



# Southwest Michigan Planning Commission

## The Quarterly

**SWMPC**  
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[www.swmpc.org](http://www.swmpc.org)  
[www.facebook.com/swmpc](https://www.facebook.com/swmpc)

## PARK(ing) Day in Ox Creek Watershed

The area south of Napier Avenue along Pipestone Road in Benton Township used to be fruit orchards and farm fields. Now, it is the township's main business district. "There's more pavement in this area than, really, anywhere else in Berrien, Cass or Van Buren County," said Marcy Hamilton, senior planner with the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) in Benton Harbor. The Southwest SWMPC, Wightman & Associates, Berrien Conservation District, Disability Network and the Two Rivers Coalition set up a space at Chemical Bank on Pipestone Road during PARK(ing) Day on Friday September 16th, 2016.

The group took over some parking spaces in a Chemical Bank parking lot on Pipestone rd. to get some input on this mall area on how we can make it more friendly to pedestrians, more friendly to people riding their bikes and ultimately, more friendly to Ox Creek.

When the mall and surrounding areas were orchards and farm fields, rainwater soaked into the ground and was cleaned by the soil before flowing into the creek. Now, the water quickly runs off the roofs and parking lots into the creek, carrying with it pollution and causing the banks to erode. The idea is, instead of moving the water off as quickly as possible if we can slow it down, spread it out and soak it in, then that allows the water to infiltrate through the ground and all those pollutants are filtered. Then, the water reaches the creek at a much slower, cleaner fashion. But most of the businesses were built before municipalities required them to build rain gardens or swales to slow down storm water.

Wightman and Associates in Benton Township is planning next spring to turn part of its parking lot along Pipestone Road into a demonstration rain garden. The rain garden will be funded in part from a three-year, \$600,000 state grant received by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy last fall to clean up and protect the Paw Paw River watershed, which includes Ox Creek.

"The Ox Creek SAW grant for this project came from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. Several local sources contributed another \$400,000 to match the state money," Hamilton said. "She said it's important to clean up Ox Creek because it flows into the Paw Paw River, which flows into the St. Joseph River, which ends up in Lake Michigan."

PARK(ing) Day was started in 2005 by Rebar, a San Francisco-based art and design studio. The idea is to challenge people to rethink the way streets are used. Other local communities observing PARK(ing) Day were Benton Harbor and Watervliet. For more information on this project visit: [www.swmpc.org/oxcreek.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/oxcreek.asp)



A photo from PARK(ing) Day.



A photo from the PARK(ing) Day Event.

# Improving Water Quality in the South Branch Watershed

This innovative project is in the headwaters of the Paw Paw River Watershed in Van Buren County. The South Branch Watershed contains 37,500 acres with 64% of that in agricultural use. South Branch and Eagle Lake Drains are listed in the Integrated Report as impaired by sediment and nutrients from bank erosion and agricultural runoff. Traditional Farm Bill programs, a drain assessment reduction program and a special pilot payment program (financed by the Village of Paw Paw) were offered to farmers to incentivize the adoption of management practices (cover crops, no-till and wetland restoration) that reduced polluted runoff.

Social monitoring was conducted to understand the opportunities and challenges with farmers adopting new management practices. The Van Buren Conservation District implemented an education campaign along with providing one-on-one assistance to farmers to encourage adoption of agricultural best management practices.

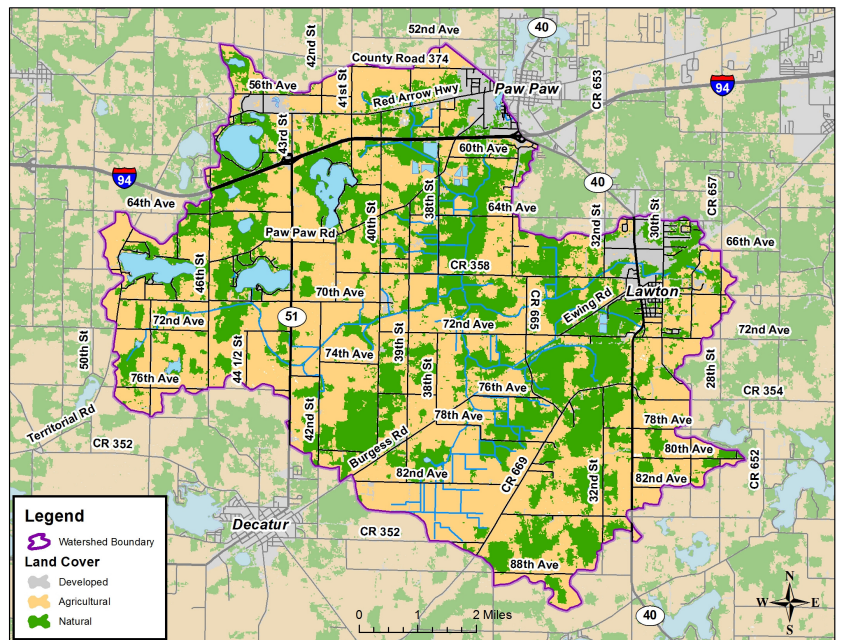
**Grant Amount: \$278,400**  
**Match Funds: \$162,300**

## Best Management Practices:

- 2,422 acres of cover crops
- 690 acres converted to no-till
- 382 acres converted to reduced till
- 22.2 acres of wetland restoration
- 22-acre conservation easement
- 11 Crop-A-Systs
- 1 MAEAP verification completed/5 started

## Annual Load Reductions:

- 570 tons of sediment



## Partners involved:

- Maple Lake Association
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
- Two Rivers Coalition
- Van Buren Conservation District
- Van Buren County Drain Office



## I&E Activities:

- One-on-One Technical Assistance
- Field Days
- Mailings
- Press Releases
- Brochures
- Newsletters



Check out this billboard that is currently located on I-94 West bound.



# Improving Water Quality in the South Branch Watershed Continued



A farmer discussing a wetland restoration/floodplain reconnection and conservation easement on his property with project partners.



A 22-acre conservation easement signed between a landowner and Van Buren County Drain Office.



Before/During: This site had three drains connecting a wetland area to the Eagle Lake Drain.



After: The drainage pipes were removed eliminating the direct connection between the wetland and the Eagle Lake Drain. This restoration reduces runoff volume and sediment and nutrients loading.



No-Till corn planted into soybean and ryegrass stubble.



Cover crop - cocktail mix (drilled August 2015).



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Our new carpool signs were installed in the eight different MDOT carpool parking lots in Southwest Michigan this fall. This was a partnership with SWMPC and MDOT. To learn more and to register to carpool visit:

[www.mywaythere.org/carpool.asp](http://www.mywaythere.org/carpool.asp)

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

Save Paper by Receiving our Newsletter Electronically: email [rosep@swmpc.org](mailto:rosep@swmpc.org)

## Calendar of Events 2016-2017

### SWMPC Staff

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### November

11<sup>th</sup> SWMPC Office Closed  
 14<sup>th</sup> 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg\*\*  
 24-25<sup>th</sup> SWMPC Office Closed

### December

12<sup>th</sup> 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg\*\*  
 20<sup>th</sup> 1:00 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg\*  
 24-25<sup>th</sup> SWMPC Office Closed  
 31<sup>st</sup> SWMPC Office Closed (afternoon only)

### January

1<sup>st</sup> SWMPC Office Closed  
 16<sup>th</sup> SWMPC Office Closed  
 23<sup>rd</sup> 9:30 am TwinCATS TAC & Policy Mtg\*\*  
 24<sup>th</sup> 1:30 pm NATS TAC & Policy Mtg\*

\*NATS Meeting location: 1345 E. Main Street, Niles, MI

\*\*TwinCATS Meeting location: Michigan Works!, 499 W Main St, Benton Harbor, MI  
 49022 Anchor Rooms A+B

For more information visit: [www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/calendar.asp)

## SWMPC Board Meeting Schedule

### SWMPC Administrative Committee Meetings

*Location: SWMPC Conference Room*

*Benton Harbor, MI*

December 13, 2016 9:30 am