

ANNUAL REPORT



*For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2009*

October 2010

FROM THE CHAIR . . .

The challenges posed by dramatic economic change continue to demand new approaches to service delivery and stewardship. Many communities in southwest Michigan find themselves making difficult decisions about what is necessary and what is not. Sound planning allows us to proceed through these times clearly understanding the hierarchy of our resources and services. The tough decisions can be mapped out years in advance while community assets can be predictably and systematically maintained. Services can be shared across jurisdictional boundaries in ways that make common sense. Planning allows communities to replace pressure and subjectivity with logic, perspective, and broad-based community input.

Communities across our southwest Michigan region of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties have asked the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) to apply our planning expertise to their particular challenges. Those challenges range from the expansive approach taken toward a community master plan, to the more categorical – recreation planning, watershed planning, heritage route planning, to the highly specific – road maintenance, bicycle safety, downtown development. The SWMPC was organized over thirty years ago by the three counties as a not-for-profit resource for professional planning. We have a unique regional perspective but can also focus on the needs of individual communities. In addition to an amazing breadth of contacts throughout the region, the SWMPC is a strong partner to departments of Michigan state government as well as the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the U.S. Department of Commerce among others at the federal level.

This annual report is a brief compilation of our work in 2009. If you are not familiar with the SWMPC, we hope that this report will encourage you to get acquainted with us. For those who are already familiar with us, we appreciate your collaboration and we thank you for the part you played in a rewarding year for the Commission.

*Sincerely,
Linda Preston, Chair 2010*

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) is one of fourteen Planning and Development Regions in the State of Michigan and one of approximately five hundred in the United States. A 1968 order by then-governor George W. Romney enabled planning regions in Michigan.

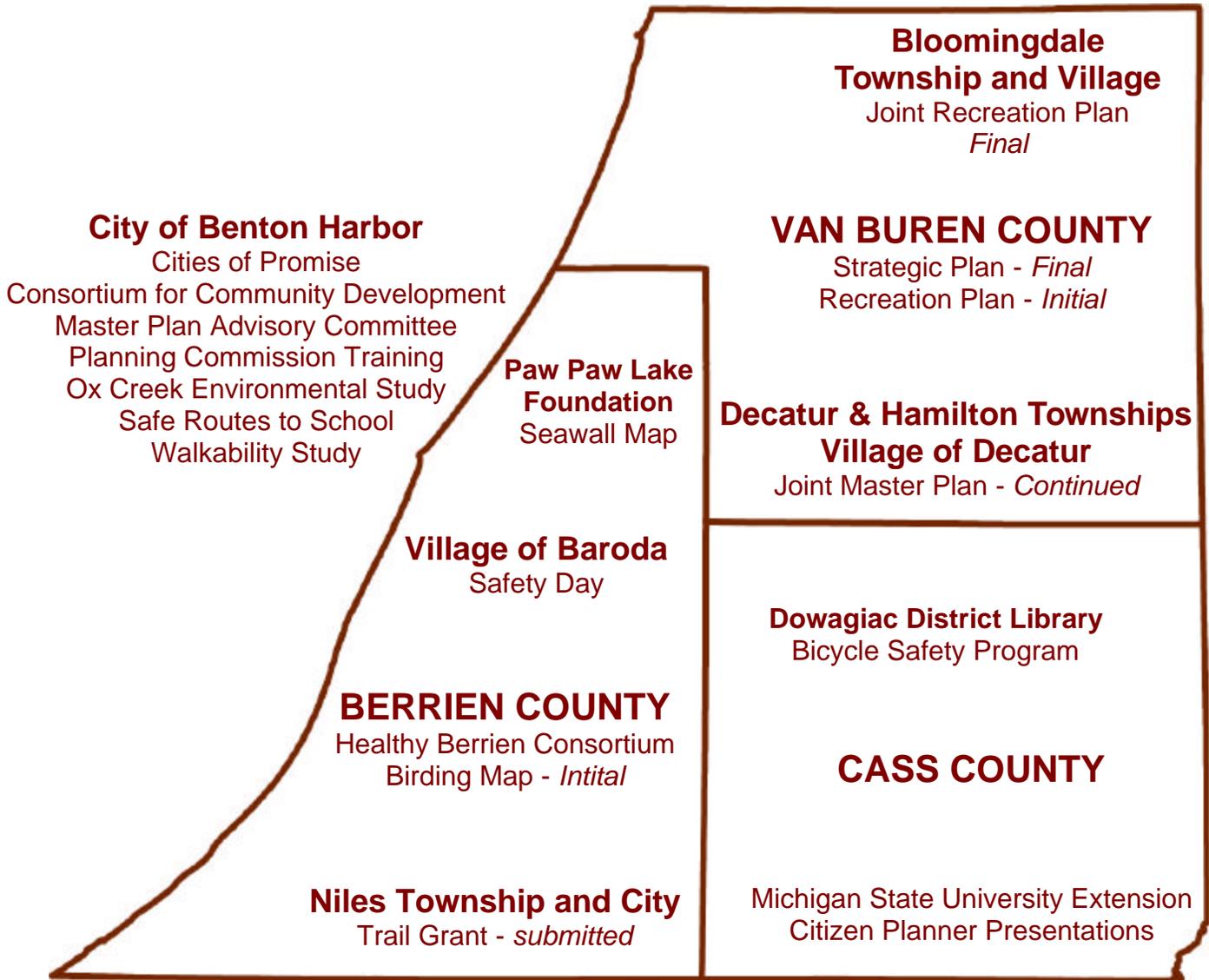
Resolutions of the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren County Boards of Commissioners officially formed the SWMPC in 1973. The Commission was first staffed in 1974.

