

3 Community Profile

3.1 History of Region

Throughout history, water resources have been important for the culture and economy of southwest Michigan. The Hopewell inhabited the area from 500 BC to 900 AD, followed by the Algonquin groups and the Miami tribe. By the early 1700's the Potawatomi tribe was the predominant Native American people in this area. The French were the first European explorers to come to southwest Michigan. They were interested in the fur trade in this area. The French explorer, LaSalle, is known to have wintered near the City of St Joseph in 1680-81. A 1999 Michigan History magazine article indicates La Salle proceeded up the Paw Paw River and entered western Kalamazoo County at Prairie Ronde. British traders came here during the second half of the eighteenth century. Artifacts suggest that a trading post existed on the banks overlooking the Paw Paw River near Coloma.

The Erie canal was opened in 1825 and settlers poured into southwest Michigan from the east. Most settlements were located on streams or rivers and soon major water and steam driven mills were erected in every settlement. Until railroads were installed, flour and other products were transported by water to Lake Michigan. The Paw Paw River was, in the days of early settlement, an important highway for the transportation of freight from the Paw Paw Valley to St. Joseph, and many people were engaged in the business of boating flour on flatboats. The traffic on the Paw Paw continued with more or less regularity until the completion of the Michigan Central Railroad.

In 1893, an old sawmill in Watervliet was replaced with a paper mill. For the next hundred years the paper mill grew into the town's main industry, employing 400 people. Today Watervliet is reclaiming its waterfront from industrial uses and there is a nice stormwater demonstration project at Veterans Park with a porous parking lot, a rain garden and a riparian buffer along the Paw Paw River.

In the late 1800's tourism abounded at Paw Paw Lake (the largest lake in the watershed at 920 acres). Its eleven miles of shoreline, proximity to Benton Harbor/St. Joseph, and accessibility to railroads made it the perfect place for a resort destination. Double-decked steamboats 90 feet in length were circling the lake on a regular schedule. Vacationers came to town by the electric interurban train or by regular passenger trains. Train records from the early part of the 1900's show 40,000 people coming to Paw Paw Lake every summer. At one time, fifty hotels and four dance pavilions lined the lake. The area's popularity continued through the 1950's.

In April 1947 torrential rains caused a dam to break in Lawrence creating a domino effect of flooding downstream on the Paw Paw River. The record flooding of Paw Paw Lake resulted in hundreds of homes being damaged and many being pushed off their foundations. The cost of cleanup and repair was a staggering dollar amount for that time.

The Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery was established in 1927 with land donated to the State by the Izaak Walton League who bought 78 acres for \$5,000. This facility produces a wide range of fish species for both inland and Great Lakes waters. The hatchery has both indoor and outdoor rearing facilities.

Southwest Michigan is known for its fruit and vegetable production. The PPRW is the home to several wineries. The rural character, the Paw Paw River and area lakes continue to attract tourists and residents to southwest Michigan.

Water resources are important to our economy, history and culture. These priceless treasures must be protected.

(History section is courtesy of Barb Cook)

3.2 Governmental Units

In the PPRW, there are 39 governmental units including 25 townships, four (4) villages, six (6) cities, three (3) counties (Berrien, Van Buren and Kalamazoo counties), and one (1) tribe (Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians). Out of the 35 townships, cities and villages, only 22 have at least 75% of their land in the PPRW. The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians own 1,212 acres within the watershed (Hartford and Bangor Townships). Approximately 775 acres of these lands are held in federal trust for the benefit of the Pokagon Band, and as a result, the Band possesses the jurisdiction to develop and implement its own land use plan, as well as regulate the resources and other activities within these lands. The majority of these lands are along the Paw Paw River. See Figure 6 for a map of governmental units in the PPRW.

Table 4 lists all of the governmental units located in the PPRW along with the approximate: 1.) number of acres of that governmental unit in the PPRW, 2.) percent of that governmental unit in the PPRW, 3.) number of miles of PPRW streams and rivers in that governmental unit, and 4.) number of acres of lakes and ponds in that governmental unit and within the PPRW. Almena, Waverly and Hartford Townships have the most river length in the PPRW. Paw Paw, Lawrence and Coloma Townships have the most surface water acreage in the PPRW.

Figure 6. Governmental Units in Paw Paw River Watershed

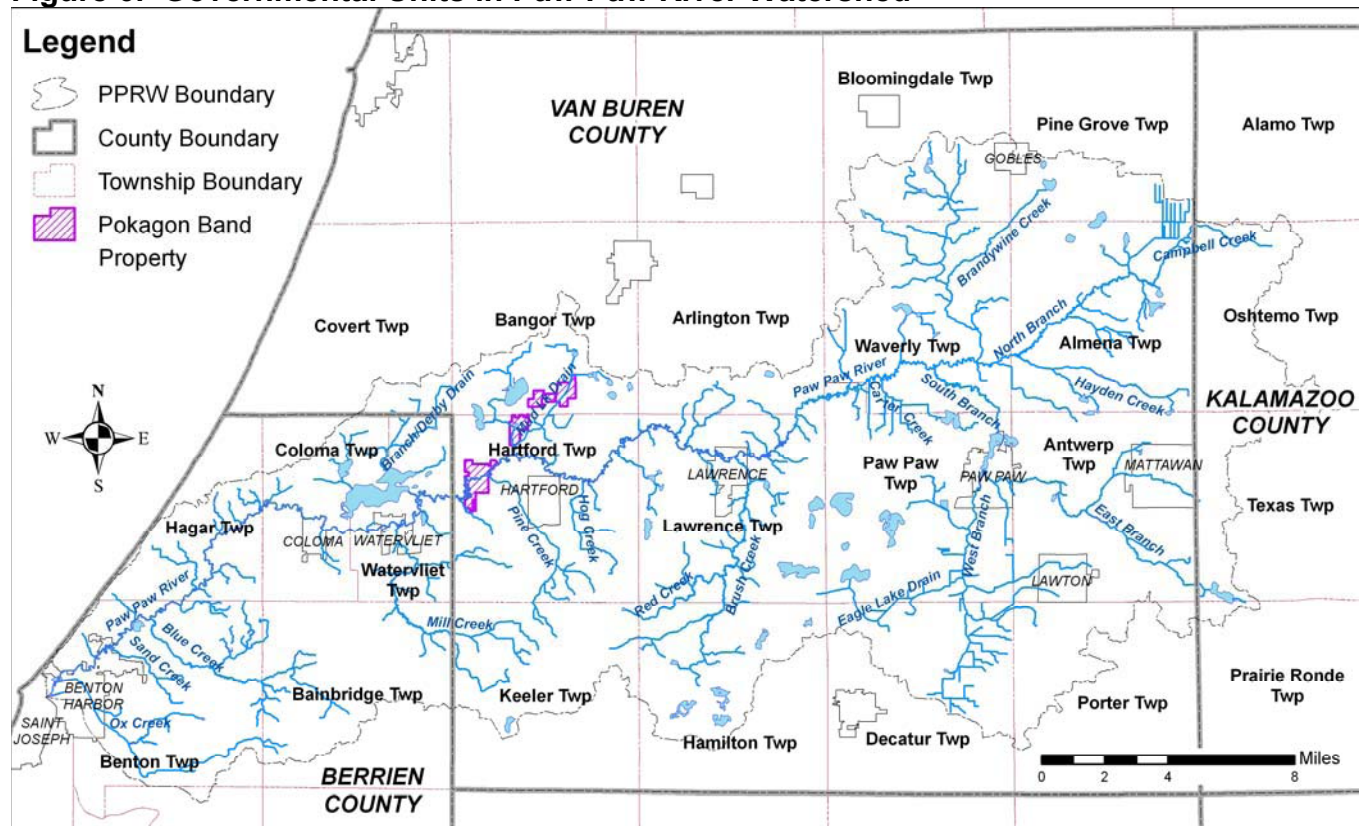


Table 4. Watershed Area, River Length and Water Acreage by Governmental Unit

Governmental Unit	County	Watershed Area (Acres)	% in Watershed	River Length (Miles)	Surface Water Area* (Acres)
Alamo Twp.	Kalamazoo	59	0.25	0	0
Almena Twp.	Van Buren	22,310	100	36.5	345
Antwerp Twp.	Van Buren	18,168	99.87	15	145
Arlington Twp.	Van Buren	5,112	22.86	1.9	79
Bainbridge Twp.	Berrien	15,729	69.54	5.1	87
Bangor Twp.	Van Buren	7,773	32.18	2.55	442.7
Benton Harbor, City of	Berrien	2,177	76.81	9.1	28
Benton Twp.	Berrien	18,292	86.94	19.8	165
Bloomingdale Twp.	Van Buren	7,301	33.66	4.3	109
Coloma, City of	Berrien	569	100	1.6	1
Coloma Twp.	Berrien	10,047	82.31	5.5	602
Covert Twp.	Van Buren	1,910	8.53	0.8	2
Decatur Twp.	Van Buren	10,326	47.15	9.8	16
Gobles, City of	Van Buren	495	74.88	0	0

