



# The Quarterly

## Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

*Planning that is Credible, Credentialed and Connected*

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### **Paw Paw River Watershed Project**

The Paw Paw River Watershed (PPRW) is all of the land that drains into the Paw Paw River. The watershed encompasses 285,557 acres in Berrien, Kalamazoo, and Van Buren counties. A management plan is being developed with a Clean Water Act Section 319 grant from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The PPRW is a priority for protection and preservation among southern Michigan watersheds because a relatively high percentage of its natural land cover remains in spite of increasing development pressure throughout the region.

The plan is intended to guide individuals, businesses, organizations and municipalities working cooperatively to build more environmentally and economically sustainable communities within the PPRW. The plan can be used to educate watershed residents, encourage and direct natural resource protection, and develop land use planning and zoning that will protect water quality in the future. Planning the location of certain land uses and

properly managing developed and natural lands will prevent or reduce pollutants threatening or impairing water quality.

Community leaders, citizens and other stakeholders developed long term goals for the PPRW. The goals should guide future actions and plans within the PPRW.

#### **Goals for the PPRW**

1. Prevent/reduce pollutants threatening or impairing water quality
2. Promote and implement coordinated planning in the PPRW
3. Protect habitat for native aquatic and terrestrial wildlife
4. Develop a green infrastructure network in the PPRW
5. Protect groundwater resources
6. Improve recreation infrastructure along river while respecting natural features

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# SWMPC HIGHLIGHTS

## Green Communities in Southwest Michigan

A new resource and planning tool for communities in southwest Michigan is our Green Communities website. The site is dedicated to help communities find resources that will aid them in the development of becoming a more environmentally and economically sustainable community.

Resources included in the toolkit include the Environmental Law Institute's Report on *Municipal Green Building Policies* and how communities can do the following:

- Lower urban heat temperatures
- Reduce solid waste
- Increase energy efficiency

[www.swmpc.org/green\\_community.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/green_community.asp)

# TRANSPORTATION

## Traffic Count Season In Full Swing

The SWMPC transportation planning department is now in full swing for the 2008 traffic count season. For many years the SWMPC has conducted traffic counts for local municipalities and economic development agencies within our region.

Traffic count request forms are available on our website at [www.swmpc.org/traffic\\_counts.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/traffic_counts.asp) please fill in all columns for each count that you are requesting. If you have a map of the locations where you are requesting traffic counts, please send a copy with your request form. Please make sure you fill out the Contact Information section at the top of the form so we can update our database to reflect the appropriate contact person.

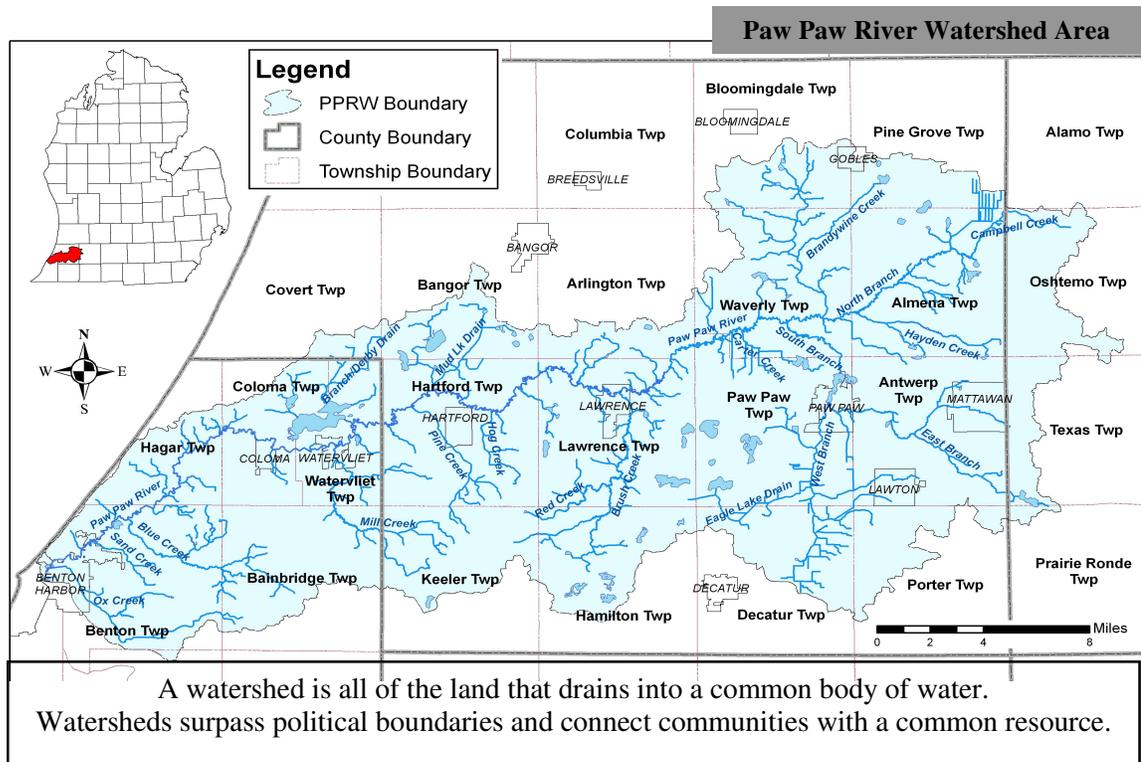
Contact **Nick Musson** at (269) 925-1137 ext. 24.

Paw Paw River Watershed Continued...

7. Continue/increase watershed monitoring efforts

8. Develop an organization to coordinate and implement the watershed management plan and to instill a sense of stewardship

The plants, animals, natural features, and sensitive ecosystems within the watershed are valuable resources for residents and tourists in our region. The protection and conservation of watersheds in southwest Michigan is necessary to provide clean water for generations to come.



# COMMUNITY TOPICS

## Project Connection! Wrap-Up

Project Connection! was held April 17, 2008 at the Van Buren ISD Technology Center in Lawrence. Project Connection! is a homeless prevention event designed to offer free assistance and services at a one-stop-shop location and is made possible through partnerships between SWMPC and several agencies and organizations serving Van Buren County.

The VBISD has been generous with their facilities, staff, students, and volunteers. The Technology Center was a great location for the event and allowed the students to offer some of their newly-learned skills while performing a much appreciated community service. Guests were offered cookies, coffee, and lemonade when they first arrived and, if time allowed, there was a chair massage area set-up in the waiting room and students gave massages throughout the afternoon. Students were also available to do manicures, pedicures, serve food, escort guests, and provide a number of other services. Over 100 people received services at the event and gave very positive reviews.

The main feature of the event was the presence of twenty-one social service agencies ready to offer assistance and help fill out applications for services. Guests were escorted to each table by volunteers including a group of social work majors from Western Michigan University. Volunteers also came from area churches, social service agencies, and the Technology Center. Guests were treated to a free hot lunch and received a bag of goodies and gifts as they left. As an unexpected bonus, Vera Tanier, Executive Director of the Van Buren County United Way stepped in and cut hair for several hours in the cosmetology lab. Another unexpected bonus was the Matthew 25 Ministries van set up in the parking lot offering free clothes and shoes to anybody who needed them. This street ministry was still working when the event ended at 6:00 p.m. and will definitely be part of future events.



## GRANT AWARDS

### Growing Green In Southwest Michigan

The program Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan received a \$24,000.00 grant from the MDEQ Coastal Zone Management Program to do the following:

- Conduct a mail survey of 3,000 residents in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties to understand opinions about land conservation and recreation opportunities
- Develop and print a green infrastructure report to communicate a vision of green infrastructure in southwest Michigan
- Ensure that green infrastructure materials are available to communities
- Host a local officials workshop to assist communities with incorporating green infrastructure elements into their local plans and policies

[www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp)

### Transit Technology Coordination

The National Center for Senior Transportation (NCST) awarded SWMPC a \$90,000.00 grant to improve the mobility of the seniors in the counties of Berrien, Branch, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren by:

1. Purchasing and implementing a regionalized, web-based program allowing for efficiencies and improvement/expansion of services;
2. Conducting a survey of older adults in Van Buren County and St. Joseph County to better understand how to best expand and diversify transit services to meet the seniors' changing and growing needs and then share those results with the other counties for their use and;
3. Piloting a program in Branch County, which allows seniors to travel on public transit with an escort/mentor at no additional cost.

“We believe the projects that have been selected for funding will lead the way in addressing the transportation needs of older adults through the use of highly creative approaches,” said **Virginia Dize**, NCST's assistant director.



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**Receive Our Newsletter Electronically**  
mooret@swmpc.org

## Calendar of Events

### July

July 1-15 UWP Comment  
Period for NATS &  
TwinCATS  
July 4-SWMPC Offices Closed  
July 15-Wind Energy in SW MI  
July 16-18-MTPA & MAR  
Conference (Dearborn)  
July 21-9:30 a.m. TwinCATS  
July 22-1:30 p.m. NATS

### August

August 5-Election Day!  
August 18-9:30 a.m. Twin  
CATS  
August 26-1:30 p.m. NATS

### September

September 15-9:30 a.m.  
TwinCATS  
September 23-1:30 p.m. NATS

[www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp)

### SWMPC 2008 Board Meeting Schedule

#### SWMPC Full Commission Meetings

Van Buren Conference Center  
Lawrence, MI  
July 15, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.  
October 21, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

#### SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings

Location: Vincent Place Conference Room  
Benton Harbor, MI  
September 16, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.  
December 16, 2008 at 9:30 a.m.

The public is welcome to attend  
[www.swmpc.org/board.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/board.asp)