

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



*For the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
from January 1 to December 31, 2012*

November 2013

FROM THE CHAIR . . .

In southwest Michigan we have found a “new normal” where the drive toward collaboration and efficiency in service delivery is the rule. We tend to see our challenges in a larger context and where possible, we address them together. Every day the SWMPC gathers individuals, organizations, and governments together to identify challenges early and align resources to address them in the future. Because of our unique position as the regional connection point for local government, private enterprise, state and federal government, and private citizen groups, we are well situated to find the shortest distance between a challenge and a solution. We are expert at taking a step back - analyzing where we are, where our constituents want to go, and the most effective route to get there. To the SWMPC, that is the act of planning. We see firsthand that it is needed as much today as it ever has been.

To our partners in southwest Michigan, it has been our privilege to serve you in 2012. We look forward to expanding our partnerships still farther in 2013.

*Sincerely,
Jeff Radtke, Chair 2013*

SWMPC 2012 STAFF

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Executive Director

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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: www.swmpc.org

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are responsible for a process that is cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing and that encompasses all modes of transportation. The SWMPC coordinates the two MPO areas (*shown below*) in cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and member municipalities.

TIP FY 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program amendments and modifications were processed and an online template for TIP applications was created.

Performance measures, language for goals, objectives as required under **Moving Ahead for the Progress of the 21st Century** (MAP-21) legislation were researched and developed.

A grant was applied for and received from Great Lakes Integrated Science & Assessments Center (GLISA) to provide climate change research for consideration in NATS, TCATS Long Range Plans.

Activities contributing toward the **2013-2040 Long Range Transportation Plans (LRP)** included a stakeholder meeting for socioeconomic data development. An analysis was performed of all Berrien County Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances for changes that apply to Socio Economic Data Review.

Urbanized Area updates from the US Census were monitored and maps designed to communicate results to area municipalities. Meeting and outreach strategies were developed with final maps of Adjusted Census Urban Boundary for both MPOs to submit to MDOT and FHWA.

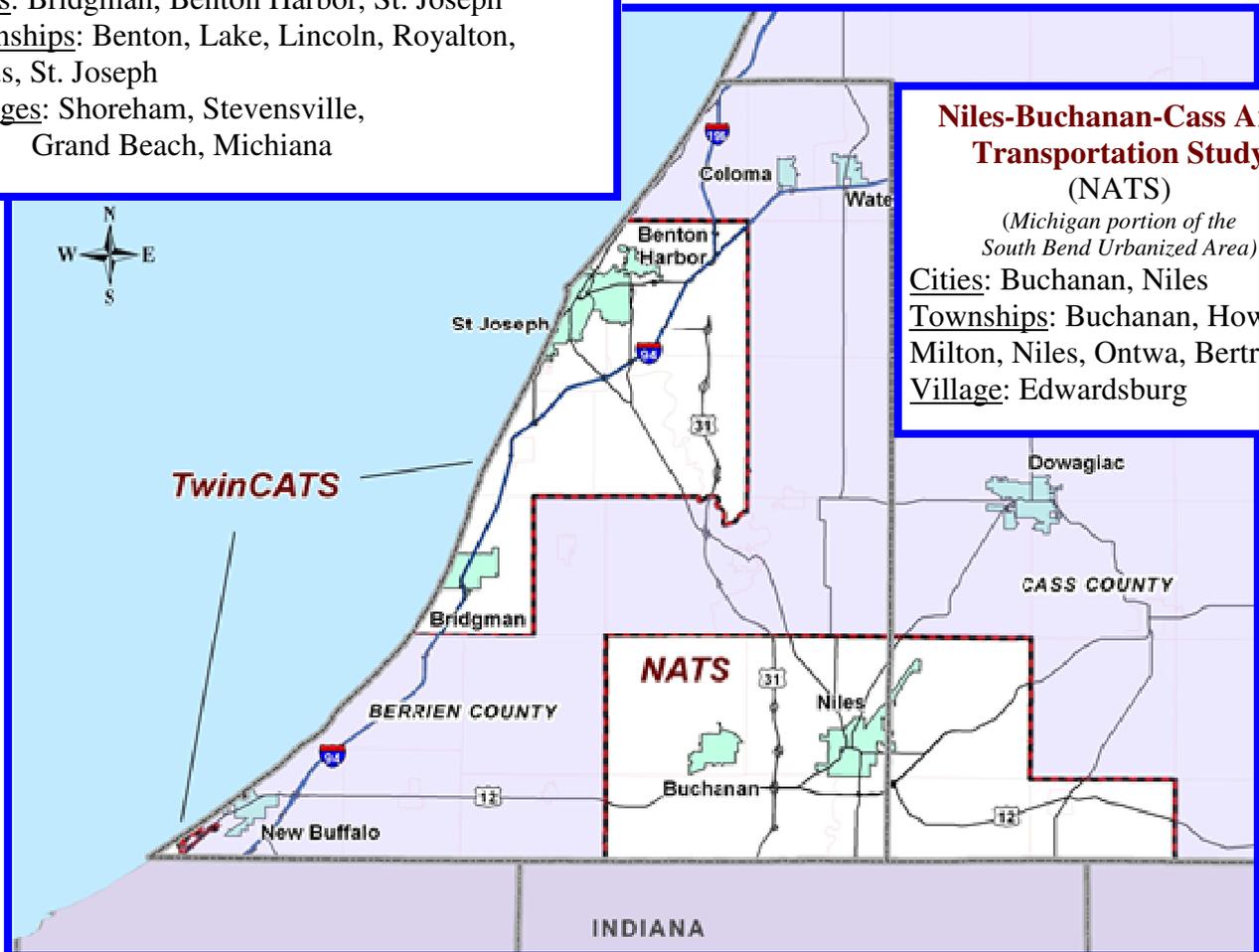
TwinCATS and NATS completed **2011 Annual Reports** and the **2013 Unified Work Plans**.