Governmental Unit	County	Watershed Area (Acres)	% in Watershed	River Length (Miles)	Surface Water Area* (Acres)
Hagar Twp.	Berrien	8,672	72.5	6.7	57
Hamilton Twp.	Van Buren	11,840	52.04	12.5	536
Hartford, City of	Van Buren	988	100	0.4	4
Hartford Twp.	Van Buren	21,545	100	28.7	151
Keeler Twp.	Van Buren	12,442	55.55	11.2	122
Lawrence Twp.	Van Buren	21,753	100	27.1	644
Lawrence, Village of	Van Buren	1,158	100	3.9	6
Lawton, Village of	Van Buren	1,527	100	0	23
Mattawan, Village of	Van Buren	2,633	100	2.8	15
Oshtemo Twp.	Kalamazoo	1,0237	44.42	0	24
Paw Paw Twp.	Van Buren	21,832	100	9.1	1131
Paw Paw, Village of	Van Buren	1,811	100	2.1	140
Pine Grove Twp.	Van Buren	6,088	27.13	2.6	193
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians	Van Buren	1,212	100	3.73	17.3
Porter Twp.	Van Buren	6,985	30.84	1.3	17
Prairie Ronde Twp.	Kalamazoo	575	2.47	0	6
Sodus Twp.	Berrien	190	1.48	0	0
St. Joseph, City of	Berrien	103	4.4	0.75	1
Texas Twp.	Kalamazoo	5,137	22.12	1.6	127
Watervliet, City of	Berrien	782	100	2.6	0
Watervliet Twp.	Berrien	9270	100	16.5	573
Waverly Twp.	Van Buren	19,723	89.3	32.3	174

*Surface Water Area does not include rivers and streams.
Information

Source: Michigan Center for Geographic

3.3 Demographics

The PPRW is an important resource for its human population, including parts of the metropolitan areas of Kalamazoo at the headwaters and Benton Harbor-St. Joseph at the mouth. It is important to understand the characteristics of the population in the watershed. By having a better understanding of the people, water quality related management and outreach efforts can be tailored to be more effective for the intended audience(s).

All of the demographic information presented here is from the US Census. It was not possible to report numbers specifically for the watershed area. The Census information was available at two different levels, the block and block group level.

At the block level, 2,505 blocks were selected to best represent the PPRW area. The 2,505 blocks encompass about 452.32 square miles compared to the PPRW, which is 446 square miles. Figure 7 illustrates the extent of the selected blocks with population density. Only population, population density, number of households and race were available at the block level. The remaining census information is presented at the block group level.

At the block group level, 95 block groups were selected to best represent the PPRW area. The 95 block groups encompass 677 square miles compared to the PPRW area of 446 square miles. Figure 8 illustrates the extent of the selected block groups with median household income.

According to the block level 2000 US Census data, there were about 80,851 people living in the PPRW. The average population density in the watershed was 179 people per square mile. In 2000, the watershed contained about 29,733 households with 22,043 (74%) of these being owner occupied. The average household contained 2.7 persons. Figure 7 illustrates that the most densely populated areas of the watershed are located in the headwaters and near the mouth (Benton Harbor and Coloma/Watervliet areas). Table 5 lists the race breakdown of the population living in the watershed. About 80% were white only, about 15% were black or African American and about 5% were Hispanic or Latino.

Figure 7. Population Density (2000)

