

# Paddling the Hickory

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI - H-P Correspondent | Posted: Thursday, May 12, 2016 6:00 am

ST. JOSEPH — The concept of a recreational water trail running on Hickory Creek has earned a resounding thumbs-up from the St. Joseph Township Board.

Passing a resolution to support the Hickory Creek Water Trail project is only the first step, but a critical one because the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission supports the idea, Township Clerk Denise Cook said.

The project has attracted support from Third Coast Surf Shop, too, she said.

“There's been a lot of discussion about kayaking and canoeing along the creek, and how they (the commission) want to make it a designated waterway, which would also allow for grants for redeveloping (the area),” she said.

The proposed project area runs along Hickory Creek from Baroda, past the Ace Hardware store along M-63 and into the St. Joseph River.

There are about six to eight sites for people to enter and exit along the route. The township's major site is north of Nelson Road at Cleveland Avenue, Cook said.

The resolution, which the board passed last week, notes that “a water trail benefits the region by improving and increasing recreational access for non-motorized small boat use by persons of all abilities.”

Improving access to the river for single- or multi-day trips is “a desired goal” of the board, which is why it's supporting the trail project as one that would have “a significant impact on the health and economic viability of the region,” the resolution further states.

For all of those of reasons, the board supports “the funding, planning, development, maintenance and promotion of the Hickory Creek Water Trail, in coordination with the other municipalities along the



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People passing over Hickory Creek at Cleveland Avenue in St. Joseph Township may see a brown creek. But more and more it's seen as a waterway. The Township Board is supporting the development of the Hickory Creek Water Trail Project.

river,” the resolution notes.

The commission is requesting similar resolutions from other municipalities along the route, such as Baroda, Cook said.

“They're asking for signgage as one of the things they're saying that we need to do. They'd like to see all the communities do some signage so that people know it's there,” she said.