

**Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project
Steering Committee Meeting Summary
April 18, 2007 9:30 – 12:00 PM**

PRESENT:

NAME	REPRESENTING	NAME	RESPRESENTING
Charles Goodrich	<i>Hamilton Twp</i>	Ken Schaut	<i>Village of Lawrence</i>
Mark Parrish	<i>Pokagon Band</i>	Chris Bauer	<i>MDEQ</i>
Laurence Picq	<i>Kieser & Associates</i>	Sue DeVries	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Steve Petersen	<i>Hamilton Twp</i>	Julia Kirkwood	<i>MDEQ</i>
Bob Becker	<i>Paw Paw Lake Assoc.</i>	John Legge	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Mindy Walker	<i>Sarett Nature Center</i>	Darrin Schaer	<i>Inventory Volunteer</i>
Joe Parman	<i>VB Co. Drain Comm.</i>	Doug Stiles	<i>Almena Twp</i>
Pat Nelson	<i>Little Paw Paw Lake Assoc.</i>	Rob Zbiciak	<i>MDEQ – LWMD</i>
Don Main	<i>Landowner</i>	Marcy Colclough	<i>SWMPC</i>
Bob Harvey	<i>Paw Paw Village</i>	Matt Meersman	<i>SWMPC</i>
Pete DeBoer	<i>SWMLC</i>	Del Sipes	<i>Watervliet Twp</i>
Dave Foerster	<i>Waverly Twp</i>	John Fraser	<i>SWMLC</i>
Nancy Edwards	<i>Landowner</i>	Gary Stock	<i>Landowner</i>
Gaye Blind	<i>Berrien County Conservation District</i>	David Diget	<i>Kalamazoo Canoe & Kayak Club</i>
Lou Gibson	<i>Paw Paw Lake</i>		

Project Updates:

Land Protection Committee:

Conservation Priority Model – The land protection committee assisted in the creation of a map of critical areas for protection that unites local knowledge and human values with the best available scientific data. The map can be refined throughout the planning process as more data is received and when local conditions change (for example, next year a subdivision could be placed on an area that was identified as important). The map can be utilized as the basis for influencing planning and zoning decisions (such as future land use maps or specific zoning ordinances) and also to target private land protection efforts of land conservancies.

The conservation priority map and supporting documentation is available in the preservation section of the Critical Areas component on the PPRW website at http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_crtcl_areas.asp.

Matt Meersman described the processes used to develop a map of priority conservation areas in the Paw Paw River Watershed. The original computer model was developed by John Fraser at SWMLC. The model computes a score for potential conservation value for each quarter-quarter section (40 acre squares) within the PPRW. With input from the committee, Matt revised the model to include other criteria. The criteria included: percent of natural land cover, groundwater recharge, proximity to water (lakes, streams, ponds, Paw Paw River Mainstem, High Quality Fisheries) and proximity to protected land.

In response to several questions, Matt explained the limitations of the data, the limitations in zooming into a small areas and the potential future uses of the map and data. John Fraser emphasized that the computer did not take decisions out of the hands of humans, because the selection, scoring, and weighting of criteria was decided by stakeholders. The model simply computes the scores based on those factors. The conservation priority map is a result of combining scientific data with human values and knowledge.

Sarett Nature Center Open House - An open house was held on April 14 from 10-12 at Sarett Nature Center. A mailing was sent to 200 property owners in the western portion of the watershed (the draft conservation priority map was used to generate a targeted mailing list). Over 30 people attended the open house to hear Pete DeBoer and Sue DeVries talk about watershed management and private landowner conservation options. Chuck Nelson took the group on a guided walk in the floodplain of the Paw Paw River. Another open house will be scheduled in the fall for the eastern part of the watershed.

TNC's Floodplain Forest Area Prioritization Report:

John Legge conducted an analysis of the floodplain forest along the main stem of the Paw Paw River from just west of Paw Paw to the mouth focusing on biodiversity. John used aerial photos and a 1995 MNFI survey. Six areas were identified in the report. The results may be useful in prioritizing the work of conservation groups with landowners on management and long-term protection of significant areas, and the application for funding for such efforts. See the preservation section of the Critical Areas component for a full report and map: http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_crtcl_areas.asp

Information & Education:

A series of 4 workshops were held in the past few months. Feb 28 – Landscaping for Water Quality; March 12 – Filling the Gaps; March 14 – Wetlands 101; April 11 – Low Impact Development. Each had over 50 participants and extremely positive evaluations.

