

## SOUTHWESTERN MICHIGAN COMMISSION

### JAMES E. SNOW RECEIVES THE 2005 WELCH-LACKEY LEADERSHIP AWARD

At the April 18, 2006 meeting of the SWMC, held at the conference center in Lawrence, Chairman Tom Tanczos honored Mr. James E. Snow with the 2005 Welch-Lackey award. Snow was selected by the members of the Commission as the board member who exhibits an exemplary sense of service, leadership, and intergovernmental cooperation.

The Welch-Lackey Leadership Award is presented by the SWMC each year in honor of former Commissioners George A. Welch and William F. Lackey. These men served the Commission in times of great personal difficulties, yet continued throughout to represent the spirit of public service and to further the goals of intergovernmental cooperation. Their contribution to the communities they served embodies the leadership qualities essential to the preservation of our citizen form of government.

The Dowagiac city clerk has served on the SWMC in his capacity as an alternate for the Mayor of the City of Dowagiac since 1997. In his presentation remarks, Tanczos noted that Snow, "has demonstrated exceptional attendance and involvement in the Commission." John Egelhaaf commented, "his attention to detail and commitment to excellence as city clerk are equally on display in his role as a SWMC board member. The Commission is fortunate to have him as a member."



Tom Tanczos (left) presents James Snow with Welch-Lackey award

### SWMC WELCOMES MATT MEERSMAN

Environmental planning is a diverse and highly productive branch of SWMC planning. The next major initiative for the Commission has been the management plan for the Paw Paw River Watershed. Fortunately for the SWMC, **Matthew Meersman** has agreed to join the staff and lend his substantial expertise to the Paw Paw work. Already experienced in Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Meersman will also soon graduate from Indiana University with a bachelor's degree in general studies and a minor in public and environmental affairs.

Matt is able to view planning from his own unique prism. One facet has been polished through considerable experience on the water as a competitive canoe racer; another comes from being a small business owner and operator of an outfitter shop specializing in the needs of paddlers. Matt is very thoughtful and intelligent, and has been active in various environmental organizations in the region, and was the Executive Director of the Four Flags Area Council on Tourism. The SWMC is pleased to have Matt on board.

### PEREGRINE FALCON VISITS SWMC—REQUESTS MAP TO MUSKEGON

When staff member Nancy Perry saw an unusual bird perched on the windowsill of the SWMC board room, she called her coworkers to come look. Kim Gallagher and Marcy Colclough took several photographs and emailed them to Sarett Nature Center's Chuck Nelson for positive identification. It came as quite a surprise that they were looking at one of the world's fastest birds! Peregrine falcons can hit speeds of up to 180 mph while diving for prey and is considered to be endangered in much of North America. The falcon stayed for nearly two hours even though he was being carefully watched.



It was no surprise that the falcon chose a seventh-floor perch in the middle of downtown Benton Harbor—"they're cliff-nesting falcons" said Kip Miller, a naturalist at the Love Creek Nature Center in Berrien Center. "That's why they're not bothered by the tall buildings." Peregrine numbers dropped in past years as a result of DDT poisoning so there has been an effort to restore their numbers by putting young birds in urban environments. Those environments are typically the rooftops of high-rise buildings where biologists hope they will establish nests. Peregrine nest boxes have been established at power plants in Muskegon, Port Sheldon, and Grand Haven. Staff members noted that the falcon had a band on its leg indicating it had been released. Rachael Tupica and Shelley Klug dubbed the falcon "Perry's Peregrine" to honor Nancy Perry's alertness. Although there was evidence that the falcon had been catching and eating pigeons, "Perry's Peregrine" has not made the hoped-for nest on the roof of the Vincent Building. SWMC has put out the welcome mat for any migrating birds needing a rest stop - as long as they don't mind posing for pictures.

## FINDING A VOICE FOR THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER

The Friends of the St. Joseph River Association, in partnership with state and local agencies and organizations, is hosting two upcoming events that will play a critical role towards “**Finding a Voice for the St. Joseph River**” and achieving the goals identified in the St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan. Al Smith, Executive Director of the Friends said, “This is the next step in building the momentum established by the Friends of the St. Joseph River Association and other St. Joseph River Watershed stakeholders towards long-term water quality protection and improvement of the Watershed.” Indiana Michigan Power is

*In southwest Michigan, tributaries of the St. Joseph River include the:*

- ◆ *Dowagiac River (Pokagon, Peavine and Kinzie Creeks)*
- ◆ *Paw Paw River (Mill and Brush Creeks)*
- ◆ *Rocky River*
- ◆ *Hickory Creek*
- ◆ *Brandywine Creek*
- ◆ *Pipestone Creek*
- ◆ *McCoy Creek.*

sponsoring the events and “wholeheartedly supports this wonderful endeavor. Our hydro plants have been a part of the St. Joseph River Valley for over 100 years and we encourage everyone to attend these events.”

The events are intended to familiarize participants with the watershed management plan, provide an overview of a variety of watershed organizations, and solicit input on the format of such a partnership for the St. Joseph River Watershed.

**“Whether you are a landowner, resident, or represent a municipality, business or local organization... your input is critical in "Finding a Voice for the St. Joseph River.”**

**The first event** is a half-day educational workshop - June 13 or 14, (you choose which date and location you prefer - the June 13 workshop is at Ferrettie-Baugo Creek County Park in Osceola, IN, and the June 14 workshop is at the Dearth Center in Coldwater, MI from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

**The second event** is a full-day organizational forum

July 11 at the Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, MI. In order to ensure the success of this bi-state effort, please plan to join us for one educational workshop and the full-day organizational forum. Event details are available by calling Marcy Colclough at the SWMC, 269-925-1137 x25 or Dona Hunter at the La Grange County Conservation District (260) 483-3471. Information is also on the *Friends of the St. Joe River* website at [www.fotsjr.org](http://www.fotsjr.org). To learn more about the St. Joe River Watershed Management Plan you can visit [www.stjoeriver.net](http://www.stjoeriver.net)

### ***Finding A Voice For The St. Joseph River***

Choose one of the June dates: ***(1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)***

***June 13*** - Ferrettie-Baugo Creek County Park, Osceola, IN

***June 14*** - Dearth Center, Coldwater, MI

The second event is a full-day organizational forum:

***July 11*** at the Sturges-Young Auditorium in Sturgis, MI

***The events are free-of-charge!***

***Call Marcy at (269) 925-1137 x25 to register!***

**The registration deadline is June 9, 2006**

## RED ARROW COUNTRY - A LITTLE HISTORY

Do you know when or why US-12 became ***Red Arrow Highway?***

The 32nd "Red Arrow" Division was an infantry outfit formed of Wisconsin and Michigan Guardsmen that mobilized for WWI in 1916. The division earned its distinctive insignia, a vertical red arrow through a horizontal red bar, by piercing every enemy line it encountered in four World War I campaigns. The Red Arrow Division was mobilized again in October 1940 before the U.S. entered World War II. The Red Arrow Division played a key role in capturing Buna, a strategic enemy stronghold in Papua New Guinea, in 1942 and logged a total of 654 days in combat - more than any other U.S. Army division in any war.\* Toward the end of the 1950s the highway known then as US-12, was designated the Red Arrow Highway to commemorate the heroism of this infantry division.

In late 2000, a group of visionaries representing businesses and communities along Red Arrow Highway began working together to develop a plan to promote growth and economic development for the communities of *Coloma, Watervliet, Hartford, Lawrence, Paw Paw, and Mattawan*. This group applied for and received a Community Development Block Grant to commission a planning study of the market conditions of this collective community. The results of the Anderson Economic Group's study became the central focus for beginning cooperative promotional efforts. Based on those efforts, in 2003 the Michigan Economic Development Corporation honored the counties of Berrien and Van Buren with an award for “Outstanding Cooperative Efforts for Developing a Regional Downtown Development Plan.” These communities have recently begun to initiate organizational activities designed to bring an even greater sense of purpose and vision to the area. Currently, Lori Anthony, of the Mattawan Business Association, is working with the Red Arrow Country communities to design a website, [www.redarrowcountry.org](http://www.redarrowcountry.org) which will promote businesses, events, and community attractions.



Shelley Klug of the SWMC is enthusiastic about working with the Red Arrow Country group, ***“Knowing the history of the Red Arrow Division’s bravery and tenacity gives us a unique and interesting story to share with visitors and residents alike.”***

\*<http://www.d-2-128.org/history/32ins.htm>

## **OFFICERS ELECTED TO 2006 SWMC BOARD**

New officers were elected at the January 17, 2006 full commission meeting held at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence.

- ◆ **Thomas Tanczos** was selected as Chairman. Tanczos has served as Vice Chairman of the SWMC board since 2004. Tanczos is a resident of South Haven and is Chairman of the Van Buren Board of Commissioners.
- ◆ **Victoria Chandler** was elected Vice Chairman. Chandler is the Second District Commissioner for Berrien County and resides in Sodus Township.
- ◆ **Don Gast** retained his seat as Treasurer. Gast, a resident of Baroda, serves the SWMC board as a Berrien County Citizen Representative and represents the Ninth District of Berrien County.
- ◆ **Yemi Akinwale** retained his position as alternate treasurer. Akinwale, a resident of Benton Township, represents Berrien County as a Citizen Representative and is the Hartford City Manager.
- ◆ **Fran Sage** will also continue as the board secretary. Sage is a resident of Gobles, serves her community as a school board member and represents Van Buren County as a citizen representative.

## **DID YOU KNOW...**

The SWMC employs a **student intern** from Andrews University? Her name is **Andrea Moskalova** and she is earning her master's degree in International Development. She works closely with Marcy Colclough on the NPDES Phase II (Stormwater) Public Education Program. SWMC staff received **website training** from LIAA in Traverse City. Director John Egelhaaf appeared on the **Newsmakers** television show on Comcast in March. The SWMC lays out **traffic counters** on the region's roads and collects traffic volumes at over 350 locations annually. The SWMC organized and, with partners throughout the region, **rated** the surface quality of **every public road** in the southwest region in 2005. The per-employee **cost of health care** for SWMC employees has gone down in the last two years. When SWMC employees travel they pay **government rates** on hotels and other expenses. Director Egelhaaf meets with the region's **public sector planners** (Tri-County Planners) monthly on an informal basis. The SWMC staff **meets every other week** to discuss ongoing projects and developing issues in the region. The SWMC houses a **database of contact information** of the region's planning partners, elected, and appointed officials that contains 2,603 entries. George Tabbert is a trusted SWMC staff person who excels as the manager of our regional traffic count program. What you may not know about George is that he is also a **decorated WW II hero** who turned 86 this year.



SWMC staff preparing new website pages

## **THE HARTFORD COMMUNITY ADOPTS FIVE-YEAR JOINT RECREATION PLAN**

The City of Hartford and Hartford Township recently adopted a new five-year **Joint Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plan**. This plan has been submitted and approved by Michigan's Department of Natural Resources for the remainder of 2006 through 2010.



Outdoor concerts in Ely Park are very popular events.

Representatives of both municipalities worked as members of the joint steering committee with Shelley Klug of the SWMC throughout the planning process to create a vision and plan that will enhance the community's recreational opportunities in a variety of ways. A public visioning session, a public hearing, and a thirty-day comment period were some of the ways that resident participation was encouraged.

The first goal of the community is to establish stable and secure funding - other goals include making improvements to Ely Park, building a community center, encouraging preservation of valuable water and land resources while promoting responsible recreational use, preserving properties with cultural or historic value, and developing a skate park. The full plan is available on the City of Hartford's website: [www.hartfordmi.com](http://www.hartfordmi.com) and the Southwestern Michigan Commission's website: [www.swmicomm.org](http://www.swmicomm.org)

*"Residents of communities involved in the development of coordinated plans can be thankful to those who are willing to work selflessly to create mutual goals designed for the satisfaction of all" said Shelley Klug commenting on the work of Hartford Community's joint steering committee.*

**Southwestern Michigan Commission**  
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## **GROWING GREENER IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN**

The Southwestern Michigan Commission has partnered with several organizations and municipalities to develop a Green Infrastructure Plan for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. The Green Infrastructure Planning Process is called “Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan.” The project was one of two implementation projects selected for funding by the Michigan State University (MSU) Land Policy Institute (LPI) during the 2006 Planning for Prosperity Land Use Summit this spring. The grant program sought to direct local communities toward smarter growth and community revitalization projects that build economic growth, preserve and conserve land (i.e., open space, active farmland), improve quality of life (defined by factors that contribute to community stability), create healthy communities (address social, economic, and environmental factors), and encourage walkable neighborhoods (safe, multi-modal and mixed use).



The Growing Greener project covers much of southwest Michigan with a goal to increase awareness of the connection between green infrastructure and prosperity; the grant award supports project elements that include mapping green infrastructure, holding green infrastructure educational charettes, and, ultimately, synthesizing public opinion and science into the planning process. The project leverages more than \$70,000, with the largest and most diverse team of all applicants.

Members of the prosperity team included: Barb Cook (Cass County Planning Commission, MEANDRS, US-12), Doug Stiles (Almena Township), Connie Selles (Van Buren County Planning Commission), Peg Khoring (Berrien County Planning Commission, The Conservation Fund), Dave Zilke (Southwest Michigan Homebuilders Association), Tom Hackley (Chikaming Township Planning Commission), Mark Parrish and Kevin Daugherty (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians), Jean Brokish (Chikaming Open Lands), Kelly Getman-Dissette (Van Buren MSUE), Marcy Colclough (SWMC). The following municipalities and agencies also provided letters of support for the grant proposal: Benton Harbor City, Niles City, Bangor City, Hartford City, St. Joseph Charter Township, New Buffalo Township, Cass County Planning Commission, Van Buren County Planning Commission.

## **CITY OF BANGOR RECEIVES COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT**

The City of Bangor was recently awarded a **\$418,000 CDBG** from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to make improvements to several downtown streets and alleys.

The proposed project activities are part of the City’s short and long term community development plans and include crushing and reshaping portions of Pine, Exchange, and Charles streets, capping portions of Walnut, Railroad, and Division streets, correcting storm water system deficiencies, repaving alleys, and correcting sidewalk deficiencies.

The improvements to the downtown streets proposed in this project will enhance delivery truck and customer access to all businesses as well as eliminate street flooding, reduce potholes, and enhance the appearance and appeal of the whole downtown area. Brenner Excavating was awarded the contract to complete these improvements with a bid of \$499,820. Work is scheduled to begin in July 2006.