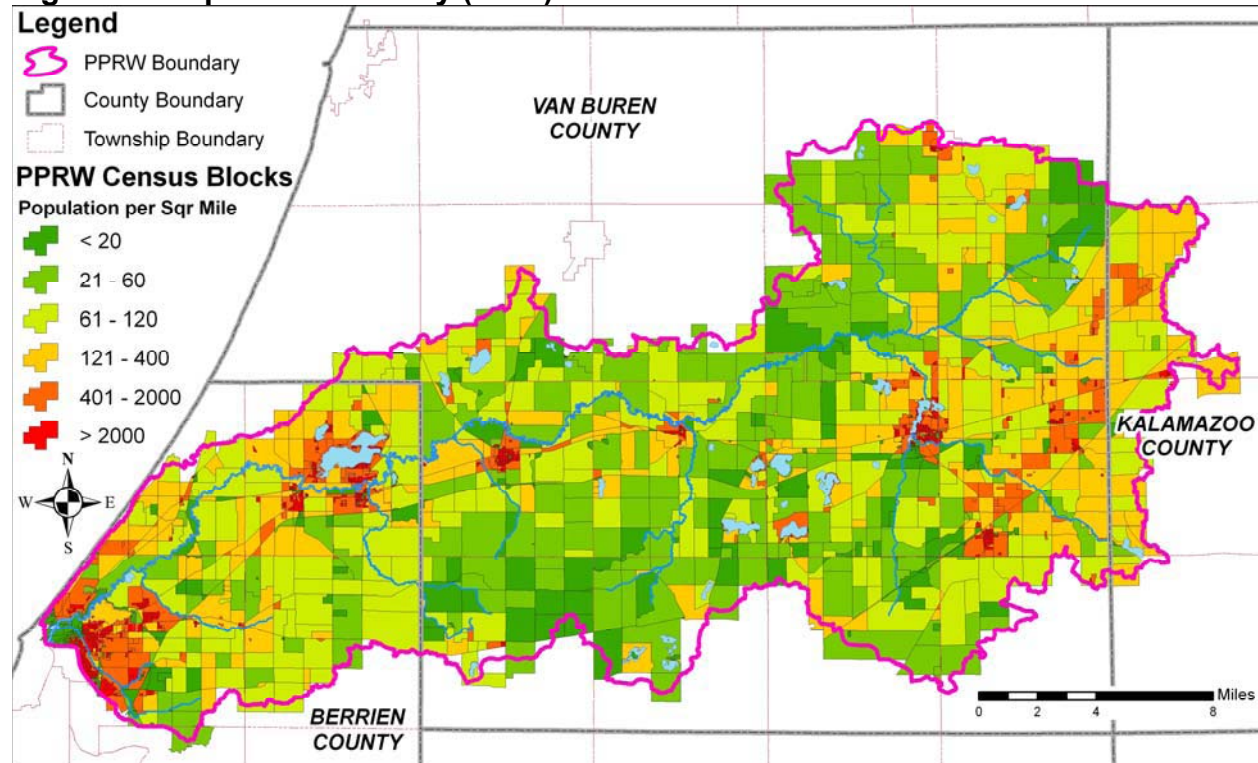


Table 5. Race by Census Block (2000)

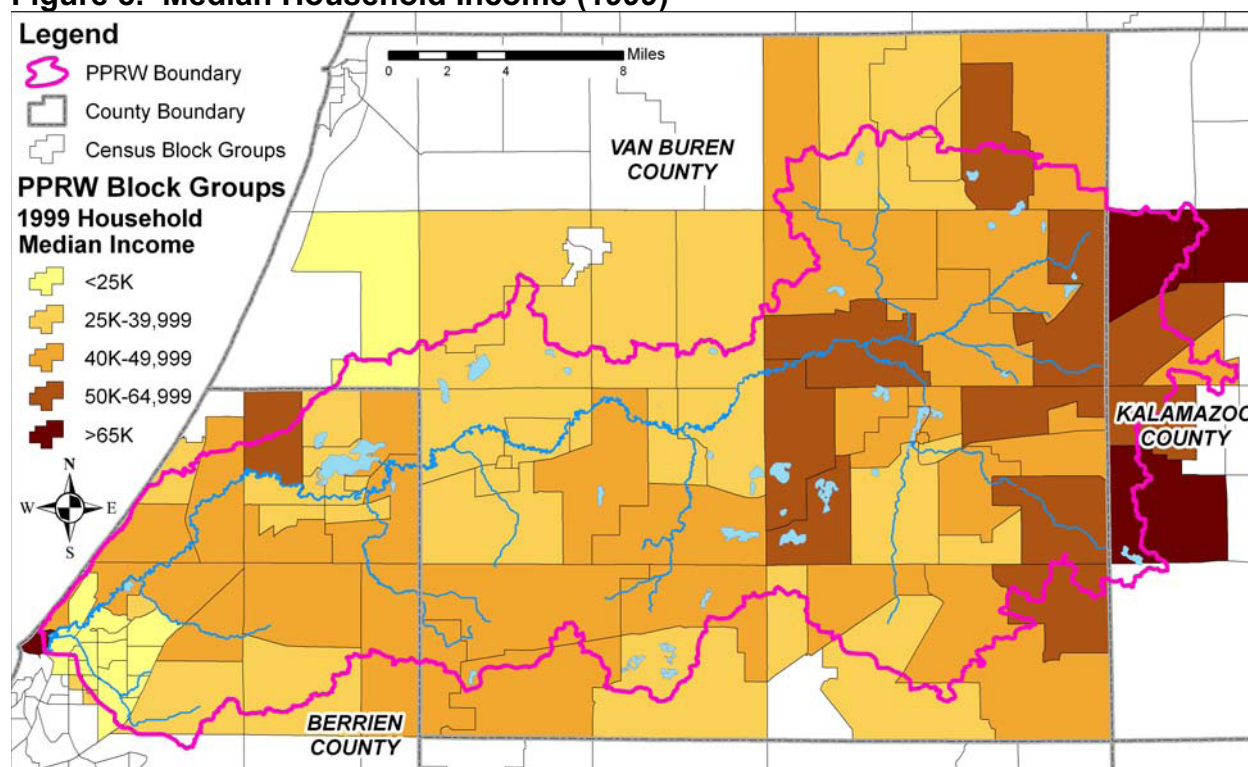
Race	Number	Percentage
White Only	64,004	79.16%
Black or African American Only	12,850	15.89%
American Indian or Alaska Native Only	504	0.62%
Asian Only	293	0.36%
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Only	16	0.02%
Some Other Race Only	1,758	2.17%
Two or more races	1,426	1.76%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	4,246	5.25%