Twin Cities Area Transportation Study (TwinCATS)

Cities: Bridgman, Benton Harbor, St. Joseph
Townships: Benton, Lake, Lincoln, Royalton, Sodus, St. Joseph
Villages: Shoreham, Stevensville, Grand Beach, Michiana

Niles-Buchanan-Cass Area Transportation Study (NATS)

(Michigan portion of the
South Bend Urbanized Area)
Cities: Buchanan, Niles
Townships: Buchanan, Howard, Milton, Niles, Ontwa, Bertrand
Village: Edwardsburg



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Walk & Roll

The **Rural Task Force** (RTF) Program provides federal dollars to rural counties with a population under 400,000. Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) funds must be spent in these geographic areas and both road and transit capital projects are eligible. All project selection is through the Rural Task Force which is comprised of equal representation from the county road commission, the cities and villages under 5,000 within the county, and the rural transit provider.

Region 4 is comprised of Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties. SWMPC is currently administering the program on behalf of MDOT. Staff attended MDOT training and planned and held local RTF training for eligible communities. Bylaws were drafted for each county's RTF, the Region IV Balance report was outlined, and a website created. RTF program administration provided MDOT with documentation on public consultation process.



In coordination with MDOT, SWMPC Traffic Engineering Staff inventoried and rated approximately **825 miles** of federal aid eligible roads throughout the region. Annual **Asset Management** reports were compiled for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties and submitted to Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council. Local asset management plans have continued with the cities of Benton Harbor and New Buffalo with the goal of streamlining their road maintenance efforts and increasing cost effectiveness.

RoadSoft programming was updated and debugged to increase efficiency in conducting PASER ratings.

Staff conducted approximately **100 traffic counts**, and uploaded the data to a newly organized website which manages past, current, and future traffic counts.

Executive Director John Egelhaaf serves on the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council and staff also attended and promoted conferences and training.

The TwinCATS Walk and Roll Plan was implemented by the adoption of **Complete Streets** policies which supports integration of bicycling, walking and transit into the transportation network, now included in the Long Range Plan. Non-motorized project locations were prioritized and a project evaluation matrix created.

NATS refined their Walk and Roll plan by approval to form a non-motorized and pedestrian subcommittee to focus on the assets and deficits within the area.

Other activities promoting transportation alternatives included continued outreach regarding the Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and Map update, US Bicycle Route 35 information and Complete Streets training for local officials.

Transit Coordination and Mobility Management ensure that public transportation is accessible, integrated, and efficient. www.MyWayThere.org remains a useful tool with additions resulting from research into mobility options. **Regional Reduced Fare cards** provide many seniors and disabled individuals with affordable transportation.

SWMPC remains involved in the **Berrien County Consolidation Feasibility Study**, also in ongoing research involving local stakeholders to identify barriers to county-wide transit agency collaboration and proposed solutions.

