

The Quarterly



Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected

SWMPC

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Adapting and Planning for Climate Change

Certain communities in Michigan that are economically dependent on tourism and agriculture are vulnerable to the effects of a changing and variable climate. A team of Michigan State University (MSU) Extension specialists and educators have received funding from the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center (GLISA). The team will collaborate with GLISA researchers, relevant decision-makers, and stakeholders in two Michigan local government units to increase community resiliency by incorporating climate variability and change adaptation strategies into local land use master plans, long range transportation plans and policies. A second goal is to create an assessment tool that can be used by other communities throughout Michigan to plan their adaptation needs.



Shore of Lake Michigan

The Twin Cities Area Transportation Study MPO was chosen along with the City of Marquette as the partner communities in 2013. The TwinCATS MPO consists of 13 jurisdictions in southwest Michigan. They will review the data collected and incorporate this data in the most appropriate planning documents. Andrea Dewey, Transportation Planner with the Federal Highway Administration-Michigan Division (FHWA) stated; "As a transportation partner in the SWMPC area, FHWA is committed to improving transportation mobility and safety while protecting the environment, reducing GHG emissions, and preparing for climate change effects on the transportation system. FHWA is encouraged by this effort to actively initiate, collect, and disseminate climate change-related research and to provide technical assistance to the SWMPC stakeholders."

The TwinCATS MPO was chosen because Berrien County is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, due to its economic dependence on tourism and fruit production, its transportation infrastructure that includes major highways, and its diverse mix of rural and urban communities.

A community conversation, open to the public, will be held on February 27th 2013 at 6 pm at Michigan Works! 499 West Main Street Benton Harbor, MI 49022. This event will be hosted by the SWMPC, GLISA and MSU Extension. We want to begin a conversation about how the region can be more resilient in the face of climate variability and change. Light refreshments will be served. People attending the event will be entered into a drawing **to win Meijer Gift Cards!** To RSVP or learn more, email kmartin@swmpc.org or call 269-925-1137 x 21. Or visit us online at: www.swmpc.org/climatechange.asp

ENVIRONMENT

Reducing Sediment in the Paw Paw River Watershed through a New Local Innovative Program

A new program through the Van Buren Conservation District is funding the installation of sediment reduction practices on privately-owned agricultural land within the Paw Paw River Watershed (PPRW) in southwest Michigan.

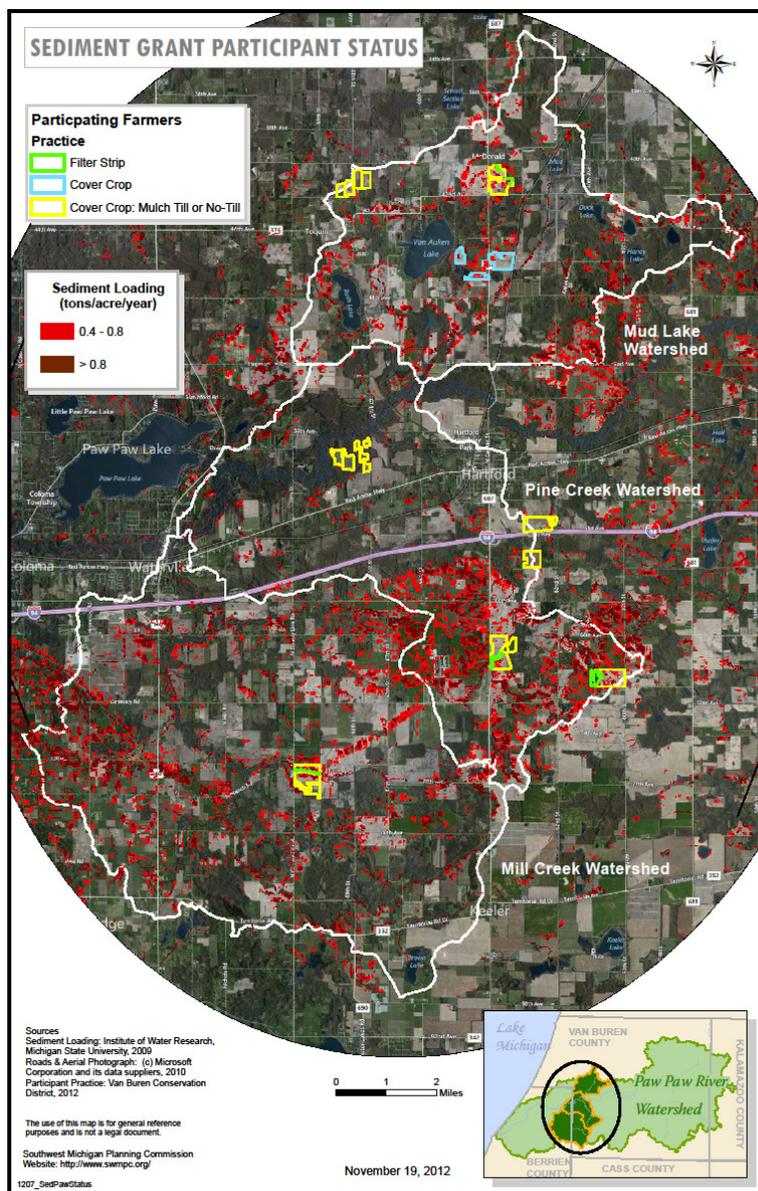
Sediment is the highest priority pollutant in the Paw Paw River Watershed. Agricultural runoff and stream bank erosion are the primary sources of sediment in the watershed. This project is promoting the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on agricultural land to reduce sediment entering the river.

The District is using an auction process where farmers submit bids on how much they think a BMP is worth implementing. The practices include **cover crops, filter strip, no-till, and reduced-till** on farmland. All of these practices increase the amount of vegetation or residue on a field, which reduce the amount of soil erosion. The practice must be newly implemented to qualify for the program.

After the bids are submitted, a Sediment Reduction Calculator, developed by Michigan State University, is used to determine how much sediment is reduced with the newly implemented practice. The bids are then ranked based on the cost per ton of sediment reduced. The bids with the lowest cost per ton of sediment reduced are selected for funding.

The first round of bids closed in June 2012. Contracts have been signed to implement 467 acres of cover crop, 160 acres of mulch-till, 65 acres of no-till, and 5 acres of filter strips. The total amount of erosion reduced from these practices is estimated at over **1,400 tons** over three years. **A second round of bidding is taking place, contact Colleen Forestieri at colleen.forestieri@mi.nacdnet.net or 269-657-4030 x 129 . For more information visit “Bidding for Better Conservation Practices” at the Van Buren Conservation District’s website: <http://vanburencd.org/programs-services/conservation-partnership>.**

This new program is a partnership between the Van Buren Conservation District, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, Delta Institute, Van Buren Drain Commissioner, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with funding from the Great Lakes Commission; Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Program.



Colleen Forestieri, VBCD with John Legge, TNC and a farmer in the Paw Paw River Watershed at a field day in 2012. ©TNC

TRANSPORTATION

Sharing The Commute Can Be Easy!

GO Rideshare is a program of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation, working to reduce traffic congestion and increase mobility throughout Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties.



We offer **free** carpool and School Pool matching, a van-pool start-up service, and we operate a Ride Home program, which provides free rides home in an emergency to users of alternative transportation. Rideshare also works with employers to develop and implement traffic reduction programs, and we market the region's Park and Ride lots.



What is the Go Rideshare School Pool Program?

The Rideshare program has been known for helping commuters share rides to and from work and is now offering this tool as a resource for parents who drive their children to school. The Go Rideshare program offers a free, voluntary and confidential online matching service, to assist people interested in sharing the ride to and from work or school.

How Can This Help Me or My Family?

Sharing the drive to work or school can dramatically reduce your driving costs. **Fact:** According to AAA the average cost to operate a sedan in 2012 is 59.6 cents per mile and an SUV is 75.7 cents per mile. Take a minute and calculate your savings by using this tool at www.gorideshare.org/calsavings.asp.

How Does This Benefit My School Community?

The Rideshare program is about creating community. Getting to know fellow co-workers, neighbors and fellow students can be a part of our daily interactions and Rideshare can help facilitate this process!

How Does This Benefit the Environment?

Ensures cleaner air. **Fact:** Every day, millions of vehicles pump pollutants into our atmosphere. Still more of these pollutants cling close to earth, inhaled with every breath we take. Air pollution is a proven cause in several lung ailments, from asthma to emphysema. Ridesharing reduces the impact of automobiles on our environment and helps ensure a healthy future for our children very simply - by decreasing the number of vehicles on our roads.

How Can I sign Up?

The online registration process is simple and only takes a few minutes to register. When you register on the Rideshare website you will need an email account since the service is web-based.

For information on the program or to register visit: www.gorideshare.org

Or call if you have any questions!

Toll Free: 877-959-7005

Phone: 269-925-1137

Email: gallagherk@swmpc.org

Upcoming Events: Wetlands at Work: Protecting & Restoring Wetlands for Clean Water

WETLANDS WORK FOR US: they filter pollutants, absorb floodwaters, provide habitat, and perform a number of other functions that keep our lakes and rivers clean.

YOU ARE INVITED to learn about programs, tools and financial incentives for landowners and public officials to protect existing wetlands and restore degraded or destroyed wetlands.

-This event will be offered at two times and locations:

Thursday, January 31, 2013

3-5 p.m. at Sarett Nature Center, Benton Harbor

7-9 p.m. at Lake Michigan College, South Haven

Sponsored by the Van Buren Conservation District

www.VanBurenCD.org • 269-657-4030 x5

Staff Departure

Recently SWMPC said farewell to **Matt Aslesen** who has worked for the SWMPC since June 2010. Mr. Aslesen worked as our Associate Planner. He is now working for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.



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*The SWMPC Mission is to promote a sustainable high quality of life through
 facilitation of sound planning and decision making*

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Calendar of Events 2013

<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>
1 st New Year's Office Closed 21 st Martin Luther King Day Office Closed 22 nd 1:30 pm NATS mtg* 28 th 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** 31 st 3 pm Wetlands at Work 31 st 7 pm Wetlands at Work	18 th Presidents' Day Office Closed 25 th 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** 26 th 1:30 pm NATS mtg* 27 th 6 pm Community Forum on Climate Change 28 th 9 am Age Friendly Communities	18 th 9:30 am TwinCATS mtg** 26 th 1:30 pm NATS mtg*

*NATS Meeting 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI **TwinCATS Meeting 1123 Territorial Road, Benton Harbor, MI

For more information and other events visit: www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2013 SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meetings	SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings
<i>Location: Van Buren Conference Center 490 South Paw Paw Street, Lawrence, MI</i> February 5, 2013 9:30 a.m. April 23, 2013 9:30 a.m. July 16, 2013 9:30 a.m. October 15, 2013 9:30 a.m.	<i>Location: Vincent Place Conference Room 185 East Main St. Benton Harbor, MI</i> March 19, 2013 9:30 a.m. June 18, 2013 9:30 a.m. September 17, 2013 9:30 a.m. December 17, 2013 9:30 a.m.