Executive Director, commented: "The Commission staff appreciates that Mr. Ryman can always be relied upon to lend valuable and thoughtful critique on Commission business."



John Egelhaaf and Don Ryman

SWMC BOARD MEMBER UPDATES

The SWMC staff would like to extend their great appreciation to the following individuals who have recently left board positions: **Kevin Gillette, Larry Clymer, Jeanette Leahey, Daryl Poprave, Paul Harvey, and David Taylor**. It has been an honor to work with each and every one of you. Your individual and collective input has helped this Commission formulate and reach goals that have enriched our communities.

The SWMC also welcomes the following new members who have graciously accepted the responsibility to serve on the board. **Cathy Goodenough, Harold Johnson, Marletta Seats, Georgia Boggs, Virginia Withrow, Mamie Yarbrough, Dick Stauffer, and Ron Ferguson**. Each of you will bring unique insights and viewpoints that will enable us to better serve our constituents as a whole.

NOTICE OF BOARD VACANCY

If you are a resident of Van Buren County and are interested in serving the Southwestern Michigan Commission as a Citizen's Representative, please send a letter of interest to SWMC. (Include the municipality you are a resident in.)

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THE GREAT LAKES BASIN

In February 2005, SWMC Executive Director John Egelhaaf attended a meeting in Chicago with other executive directors of regional planning organizations in northern Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. This meeting was the first step in an emerging effort to link the regions that share the resources of Lake Michigan. The Great Lakes Basin is the watershed that includes all of the Great Lakes. As water becomes an increasingly valuable local, regional, and global resource, the water within the Basin will be looked to as a ready solution for many. The initial focus of this partnership has been development and land use within the Great Lakes Basin. One of the primary concerns regarding the health of the watershed is the extraction of water from the watershed (from lakes, groundwater, and streams) without replacing the treated wastewater back into watershed. This net loss will have far reaching impacts on habitat, maritime use, water quality, and many other facets of the Basin that are crucial to

its role as a valuable natural resource.

SWMC staff also attended a conference on the Great Lakes Basin. Over two hundred people attended this conference including several individuals (invited by the SWMC) representing southwestern Michigan lakeshore municipalities involved in water supply in our region.

As water becomes an increasingly valuable local, regional, and global resource, the water within the Basin will be looked to as a ready solution for many.

These were valuable opportunities to increase our knowledge of the issues associated with water supply planning in the Great Lakes Basin by consolidating information and learning from experts in the field.

NEW STAFF

PROMOTIONS

AWARDS

The Commission welcomes Ms. Terri Moore to the staff as Administrative Assistant. Terri graduated from Northern Michigan University with a Bachelor's degree in Education. She has updated her skills through the years while serving as teacher, librarian, retail manager, and volunteer coordinator. Since joining the SWMC in January, she has been maintaining and updating the database, assisting the executive director with preparation for Board Commission meetings, and providing administrative support for the various projects of the other staff members. Terri maintains an active volunteer life in her home community of Dowagiac. Terri's thoroughness and attention to detail are a great asset to the staff.

Larry Koepfle was promoted to the position of Senior Planner in December 2004. Larry joined the Commission in 2002 and has been the project coordinator for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS).

Shelley Klug was promoted to Associate Planner with responsibilities including Economic Development, grant writing and administration, regional transportation issues, and assistance with master plan development. Shelley has recently been attending the Community Leadership Academy sponsored by Lake Michigan College.

Marcy Colclough, SWMC Senior Planner, was presented with the "Environmental Stewardship" award by Kay McAdam, director of the Cass County Conservation District, for her role in coordinating and completing the Dowagiac River Watershed project.

The SWMC applauds Marcy for this achievement and for her continued efforts to improve the overall quality of the environment in southwest Michigan.