In partnership with **Twin Cities Area Transportation Authority**, SWMPC created an ADA plan and public outreach program and gave technical assistance regarding non-compliance issues. A public transit governance, operations and administration plan was prepared for the City of Benton Harbor.

SWMPC continues to participate in the West Michigan Passenger Rail Collaborative (**Westrain**) to support access and promotion of passenger rail.



HERITAGE ROUTE PLANNING

US 12 Heritage Trail

SWMPC Staff continued outreach to enlist new council members and partners along the US 12 corridor. Data from the heritage route communities was incorporated into the Southwest Michigan Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and the nine county map associated with the plan was produced and distributed in Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Branch Counties. Activities promoting the addition of US 12 to the US Bike Route system were provided.

Changes to the US 12 brochure included new sites, narratives and design. Along with other marketing materials including rack cards and posters, all were distributed to communities along the route. Press releases were distributed to over forty news outlets across the Midwest. Interviews with various media including radio and newspapers were conducted.



US 12 Garage Sale preparations included contacting communities along the route and distributing promotional pieces to various distribution outlets. Interactive elements to the US 12 Heritage Trail website were enhanced to encourage interaction between visitors and community members hosting garage sales. Vendors entered key information about their sales into an online form, which was uploaded to an interactive online map and a printable list of addresses for the event. Over 435 people entered sale information onto the site, which helped grow interest in the sale.

Regular updating of the calendar, creation of banner ads for large events, and prompt response to email requests for information supported the success of the US 12 Heritage Trail website, which saw an increase in traffic with many new visitors and lengthening time spent on the site. Relevant community and event information was posted on the Facebook page on an as needed basis.



Heritage Routes Administered by SWMPC

- **US-12 Historic Heritage Route**
A 212 mile network of interdependent communities whose concerted actions reflect their commitment to protect and conserve the unique and inherent natural, historic and cultural resources that are the foundation upon which they will build and maintain a diverse, prosperous and sustainable economy.
- **I-69 Recreational Heritage Route**
A two-county, eighty-mile storybook telling stories

For more info visit: www.us12heritagetrail.org

Scenic Byways

At a Heritage Route workshop hosted by MDOT, steps were begun to address a Scenic Byway statewide strategic planning process. Documents regarding the value of byway travelers were prepared for distribution. SWMPC staff participated in a joint meeting with Travel Michigan, MDOT, and US 23 project manager. Discussions included timeline for more inclusion of Michigan Scenic Byways on the Travel Michigan website and additional downloadable marketing materials that could be used by the Michigan.org visitor.

Staff also reviewed and made edits to Scenic Byways Application for Village of Clinton.

Representing SW MI: Quad State Directors
Strengthening Disaster Recovery, Milwaukee WI

Local Employment Dynamics Conference, D.C.
Southwest Michigan First Regional Partners

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Economic Development District

The US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) has designated SWMPC as an Economic Development District (EDD). A three-year renewable Partnership Planning Investment grant is utilized to implement this planning program. The 2012-2015 application process involved the annual update of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

SWMPC participated in **Stronger Economies Together** (SET) a process led by US Department of Agriculture Rural Development, Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDC) and Michigan State University. SET was devised to strengthen the capacity of rural communities to work together to develop and implement an economic development blueprint built on their regional economic strengths. SET hopes to build collaboration between communities in a region, provide economic analysis tailored to capture the region's comparative economic advantages. A Regional Economic Development Plan for Southwest Michigan, resulting from a planning process with active participation from business, civic, and community leaders, will serve as the roadmap for the future economic development efforts.

Connect Michigan is a state wide program in partnership with the Michigan Public Service Commission, working to ensure all can access the benefits of broadband technology. SWMPC drew Southwest Michigan stakeholders together with a series of meetings to explore steps to increase broadband Internet access in Southwest Michigan.

LOCAL PLANNING

Technical Assistance: South Haven, Economic Adjustment Assistance Program, and Andrews University Technology Park Partnership

Demographic data: South Haven, Three Oaks

Planning Commission Workshop: Vandalia

Benton Harbor area involvement: Consortium for Community Development, Downtown Development Authority, Community Partnership Coalition and Urban Core continued.

Mapping : Berrien Birding map completed

Work on a new edition of a **Data Extract** has been completed. Information from 2010 Census, American Community Survey, IRS, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Michigan Department of Transportation, US Department of Agriculture, Center for Disease Control, and US Geological Survey sources were combined in an easily understandable format with visualizations and carefully selected comparisons.

As part of its overall economic development mission, SWMPC seeks to link business and civic efforts towards making healthy, affordable food a reality in each of the region's communities. The **Great Lakes Food Hub Network** (GLFHN) is a collaboration with these goals:

- A commitment to local sourcing
- IT platforms to create efficient communication
- Idea exchange to develop new business practices
- Investment opportunities and capital resources
- Shared branding and strong food safety protocols
- Business models that partner farmers, workers and communities

As a follow up to the April national gathering of food hub representatives held in Chicago, SWMPC invited a select group to visit our area to tour farms, food processors, and restaurants.

Food Innovation Network and **Michigan Food Hub Collaborative** are among other SWMPC activities promoting growth of regional food systems.

The Berrien County Health Department presented the **Berrien Friend of Public Health Award** to SWMPC noting that "the regional planning agency's area of expertise aligns with the mission of the Berrien County Health Department. The field of planning is concerned with optimizing community infrastructure and organization. SWMPC has risen to this challenge as demonstrated through thriving partnerships with the BCHD and others.

- Health Equity Alliance (HEAL)
- Building Healthy Communities Coalition
- Complete Streets Project
- BeHealthyBerrien county obesity reduction initiative
- Non-motorized Transportation efforts
- Community survey on septic systems
- Support of fixed route bus system
- Sharing community data "

SWMPC began to create websites to assist residents in finding fresh local food and recreational activities.

NATURAL RESOURCES PLANNING

Water and natural resources are of major environmental, social, and economic value and SWMPC brings local, state, and federal partners together to address these issues. www.swmpc.org/water.asp

WATERSHEDS

Lake Michigan

Regional planning agencies around Lake Michigan met at the **Lake Michigan Academy** to discuss water quality issues and develop proposals for future projects.

Paw Paw River and Black River

SWMPC received grant funds from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to test for pathogens (or E. Coli) in the **Black River** and two tributaries of the **Paw Paw River** (Pine and Mill Creeks). After testing was finished, selected samples were submitted for DNA analysis. Berrien County Health Department has been a critical partner in this project. A review of the results has begun and an improvement plan will be developed in 2013.

With grant funding from the Great Lakes Commission, the Van Buren Conservation District (VBKD) is offering a new program to increase the use of conservation practices and reduce the amount of sediment reaching local water bodies. The first round of bids were accepted and 8 of the 10 bids came from 3 landowners. The best management practices to be implemented include no-till, mulch-till, cover crops, and filter strips on 407 acres for \$37,833. Farmers will benefit from soil savings and the public will benefit from cleaner water, better fish habitat, and less sediment in the St. Joseph harbor. The second round was accepted through December. So far 3,000 tons of sediment has been reduced with the installation of 673 acres of conservation practices, resulting in 1,430 tons of erosion reduced over 3 years.

St. Joseph River

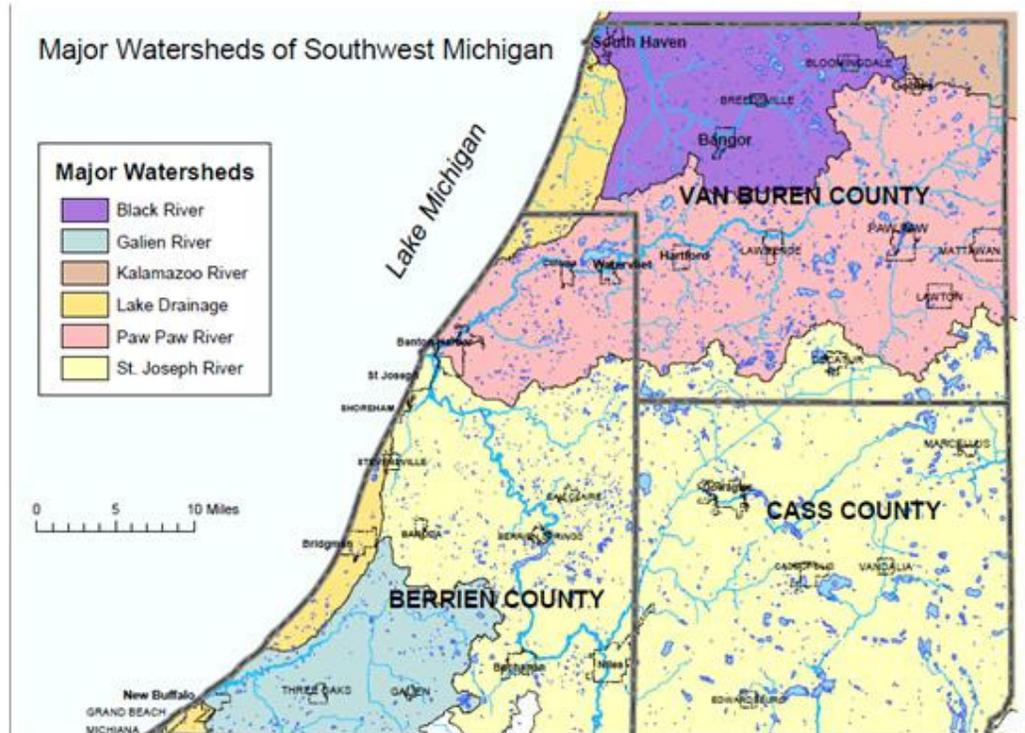
The 5th Annual Meeting of the **St. Joseph River Watershed Council** was planned and included guest speaker Tom Springer, author and senior editor at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, presenting "It's a Swamp Thing: How to Help the Public Care About Marshy, Mucky and Ducky Places."

St. Joseph River Watershed Wetland Partnership

Funded by the EPA, all the wetlands in the St. Joseph River Watershed have been mapped and functions evaluated. SWMPC also provided grant administration and worked with **Friends of the St. Joe River** and partners to distribute the information to high priority municipalities and landowners. Two landowner outreach workshops in August and November were planned and held.

Hickory Creek Watershed Partnership

Agreements were secured with municipalities, agencies and non-profits in the watershed. Lakeshore High School students presented findings from monitoring work in Hickory Creek during a follow up meeting.



Galien River Watershed

Planning map layers were created showing wetlands, important natural areas, and conservation areas for 5 municipalities in the watershed and implemented online maps of wetlands and other natural resources.

Galien River Water Quality Survey

A final report created from 300 mailed responses and over 100 homes visited, provided more effective education and outreach materials to the residents in the watershed.

Septic System Maintenance Campaign

SWMPC worked with an advertising firm to develop an outreach strategy for raising awareness about required maintenance of septic systems.

The Berrien County Health Department was assisted with research on point of sale ordinances to ensure properly functioning septic systems and drinking water wells.

WATER TRAILS

Great Lakes Water Trails SWMPC conducted an inventory of the public access sites along Lake Michigan under a MDEQ Coastal Zone Management grant to develop a website for Great Lakes Water Trails.

Southwest Michigan is one of 2 pilot areas where extensive mapping of access sites and amenities along the coast of Lake Michigan is taking place.

Lake Michigan Water Trail SWMPC is working with Land Information Access Association to develop a website for the Lake Michigan Water Trail and connecting water trails on the Galien, St. Joseph, and Black Rivers.

Lake Michigan Water Trail Symposium SWMPC joined talks about coastal water trail development.

GRANT WRITING

- **IN-MI River Valley Trail** — applications for MDNR Trust Fund and MDOT Enhancement for Niles Township and Berrien County Road Commission, with a conditional commitment from MDOT for a 34 mile, multi-use trail connecting Niles with South Bend and Mishawaka
- **North Lake Park** — Lincoln Township, MNDR Trust Fund grant application
- **Ox Creek** — EPA Urban Waters Grant
- **MDEQ 319** — partner with Village of Paw Paw to implement best practices in the South Branch watershed to improve water quality in Maple Lake

Preserve The Dunes Residential Design Awards Scientific Panel and Jury meetings for the competition were facilitated and the selections were featured in Michigan BLUE Summer Issue. A publication was produced highlighting the environmentally sensitive methods for developing in dunes as seen in homes in Van Buren County.

EDUCATION

Low Impact Development workshop presented water as a resource with planning and designing for new or re-development to county health department staff, village supervisors, contractors, city staff, planning commissions, parks and recreations boards, tribal staff, and general public.

Landscaping for Clean Water workshop provided instruction about native plants, composting, vermicomposting, rain barrels, rain gardens, using phosphorus free fertilizer and other practices to protect creeks, rivers, lakes and Lake Michigan.

Clean Water Bus Tour featured a recently grant-funded improved road/stream crossing, a rain garden, and the Celery Pond wetland in South Haven in partnership with the Van Buren County Road Commission, Drain Commission and Conservation District.

Goshen College, Marry Lea Environmental Learning Center participated in a presentation on watersheds in southwest Michigan.

Almena Township and South Haven Harbor Commission received information on wetland functions and targeting protection and restoration efforts. (partnership with the Van Buren Conservation District)

Stormwater Public Education Plan (PEP), required by Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), involves assisting Berrien and Cass County communities with information about water quality. Bridgman was aided in a stormwater program audit by MDEQ. Presentations on clean water were made to the Niles City Council, Lincoln Township, Dowagiac Rotary, St. Joseph Harbor Authority, Michiana Sanitarian Partnership, and Two Rivers Coalition.

SWMPC serves on the Board of
Michigan's Great Southwest
Sustainable Business Forum
www.mgssbf.org/

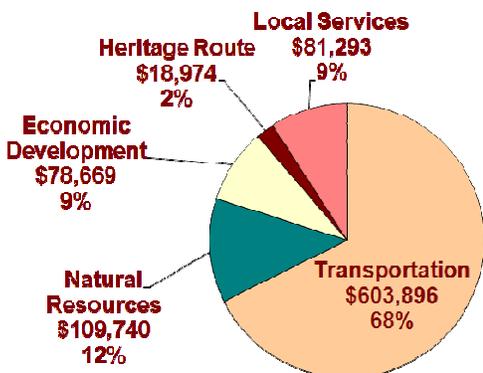
2012 BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICERS

- Chair: Jeff Radtke,**
Van Buren Citizen Representative (Planning)
- Vice Chair: Gloria Payne**
Berrien Townships Representative
- Treasurer: Yemi Akinwale**
Berrien Citizen Representative
- Alternate Treasurer: Richard Remus**
Berrien Citizen Representative
- Secretary: Frances Sage,**
Van Buren Citizen Representative
- Alternate Secretary: Linda Preston,**
Cass Townships Representative

BERRIEN COUNTY

- Victoria Chandler, Citizen Representative
Janet Clark, Citizen Representative
Marge Durm-Hiatt, Supervisor's Alternate,
Niles Township
McKinley Elliott, County Commissioner
Juan Ganum, Mayor's Alternate, City of Niles
James Hightower, Mayor, City of Benton Harbor
John Hodgson, Mayor's Alternate, City of St. Joseph
Nora Jefferson, Supervisor's Alternate,
Benton Charter Township
Jesse Minks, Citizen Representative
Paul Pantaleo, Supervisor's Alternate,
Oronoko Township
Zach Perkins, County Commissioner
Don Ryman, Citizen Representative
Marletta Seats, County Commissioner
Roger Seeley, St. Joseph Charter Township
Supervisor (Tim Fenderbosch, Alternate)
Dick Stauffer, Lincoln Charter Township Supervisor
Cathy Thieneman, County Commissioner
Tracy Vines, Citizen Representative (Planning)



Revenue by Theme

Jan. 31, 2012 Having their Map/Cake & eating it too —
Graham Woodhouse Award recipients & SWMPC Staff



CASS COUNTY

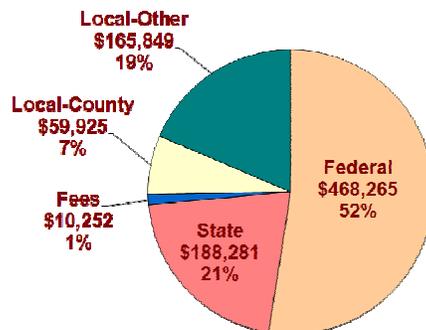
- Barb Wood Cook, Citizen Representative (Planning)
Walter Lehmann, Townships' Representative
Robert Powers, Citizen Representative
Johnnie Rodebush, County Commissioner
James Sayer, Citizen Representative
Joseph Silvia, Citizen Representative
James Snow, Mayor's Alternate, City of Dowagiac
Robert Ziliak, County Commissioner

VAN BUREN COUNTY

- Robert Burr, Mayor, City of South Haven
Dave Foerster, Citizen Representative
Don Hanson, County Commissioner
John "Mike" Henry, County Commissioner
Dale Lewis, Citizen Representative
Daniel Ruzick, Supervisor, Antwerp Township
Ron Sefcik, Townships Representative
John Tapper, Townships Representative
Mike Toth, County Commissioner

POKAGON BAND OF POTAWATOMI

- Jason Auvil, Tribal Chair's Alternate



Revenue by Source