In addition to serving public and private entities within Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties by providing technical or management assistance, the SWMPC acts as an intergovernmental forum to discuss regional concerns. The SWMPC addresses issues and administers programs that its membership deems appropriate and which are in keeping with locally established area-wide planning and development goals.

For more information about the SWMPC, please visit our website at: www.swmpc.org

LOCAL SERVICES PLANNING

The SWMPC provides customized planning and information services to local governments and organizations including comprehensive and land use planning, research and analysis, GIS mapping, surveys, recreational planning, grant writing and grant administration. Outreach to build support for wise planning and awareness of vital regional development issues leads to program initiatives that address local needs.



BEYOND OUR BORDERS

PARTICIPATION

Aging in America Conference
American Planning Association
Great Lakes Association of Regional Councils
Lake Michigan Watershed Academy (Delta Institute)
Michigan Association of Planning
Michigan Association of Regions

Michigan Business Incubator Association
Michigan Economic Developers Association
Michigan Transportation Planning Association
Quad State Directors
Wingspread Accord

PARTNERS

Community Media Workshop
Land Information Access Association
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Michigan State University
University of Michigan

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated the SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD) serving Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. EDD funding covers coordinating regional and local business and industry planning processes, providing technical assistance, maintaining economic and demographic databases, and information dissemination.

An important function of an EDD is preparing an annual **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)** update, with full revisions every three years. The 2009-2011 document guides the SWMPC and its members in making economic development planning decisions that benefit the region. The action plan reflects a strong interest in regional collaboration, entrepreneurialism and the link between education and economic development. This holistic approach seeks to build on the strengths of the region's residents, workforce, employers, and natural and built environments to improve the quality of life for southwest Michigan's residents.

The **360 Group** contributes to the CEDS and continues to build regional collaboration. A grant from the People and Land (PAL) organization, a W.K. Kellogg Foundation project focused on growth and change in Michigan, funds the project. The Michigan Association of Planning and the Land Information Access Association also support the Commission's work with the 360 Group. Representatives of regional businesses, economic development departments, education, and State agencies convene regularly as a forum for projects and initiatives. This collaboration is helping develop a common regional vision of thriving regional markets (agriculture, tourism, etc.) that will increase the quality of life for southwest Michigan's residents with the end goal of job creation.