The following statistics are presented at the census block group level from the 2000 US Census. The total population for the 677 square miles was 109,882 with a population density of 162 persons per square mile. The number of individuals below the 1999 poverty level was 16,092 or 14.8% of the population. The median household income was \$39,412 in 1999. Figure 8 illustrates a higher median household income in the headwaters area of the PPRW. In 2000, the unemployment rate was 6.29%. About 80% of the population age 25 and over had at least a high school diploma. Only about 3% of the population age 5 and over spoke English less than very well.

Table 6. Poverty, Employment, Education and Language by Block Group (2000)

Poverty Status in 1999	Number	Percent
Individuals below Poverty Level	16,092	14.87%
Individuals At or Above Poverty Level	92,140	85.13%
Employment Status (Age 16 and over)		
Total Civilian Workforce	53,188	
# of workforce unemployed	3,348	6.29%
# of workforce employed	49,840	93.71%
Educational Attainment (Age 25 and over)		
Total Population 25 and over	67,327	
Less than 9th Grade	3,005	4.46%
9th to 12th grade, no diploma	10,136	15.05%
High School Graduate (includes equivalency)	23,672	35.16%
Some College, no degree	15,328	22.77%
Associate degree	4,482	6.66%
Bachelor's degree	6,906	10.26%
Graduate or Professional degree	3,798	5.64%
No High School diploma	13,141	19.52%
High School Graduate or higher	54,186	80.48%
Bachelor's degree or higher	10,704	15.90%
Language Spoken At Home (Age 5 and older)		
Total Population 5 and over	101,915	
English Only	96,537	94.72%
Language other than English	5,378	5.28%
Speak English less than "very well"	3,030	2.97%

Figure 8. Median Household Income (1999)



3.4 Future Growth and Development

The PPRW has abundant natural and water resources that attract businesses, residents and tourists. Over the next few decades, the PPRW is expected to see population growth and land use change, especially in the eastern part of the watershed and along the I-94 corridor. In 2008, MPI Inc. announced the expansion of its facilities in Mattawan and the creation of 3,000 jobs. In 2007, Harbor Shores began a 530 acre development in Benton Harbor City, Benton Township and St. Joseph City. This development is expected to spur further economic and population growth in the Benton Harbor area. The cities and townships along Red Arrow Highway are working cooperatively to attract industrial, commercial and residential growth to the area. With these projects, population growth and major land use changes are expected to occur rapidly throughout the watershed.

For the long-term prosperity and health of these communities, the water quality and natural resources need to be recognized for their important role in the current and future economic development of the region. It will be imperative to have thoughtful and sensitive planning of these and other developments to ensure that the water quality and natural resources and the services they provide are protected. For more information on economic development and natural resources visit www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp.