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The Quarterly

Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

Planning that is Credible, Credentialed, and Connected



Horse Play 2011 Business Plan Competition Winner

Horse Play is the winner of Venture Quest 2011, the business plan competition partnership between Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties, the Edward Lowe Foundations, and the SWMPC. Horse Play is a Saint Joseph business that specializes in team building and increasing workplace productivity. Clients are asked to partner with a horse in a pasture and are given various tasks that they must encourage the horse to accomplish. Tasks may include getting the horse through a gate or stepping over a log. Horse Play founders have discovered that horses naturally respond to cues that relate to their innate herd mentality. Counselor's keen observations help the clients through the process and relate their experience to their larger team building and productivity goals. The owners of Horse Play are Anne Carpenter and Kristine Proctor.

Out of a field of five finalists, three were eligible for cash prizes. In addition to Horse Play, second prize went to 8094 Media, a company that seeks to create television programming and web-based advertising that is focused on southwest Michigan. Third prize was awarded to Paradise Coast, a RV manufacturer specializing in retro styling of interior and exterior components.

The SWMPC would like to thank the Venture Quest partners whose efforts created an excellent competition. The partners include the Cass County Economic Development Corporation, the Berrien County Community Development Office, the Van Buren County Office of Economic Development, the Edwards Lowe Foundation, and the fine panel of judges throughout the three-county region. Learn more about Venture Quest at the website.

www.swmpc.org/vq.asp

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Staff Departures

The SWMPC would like to thank Anna Rahtz for her contributions to the region and wish her a fond farewell as she heads to California for her new position.

TRANSPORTATION

Berrien County Investigating Transit Consolidation



Residents use transit to get around the county.

In an effort to improve transit service to residents, the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission have selected KFH Group to conduct a study of countywide transit needs, with scenarios of how those needs could be met by various levels of coordination or consolidation of transit services throughout Berrien County. To initiate the Berrien County Transit Consolidation Feasibility Study, a kick-off meeting was held on June 1, 2011 with key stakeholders throughout the County. This meeting provided an opportunity for local discussion both during the meeting, and by the completion of a questionnaire. This detailed input will be used as a foundation for future work on the study.

A complete summary of the meeting is at www.swmpc.org/transit_study.asp.

If you are interested in participating in the *Feasibility Study* process or have questions please contact

Christina Pippen at
pippenc@swmpc.org or
269-925-1137 x19

Participant feedback focused around the following needs:

- **Connectivity** - Participants stressed the importance for seamless mobility. In addition to improved connectivity between the four transit systems that now operate in the County, meeting participants highlighted the necessity to connect between other modes of transportation and current bus services.
- **Accessibility** - Participants noted the desire for all constituent groups to have access to reliable transportation. Specifically, greater accessibility was requested at bus stops to allow customers with wheelchairs to board and disembark. There is also a demand for more sidewalks and improved pedestrian access to bus stops, as well as improved bicycle access to current bus services.
- **Service Quality** - Participants stated the need for more timely routes and more coordinated services. They noted that reliable transit services must be in place to establish trust with the public. There was also a call for improved scheduling of current services.
- **Service Design** - Participants noted the value of an assessment of the type of transit services that should be in place in various areas of the County to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Service Expansion** - Participants suggested expanded transportation services, especially to access jobs beyond current hours of operation. They also brought to light the unserved areas of the County. Participants mentioned the need to plan service improvements in order to meet the mobility needs of the growing older adult population throughout the County.

The Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance is happy to announce their 20th annual bicycle tour July 16-22. The featured trails on this year's tour are:



The Kal-Haven State Park Trail, Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, Paul Henry Thornapple Trail, Portland River Trail, Fred Meijer White Pine Trail, Musketawa Trail, Lakeside Trail, and the Lakeshore Trail.

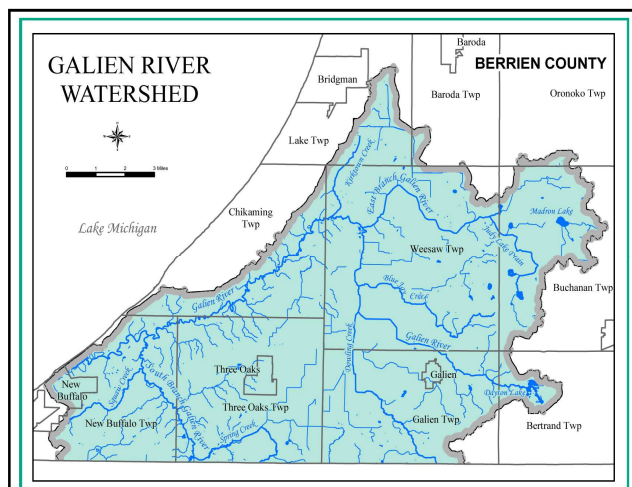
The 45-60 mile days allow for plenty of time to stop, take in the sights and enjoy the countryside. Bring your hybrid, mountain, or road bike. There is still time to sign up if you want to experience southern Michigan on a bicycle and explore these great trails.

Visit www.michigantrails.org/ to start your bicycling adventure today.

ENVIRONMENT

Outreach Efforts Underway Throughout the Galien River Watershed

The Galien River Watershed (GRW) Project is hosting two events in the coming months to help residents understand and provide input on important issues facing the study area. Public involvement is needed to help develop a citizen-led vision for natural and rural lands in the watershed. There will be interactive presentations and mapping exercises for participants to identify and prioritize areas important for maintaining benefits which these natural areas provide. The GRW project is being hosted by the SWMPC in partnership with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), the Berrien County Health Department (BCHD), and other local partners. It aims to improve local water quality by raising public awareness and addressing impairments to water quality.



The GRW is approximately 82,200 acres located in southwest Berrien County and empties from the Galien River into Lake Michigan in New Buffalo. The watershed includes the towns of New Buffalo, Three Oaks, Galien, New Troy, and the surrounding area.

The first input meeting, *Discover the Great Outdoors - Galien River Watershed Workshop*, will be held on Wednesday, July 27 from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. Participants can discover and share stories about special places in the GRW. This meeting is free and open to everyone. Refreshments will be provided. Chikaming Open Lands will also present options available to property and homeowners on different types of land protection, preserving land for future generations, and potentially providing significant tax benefits.

The second input meeting, *Well-Water Testing Night* will be held on Wednesday, August 3 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. This workshop will focus on raising awareness of the detrimental affects an improperly maintained septic system can have on the surrounding environment. Admission and water well testing are free. The public is encouraged to attend and light refreshments will be provided. There is also a chance to win a free water inspection from the health department! This interactive event will offer a free test for drinking water and a question and answer session about your own septic system. Attendees who wish to have their water tested need to bring a small sample of their tap water in a clean, sealed container. BCHD, along with several representatives from local, licensed septic companies will be available to answer questions, as well as schedule inspections and/or septic pumping. The event will also feature presentations by Peg Kohring, the Midwest Regional Director of The Conservation Fund, and Ken Priest, a Health Inspector for the BCHD.

Important Dates to Remember

Discover the Great Outdoors- Galien River Watershed Workshop

July 27, 2011 6:00-8:30 p.m.
New Troy Community Center
13372 California Rd.- New Troy, MI 49119

Well-Water Testing Night

August 3, 2011 6:00-8:00 p.m.
New Troy Community Center
13372 California Rd.- New Troy, MI 49119

Information on the Galien River Watershed and programs can be found at:

www.swmpc.org/grw.asp



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

Calendar of Events 2011

July

4th SWMPC Offices Closed
 13th 1:00 p.m. Bridgman Bicycle Safety Clinic (Library)
 16-22nd Michigander Bicycle Tour
 18th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS-
 CANCELLED
 26th 1:30 p.m. NATS-CANCELLED
 27th 6:00 p.m. Galien River Input Meeting (New Troy)

August

2nd 11:00 a.m. Dowagiac Bicycle Safety Clinic (Library)
 2nd Remember to Vote
 3rd 6:00 p.m. Galien River Input Meeting (New Troy)
 24th 1:00 p.m. Decatur Bicycle Safety Clinic (Library)

September

5th SWMPC Offices Closed
 20th 9:30 a.m. TwinCATS
 28th 1:30 p.m. NATS

NATS=meets in Niles
 TwinCATS=meets in Benton Harbor

www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp

2011 Board Meeting Schedule

SWMPC Full Commission Meeting
*Location: Southwestern Michigan College
 Mathews Room East-Dowagiac, MI
 July 19, 2011 9:30 a.m.*

*Location: Southwestern Michigan College
 Mathews Room West-Dowagiac, MI
 October 18, 2011 9:30 a.m.*

SWMPC Administrative Committee Meeting

*Location: Vincent Place Conference Room-Benton Harbor, MI
 September 20, 2011 9:30 a.m.
 December 20, 2011 9:30 a.m.*