In 2009, SWMPC staff prepared and submitted an application for a three-year renewal of EDD status and additional supplemental funding. The Regional EDA Office conducted a peer review of the SWMPC's management standards, program performance, financial accountability, and overall operations. The agency reported that performance standards have been met.

The **Michigan Prosperity Initiative** joins SWMPC with the Michigan Association of Regions and the Michigan State University Land Policy Institute in an effort to provide a statewide framework for place-based economic development. Working with the 360 Group and other regional stakeholders, and in conformity with the CEDS, the SWMPC has contributed draft regional visions to a statewide strategic growth plan with the aim of influencing state-level elected officials and staff in encouraging linked regional planning.

Facilitating Growth In 2009

A **Regional Entrepreneurial Business Plan Competition** was initiated by staff representing economic development in Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. SWMPC guided the creation of a contest process that will award cash prizes to help fund startup or growth for business plans or expansion proposals.

The **Michigan Business Incubator Association** and SWMPC continued their partnership, maintaining interest in kitchen and green enterprise incubators for southwest Michigan. Such projects would assist businesses in the initial stages of growth by encouraging sharing the expenses of space,

Partnership for Change First Steps Grant recipients Hartford and Watervliet Townships and Cities continued to explore the nuances of their partnership. This effort to cultivate a common vision for the I-94 Corridor Development Project was assisted by SWMPC.

Planning that is credible, credentialed, and connected.

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

Natural resources have no particular regard for political borders; watershed boundaries, surface water run-off, and critical habitat are a few examples of these environmental issues. The SWMPC's broad regional perspective provides a unique position to apply expertise to natural resource planning.



WATERSHEDS



The **Galien River Watershed** was the focus of a survey conducted as part of the implementation project along with Michigan State University, Purdue University, University of Wisconsin, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and The Conservation Fund. 1,700 residents in the southern Berrien County watershed area received door-to-door visits or mailed versions of the survey to assess homeowner's knowledge of, and interest in water quality issues.

The **Paw Paw River Watershed** Management Plan was shepherded through its final approval process. A relationship was established with the **Black River Watershed** by the formation of the **Two Rivers Coalition**. In partnership with Van Buren County, a Joint Information and Education Plan for these adjoining watershed areas was created. The SWMPC involvement also included compiling future land use maps, creating master plan and zoning ordinance language, assisting with strategic planning and start up grants, and website planning.

In the **St. Joseph River Watershed**, SWMPC assisted the Friends of the St. Joe River Association with strategic planning and board development, helped prepare grants for wetland protection and restoration, and the American Electric Power Heart of Cook Green Infrastructure Grant. SWMPC staff gave presentations addressing green infrastructure, water quality and low impact development at the St. Joseph River Basin Commission Annual Meeting.

Results of a Michigan State University mail survey gauging residents' opinions on conservation and recreation in the Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren county area were utilized by the SWMPC's Green Infrastructure program, **Growing Greener in Southwest Michigan**, to foster increased awareness of the connection between Green Infrastructure and prosperity.



TRAILS



The SWMPC began to develop a comprehensive, regional **Non-Motorized Transportation Plan** for Allegan, Barry, Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Kalamazoo, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. The process will build consensus for a connected non-motorized network within the region and with five neighboring regions in Michigan and Indiana. This project utilizes data and maps developed by the SWMPC for the 2006 Non-Motorized Bicycle Map and current information collected for updates. The Southwest Michigan Alliance for Recreational Trails (SMART) reaches out to communities and trailway groups planning new or extending non-motorized trails to ensure that all projects will be included. SWMPC worked with the Friends of the Kal-Haven Trail, Sauk Trails RC&D Council, Potawatomi RC&D Council, and O'Boyle-Cowell-Blalock & Associates, Inc. to present a workshop that attracted participants from southwest Michigan, Grand Rapids and northern Indiana. The event covered trail planning and development in varied community settings, along with innovative funding sources.



EDUCATION



The **Public Education Plan (PEP)** component of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System continues in participating municipalities in Berrien and Cass Counties. The SWMPC coordinated outreach activities for residents about reducing stormwater pollution. Twelve communities shared the benefits of fact sheets, newsletter articles, presentations, radio spots, etc.

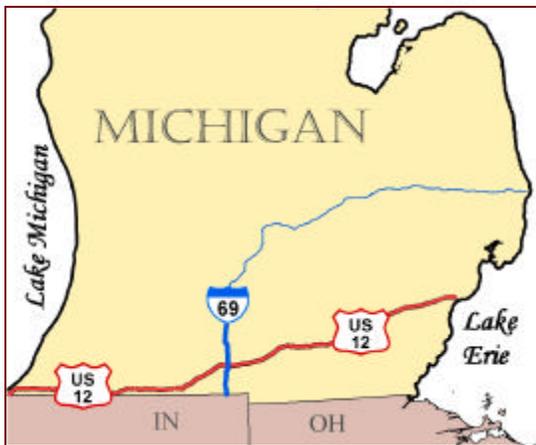
Low Impact Development (LID) is an ecological approach to site development and stormwater management that aims to mitigate impacts to land, water and air. The SWMPC provided newsletters to communities of the Galien, Paw Paw, Black and Gun Rivers Watersheds. The staff assisted in producing a new statewide manual for Low Impact Development which includes technical and policy guidance specific to Michigan conditions.

HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

Created by state legislation in 1993, the Heritage Route Program emphasizes cooperation among local residents, government officials, landowners and interested groups to preserve unique scenic, historic or recreational highways. This program works on a grassroots level, requiring involvement by local residents to ensure that their highway and its roadsides remain in their natural and unspoiled conditions. Michigan's residents have an opportunity as individuals, groups, or entire communities to become involved in this important effort to preserve Michigan's roadsides with scenic, historic and/or recreational qualities.

State Heritage Route Work:

- The SWMPC participated in the Michigan Designated Heritage Routes' work with State Transportation officials to develop the Signage Strategy, representing the two routes under its management.
- State Heritage Route website development, to build efficiency, consistency and legitimacy for Michigan's designated heritage routes, was begun by corridor management agencies with the assistance of Land Information Access Association.
- The Southern Michigan Heritage Summit was coordinated by SWMPC staff at Coldwater in October, bringing together State officials and representatives from varied Heritage Route locations to discuss promotion of local food, preservation, green reuse, financial incentives, and local event planning.
- SWMPC assisted Preserve America in seeking designation for the West Michigan Pike.



US-12 and I-69 corridors are resources in heritage tourism, transportation, recreation, landscape preservation, and economic development, each engaged in unique, collaborative planning processes. SWMPC provides planning assistance to both programs through coordination of projects and activities in the areas of interpretive planning, conservation, preservation tourism, and economic development.

US-12 Heritage Route Planning:

Traversing approximately 212 miles through Michigan, US-12 retains a rich historic character and offers the traveling motorist a unique opportunity to view the many intrinsic historic, cultural, and recreational assets along this east-west corridor.

- SWMPC facilitated production of promotional materials for US-12 events and attractions.
- Communities and local stakeholders were kept updated on current and future projects.
- Phase II of the US-12 website was completed by adding links to town pages, narrative and photos, and increasing search capability.
- Research on green technology within the corridor was conducted.

I-69 Recreation Trail Planning:

I-69 Recreational Heritage Route stretches along over 80 miles of Interstate 69 in Michigan from the Indiana border north passing by historic towns, working farms, woodlands, spectacular scenery, wildlife habitat, campgrounds, trails, lakes, and streams.

- Work continues on strategic planning and a five-year work plan, with goals and objectives established.
- Public Outreach, Resource Preservation and Economic Development committees created.
- A forum of diverse constituents gave insight on the project from the public's perspective.
- Website planning and construction continues with added narrative contents and events.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

METROPOLITAN

Federal legislation requires State Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and public transportation operators in metropolitan areas to plan together. The SWMPC is the designated MPO for the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS) and the Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS). In cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and member municipalities, SWMPC develops and refines transportation plans and policies by analyzing social, economic, environmental, health, safety, welfare, and mobility impacts.

TwinCATS Members

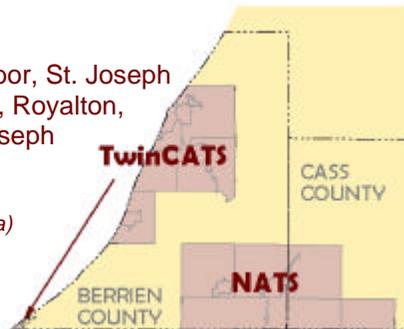
Cities: Bridgman, Benton Harbor, St. Joseph

Townships: Benton, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, Sodus, St. Joseph

Villages: Shoreham, Stevensville,

Grand Beach, Michiana

(Satellites, part of Michigan City Urbanized Area)



NATS Members

(Michigan portion of the South Bend Urbanized Area)

Cities: Buchanan, Niles

Townships: Buchanan, Howard, Milton, Niles, Ontwa

Villages: Edwardsburg, Bertrand

The two groups each established a **Unified Work Program (UWP)** to guide transportation planning throughout the year and amended its **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Fiscal Years 2008-2011** to take advantage of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds as they become available. Throughout the year, the joint **Public Participation Plan** was reviewed for efficacy and research conducted for future revisions.

Each MPO completed a **Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) 2009-2035** document. The goal of the LRP is to identify and address relevant issues, refine various processes and is updated every five years to remain effective and inclusive. Both were submitted to the Full Board and State agencies and approved.

REGIONAL

Public Transit

The SWMPC provides technical assistance and planning to transit and human service agencies. Transit projects involve the MPO municipalities and communities throughout the region. The National Center for Senior Transportation grant entered the final phase with installation of equipment and web-based software followed by training of personnel in the use of transit coordination programs. The Van Buren Transit Coordination and Berrien County Public Transit Study projects reflected the need for this cooperative effort involving 12 agencies in 6 counties. Additional transit improvements were planned through the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grant, awarded to create fixed routes for areas not currently served by public transit. RideShare is a program working toward similar goals providing website connections for commuters.

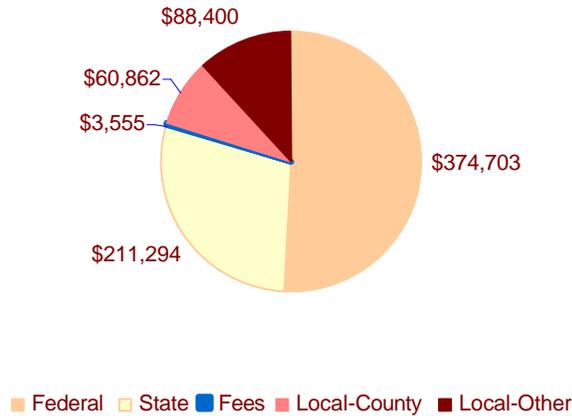
Asset Management

The SWMPC continues to partner with Michigan's Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC) and the county road commissions for Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren counties to conduct pavement condition surveys of all federal aid eligible roads in the three counties. This process of cost effectively maintaining, upgrading, and operating physical assets begins with Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) training conducted for local officials. Ratings were completed during the summer by MDOT, SWMPC and Road Commission staff members. In 2009, an Internet Reporting Tool was implemented. Also, Cass County, City of Dowagiac, Village of Three Oaks and Wesaw Township contracted to have their local roads rated and develop asset management plans. Executive Director Egelhaaf was appointed to the TAMC, involving SWMPC on the state level.

