

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

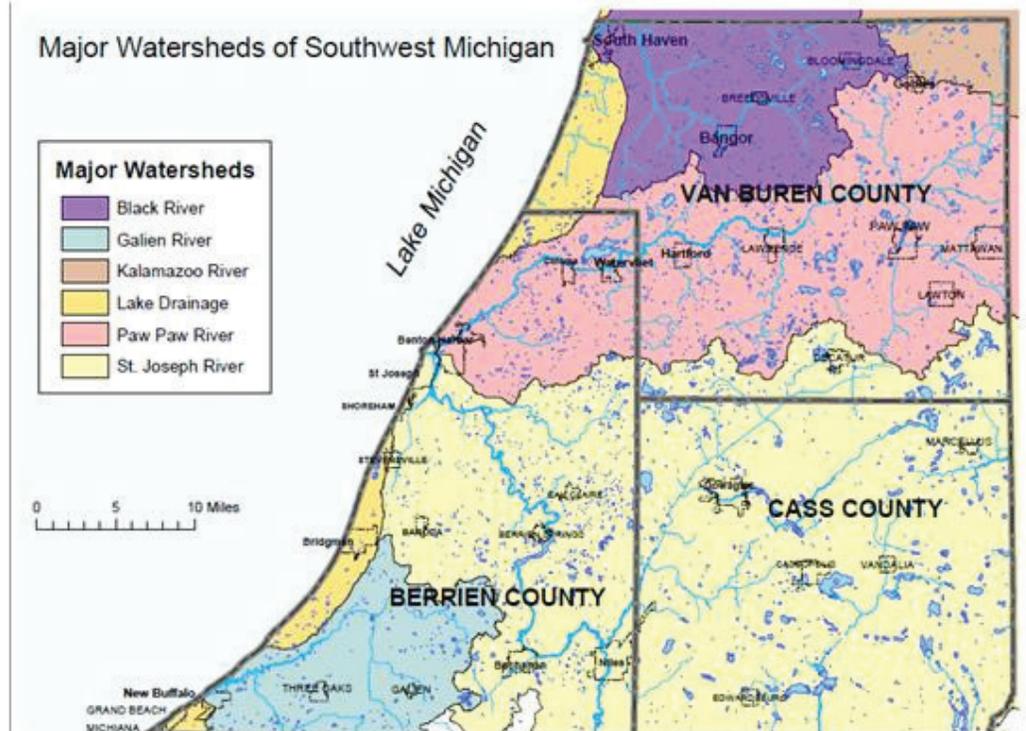
The 5th Annual Meeting of the **St. Joseph River Watershed Council** was planned and included guest speaker Tom Springer, author and senior editor at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, presenting "It's a Swamp Thing: How to Help the Public Care About Marshy, Mucky and Ducky Places."

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/