

## **Grant Enhances Recreational Access To Paw Paw River**

<http://gophouse.org/grant-enhances-recreational-access-paw-paw-river/>

**15Jun 2016** *Reps. Pscholka, Nesbitt applaud enhancements*

State Reps [Al Pscholka](#) and [Aric Nesbitt](#) today announced a \$100,000 grant to clear debris in the Paw Paw River water trail and provide access sites for canoes and kayaks.

Rep. Pscholka, R-Stevensville, who serves as chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, has worked with local communities and groups for over a year to develop a plan for the project.

“I want to thank Jerry Willmeng of Coloma for his constant efforts on this project, along with local historian Rick Rasmussen of Watervliet and Coloma Township Supervisor Ken Parrigin,” Pscholka said.

The grant, which will be awarded through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, provides funding to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and local communities.

“This is great news for northern Berrien and Van Buren counties,” said Parrigin. “It will open up lots of opportunities for more visitors discover our communities.”

Rep. Pscholka said the project will benefit more than just one area. “This project is a big win for Southwest Michigan, opening up the Paw Paw between Benton Harbor and Paw Paw will attract outdoor enthusiasts from near and far,” Rep. Pscholka said. “It is a great example of leveraging our assets and natural beauty for recreation and economic development.”

Rep. Nesbitt, who serves as the House Majority Floor Leader, said the enhancements will make a scenic area of Southwest Michigan open to water enthusiasts. “The Paw Paw River is a very popular trip for paddlers looking for a scenic and leisurely trip in Southwest Michigan,” said Rep Nesbitt, R-Lawton. “Especially in the fall, with the thick forests and remote setting, the woods become filled with brightly colored leaves in the autumn. “I believe we will become more of a destination for canoes and kayaks, this is Pure Michigan at its best,” he added.

The 62-mile water trail begins in Waverly Township in Van Buren County and flows through Berrien County, converging with the St. Joseph River just above its mouth at Benton Harbor. The Paw Paw River offers a scenic view to kayakers or canoeists through heavily wooded areas. Currently there are 22 access points where paddlers can get on the river, including the Maple Lake Dam, Paw Paw River campground and Watervliet City Park. Access points are also available in Benton Harbor-St. Joseph near the Harbor Shores development.

“This project really ties it all together.” Said Rep. Pscholka. “Downed trees in the Coloma-Watervliet area have been an issue for years, and by working together – state government, local government, river advocacy groups, and planners – we are going to get the job done.”

Rep. Pscholka said the grant was included in the recently agreed upon 2016-2017 budget and that resources will be available Oct. 1, the start of the fiscal year. #####