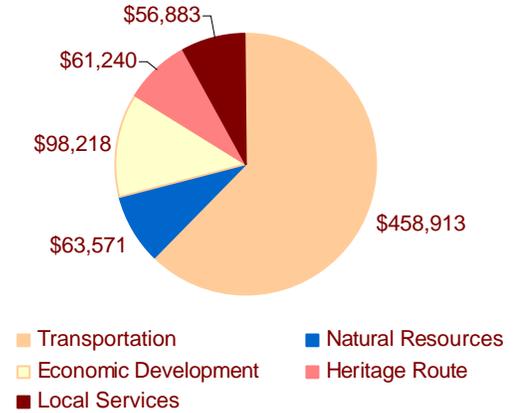
2009 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Revenue has been calculated to match the SWMPC fiscal year (January 1 through December 31). Many SWMPC projects match the fiscal years of their grant source which vary from that of the SWMPC.

Revenue By Source



Revenue by Theme



Federal	\$374,703
State	\$211,294
Fees	\$3,555
Local-County	\$60,862
Local-Other	\$88,400
TOTAL	\$738,814

Transportation	\$458,913
Natural Resources	\$63,571
Economic Development	\$98,218
Heritage Route	\$61,240
Local Services	\$56,883
TOTAL	\$738,825

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

continued

Congestion Mitigation

Projects to alleviate conditions contributing to poor air quality in the region as identified by federal agencies were planned by local communities with the assistance of SWMPC.

Traffic Data Collection

A useful tool for assessing transportation is the collection of traffic data. The 191 counts conducted throughout the region utilized a global positioning system and digital reporting equipment. The implementation of a new online traffic count database provides information availability to the public.

Rail

The SWMPC worked with MDOT, the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative, and Amtrak to continue service in the southwest Michigan area and to seek support for high-speed rail initiatives.

JAMES SAYER

2009

WELCH-LACKEY AWARD

*The mission of the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
is to promote a sustainable high quality of life
through facilitation of sound planning and decision making.*

2009 BOARD MEMBERS

Officers

Chair: Victoria Chandler
Berrien Citizen Representative

Vice Chair: Linda Preston
Cass County Townships Representative

Treasurer: Donald Gast
Berrien Citizen Representative

Alternate Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale
Berrien Citizen Representative

Secretary: Frances Sage
Van Buren Citizen Representative

BERRIEN COUNTY

Janet Clark, Citizen Representative
Wilce Cooke, City of Benton Harbor Mayor
Marge Durm-Hiatt, Alternate,
Niles Charter Township Supervisor
Ron Ferguson, Benton Charter Township Supervisor
Juan Ganum, Alternate, City of Niles Mayor
Jon Hinkleman, County Commissioner
John Hodgson, Alternate, City of St. Joseph Mayor
John Klimek, County Commissioner
Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative
Paul Pantaleo, Alternate, Oronoko Township Supervisor
Gloria Payne, Townships Representative
Richard Remus, Citizen Representative
Donald Ryman, County Commissioner
Marletta Seats, County Commissioner
Roger Seeley, St. Joseph Charter Township Supervisor
(Tim Fenderbosch, Alternate)
Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Supervisor
Tracy Vines, Citizen Representative (Planning)

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI INDIANS

John Miller, Matthew Wesaw, Tribal Chairmen

CASS COUNTY

Barb Wood Cook, Citizen Representative (Planning)
Alice LaHaie, Citizen Representative
Walter Lehmann, Townships Representative
Robert Powers, Citizen Representative
Johnie Rodebush, County Commissioner
James Sayer, Citizen Representative
James Snow, Alternate, City of Dowagiac Mayor
David Taylor, County Commissioner
Robert Ziliak, County Commissioner

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Dorothy Appleyard, City of South Haven Mayor
Dave Foerster, Citizen Representative
Don Hanson, County Commissioner
Dale Lewis, Citizen Representative
Denise Massey, County Commissioner
Jeff Radtke, Citizen Representative (Planning)
Daniel Ruzick, Antwerp Township Supervisor
Ron Sefcik, Townships Representative
Mike Toth, County Commissioner
John Tapper, Townships Representative

SWMPC 2009 STAFF

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Executive Director

Kimberly Gallagher
Associate Planner

Nancy Perry
Business Manager

Marcy Colclough
Senior Planner

Nickolas Musson
Associate Planner

Terri Moore
Administrative Assistant

Jill Leale
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