

**Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project
Steering Committee Meeting Summary
April 28, 2006 9:30 am – 11:30 am**

Present:

<u><i>Name</i></u>	<u><i>Organization</i></u>	<u><i>Name</i></u>	<u><i>Organization</i></u>
MATT MEERSMAN	SWMC	MARCY COLCLOUGH	SWMC
DAVE DIGET	Landowner	PETE DEBOER	SWMLC
BOB HARVEY	Village of Paw Paw	DAVE FOERSTER	Landowner
WILLIAM L. LAWSON JR.	Hamilton Twp. Planning	ANDREW FANG	Kieser & Associates
VAL JANOWSKI	Pokagon Band	MARK PARRISH	Pokagon Potawatomi
ROB ZBICIAK	DEQ – LWMD	CRAIG BURNS	TNC
CHRIS BAUER	DEQ – WB – Kalamazoo	CHUCK NELSON	Sarett Nature Center
MINDY WALKER	Sarett Nature Center	JACK BLEY	Almena Landowner
DEL SIPES	MLSA; Wvlt Twp Plan Comm	PETER VINCENT	MDEQ
JOHN LAUCK	Riparian	SUE DEVRIES	TNC
STEVE PETERSON	Hamilton Twp. Planning Comm.	KELLY GETMAN-DISSETTE	MSUE/Van Buren
BETH CLAWSON	MSUE Van Buren	JEANNINE TOTZKE	Berrien County Drains
DOUG STILES	Almena Twp.	CONNIE SELLES	Almena Twp.
LAURENCE PICQ	Kieser & Associates	GARY STOCK	Landowner

Partner Reports

Southwestern Michigan Commission

SWMC has started to collect data and is working with partners to develop a method for a watershed inventory that will take place this summer. SWMC is working with MDEQ and K&A to install flow monitors on at least two tributaries in the Paw Paw River Watershed. SWMC is also coordinating all the GIS (geographic information system – computerized based mapping) efforts for the project. Berrien County and Van Buren County have been very generous in sharing digital data with us for the PPRW project.

Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC)

The land protection sub committee had its first meeting on March 29. This sub-committee will be working with SWMLC and TNC to identify areas to focus outreach efforts for land preservation work. The next meeting is scheduled for May 17 at 6:00 pm at Hartford City Hall.

The SWMLC recently helped protect 52 acres in the East Branch with a conservation easement. This site contains headwater prairie fen wetland and upland habitat with one of the state's largest populations of Eastern Box Turtle.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

The TNC is currently looking at arials of the main stem to identify areas of high quality forested floodplains. TNC is also conducting outreach in the East Branch and will soon be sending out a letter to landowners. The TNC Great Lakes office has selected the PPRW for a hydrology study. This work is being coordinated with MDEQ and the results of this effort will be useful in the watershed management plan. Further, Craig Burns from TNC will be out in the watershed the next few days in the field verifying problem areas due to agricultural impacts. Craig will also speak with local agricultural experts about best management practices (bmps) that are currently being utilized in the watershed and which bmps might be promoted in the watershed to improve water quality. Craig works closely with the agricultural community in Shiawassee County and is originally from Van Buren County.

Kieser & Associates (K&A)

K&A gave a presentation on the SWAT modeling effort for the PPRW. The model will give estimates of loadings of pollutants such as nutrients and sediment. This information is needed for the management plan

and will help to identify problem areas in the watershed to focus efforts. A copy of the power point presentation will be available on the SWMC website at www.swmicomm.org.

Berrien County Conservation District

BCCD was not present – Marcy gave an update. Gaye has been assisting with planning for the watershed inventory. She has been busy with tree sales – be sure to buy trees to support the efforts of the Conservation District.

Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD)

VBCD was also not present – Marcy gave an update. Tricia Bizoukas has left and taken a position with the Department of Agriculture in Lansing. The new director is on board. Her name is Amy Lockheart. Matt Meersman has met with Amy to inform her of role VBCD has in the PPRW project. Amy is also busy with tree sales – be sure to buy trees! SWMC is also waiting for the Black River Watershed (BRW) Project to begin, because most of the educational efforts of the PPRW project will be coordinated with the watershed to the north of us. Many of the municipalities have land in both the PPRW and the BRW.

MDEQ -

Rob Zbiack reported that the PPRW is one of two watersheds selected by MDEQ to conduct a wetland assessment. Current and lost wetlands will be mapped. Each wetland will be classified by the functions it performs or did perform. This information can assist with determining which wetlands will be more critical for protection and/or restoration in the watershed. Rob also reported that Ducks Unlimited has updated the National Wetland Inventory for the southern lower peninsula of Michigan and this data will be available for the PPRW project.

Harbor Shores Update – The Army Corps of Engineers has a notice out and is accepting public comment until May 2, 2006. If you would like a copy of the notice, Marcy can get you one. EPA has submitted comments to the Army Corps of Engineers. The biggest concerns continue to be a ravine (along Golf Road) that is proposed to be filled with a relocation of the stream and parts buried under ground.

MDEQ has released a report on the **Hartford CAFO** and it is available on the Internet at this address: http://www.sagady.com/stuff/HartfordDairy06_035.pdf

Beth Clawson, Van Buren MSUE discussed the potential impact of the **Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)** in the PPRW. She stressed the importance of not moving firewood out of the area. It is better to be safe and not take firewood, but to buy it when you get to your destination. For information visit: <http://www.emeraldashborer.info>. If you suspect that you have EAB, please call 1-866-325-0023

Marcy informed the group of an initiative called **Green Infrastructure Planning in Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties**. There will be an effort to combine scientific knowledge with public input to prioritize areas that should be protected or preserved. This work will lead to a mapped inventory of natural, cultural and historical resources in the three counties. In addition, potential linkages of natural, cultural and historical areas (such as trails and wildlife or river corridors) will be identified and mapped. Then a plan to implement the Green Infrastructure vision will be developed.

Thanks to all the stakeholders for being present and giving their time to the Watershed Project. This project and the resulting management plan for the watershed will only be successful if we have committed stakeholders that give their input and also help keep others informed.

Next meeting:

The Steering Committee agreed to meet every other month on the 3rd Wednesday at 9:30 am. The next meeting will be June 21 at 9:30 am at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence. SWMC will reserve a room at the Van Buren Conference Center for the rest of the year for our meetings.