Upcoming Workshop – Rain Gardens - May 5, 1:00 pm at Sarett Nature Center. Don't miss this one!

Working with Watershed Municipalities:

On March 19, a letter was sent to all watershed municipalities offering free assistance with storm drain marking and master plan/zoning ordinance review. Paw Paw Village has submitted a letter of interest. The due date for letters of interest is May 1.

Watershed Management Plan:

Progress Report – New content is available for the following components on the PPRW website:

Natural Features (http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_ntrl_fts.asp)

Water Quality Summary (http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_wtr_quality.asp)

Critical Areas (http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_crtcl_areas.asp)

Goals & Objectives Revisions – with input from the last steering committee, the management plan goals and objectives have been revised (http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_implmnt.asp). The most significant changes were made to goal 4 regarding recreational use of the Paw Paw River to address concerns of over use and potential negative impacts from recreational uses.

Additional Concerns/Desired Uses – Maintain natural shoreline of lakes because of the impact on fisheries. There was a long discussion of MDEQ's permitting of seawalls and bulkheads and the need for education of riparian landowners.

REMINDER – Several draft components of the management plan are available on-line at <http://www.swmpc.org/pprw.asp>. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the plan and give feedback via the website, e-mail or phone. The management plan is a work in progress and will become a great plan with input from the stakeholders.

Other Comments, Concerns, Ideas, etc....

Lawrence Snow Removal/Storage – Lawrence Village is reviewing its snow removal procedures and looking for alternative areas to place snow removed from the downtown area. In addition, the Village

is looking at best management practices for spreading salt. This will not only help to protect water quality, but will also reduce salt costs. A true win-win! Ken Schaut encourages other communities to look at their salting and snow removal practices to see what changes can be made to protect water and save money!

Paw Paw Village Plans – Paw Paw Village will be utilizing native plants to stabilize an earthen dam. In addition, the Village is considering implementing several low impact development techniques. With Maple Lake being so prominent many opportunities exist for demonstration areas. Some ideas are to have buffers along the shore of Maple Lake Island, using porous pavement parking lots, rain gardens, enhancing stormwater detention areas with native plants, and working with the drain commissioner to monitor and install buffers upstream of Briggs Pond.

Mill and Pine Creek Monitoring – MDEQ had planned a public hearing this spring to gather public input on the monitoring planned for Mill and Pine Creeks this summer. The monitoring is a follow up to past monitoring efforts to determine the effectiveness of the MDEQ CAFO permit process. With budget cuts, the monitoring for this year has been canceled and so no public hearing will be held. There was discussion about the possibility of locals doing more monitoring or funding the MDEQ's monitoring themselves. Many watersheds are doing monitoring work with volunteers. There is also the possibility to partner with waste water treatment plants to run samples. For example, Paw Paw Village's treatment plant staff are taking a few extra samples upstream in addition to their required sampling. Monitoring is a great next step for the Paw Paw River Watershed project.

Paw Paw Wal-Mart – Wal-Mart has submitted another plan to MDEQ (Feb 16) that significantly reduces the impacts to on-site wetlands. The plan is currently being reviewed by MDEQ and is open for public comment. Van Buren MSUE sent a letter to Wal-Mart explaining the unique characteristics of the Paw Paw River Watershed and our efforts to protect the natural resources and the letter also encouraged the use of Low Impact Development techniques. Due to efforts of Gary Stock, Wal-Mart is considering placing a conservation easement on up to 11 acres of wetland on the site. Gary has been in communication with Wal-Mart and their consultants over the last couple of months. Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy has offered to monitor and steward the conservation easement with an endowment from Wal-Mart.

Harbor Shores -A draft permit has been issued to Harbor Shores. Harbor Shores still needs to find an acceptable stream mitigation site to compensate for the enclosure of the small stream along Golf Road. There is not much guidance for stream mitigation in Michigan. Matt and Marcy discussed possible stream mitigation requirements with MDEQ and MDNR.

Farmland Preservation – Van Buren County – Dave Forester reported that Van Buren County was successful in securing \$240,000 in grant funds from the state and federal government to purchase the development rights of an 85 acre farm in Paw Paw Township. The property is located south of I-94 and is owned by Mr. Lockman. This is the first farmland PDR in Van Buren County. This is a great success. Hopefully this example will help to spur interest from other landowners in the county.

Next Steering Committee Meeting – June 20, 2007 at 9:30am at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence.