

**Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project  
Steering Committee Meeting Summary  
June 20, 2007 9:30 – 12:00 PM**

**PRESENT:**

NAME	REPRESENTING	NAME	RESPRESENTING
Gary Soper	<i>Benton Charter Twp</i>	Pete DeBoer	<i>SWMLC</i>
Mark Parrish	<i>Pokagon Potawatomi</i>	Matt Herbert	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Laurence Picq	<i>Kieser &amp; Associates</i>	Sue DeVries	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Steve Petersen	<i>Hamilton Twp</i>	Craig Burns	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Frank Jurenka	<i>Paw Paw Lake Foundation</i>	John Legge	<i>The Nature Conservancy</i>
Gaye Blind	<i>BCCD</i>	Nancy Edwards	<i>Landowner – Almena Twp</i>
Amy Lockhart	<i>VBCD</i>	Doug Stiles	<i>Almena Twp</i>
Dave Foerster	<i>Waverly Twp</i>	Jack Bley	<i>Stakeholder</i>
Don Main	<i>Landowner</i>	Marcy Colclough	<i>SWMPC</i>
Delvan Sipes	<i>Watervliet Twp/MLSA</i>	Matt Meersman	<i>SWMPC</i>
Anne Hendrix	<i>Berrien County Drain Commissioner</i>	Darrin Schaer	<i>Inventory Volunteer</i>

**Project Updates:**

**1. Planning and Zoning Reviews:** All six proposals submitted are being accepted for the planning and zoning review/assistance. These include: Almena, Antwerp, Hartford Township, Hamilton Township/ Decatur Township/ Decatur Village (have a joint plan and submitted a joint proposal), Paw Paw Village, Waverly Township. SWMPC staff will be reviewing the master plan and zoning ordinance and assess how they are addressing non-point source water quality issues. The results will be shared with each participating community. In addition, a matrix is currently being developed for conducting the review. This matrix will be available for any community to perform a review on their own. The Black River Watershed Project is also offering planning and zoning assistance. Arlington Township, which has land in both the Paw Paw and Black River watersheds, was one of four communities selected for assistance. (The others included Bangor City & Columbia Township in Van Buren County and Clyde Township in Allegan County.)

**2. Storm Drain Markers:** Two municipalities submitted proposals to receive free storm drain markers. They were Paw Paw Village and Lawrence Village. Both will receive the amount of storm drain markers requested in their proposals. The Villages will be responsible for installing the storm drain markers.

***Marcy noted that she has additional storm drain markers – so if anyone else is interested in receiving free markers, please let her know.***

**3. TNC Agricultural Impact Study:** Craig Burns, TNC, gave a presentation on the work he has completed assessing agricultural impacts in the PPRW. Craig first looked at MDEQ biosurveys to identify areas of concern. Craig considered 2 main factors, sediment and nitrogen, in the study. The impact areas were then based on soils (Sands are coarse and erode easier than clay. Muck soils have a lot of organic matter and are vulnerable to wind erosion.) Craig also identified the Mill/Pine Creek areas as an area of concern based on recent MDEQ testing revealing extremely high levels of E.Coli. Craig used Google Earth to show the different areas of concern. Which are:

1. North Branch – Mentha Flats with straightened waterways, prone to wind erosion and farming to the edge of ditches/streams with no buffer.
2. Gobles area – farming to the edge of streams/ditches with no buffer, sandy soils with soybean/corn rotation and some hay.

3. Eagle Lake Drain – rated fair in MDEQ biosurvey, sandy soils
4. South Branch – topography and sandy soils make area prone to erosion, mostly row crops with much farming to the edge of ditches/streams with no buffer.
5. Tea Pot Dome – sandy soils and lots of open soil in the spring (no cover crops), also high elevation make this area subject to both wind and water erosion. Mostly asparagus and row crops.
6. Mud Creek/Hartford – topography is an issue, row crops do not have good cover crop, vegetables have better cover crop, farming to edge of ditches/streams with no buffer.
7. Pine Creek – E.coli concerns, CAFO, farming to edge of ditches/streams with no buffer.

**Suggested BMPS –**

1. For wind erosion – cover crops, CRP, wind breaks, combination of cover crops and wind breaks, rotation with hay, install a working border (30 feet of hay along edge of field)
2. Wetland Reserve Program – break tiles and restore wetlands
3. In some cases the river itself is highly erodible (S. Branch near Paw Paw) – 2 stage ditches may help to handle high rain events to lessen the erosiveness of high flows.

**Conclusions:** Impact areas identified are very similar to areas identified by SWAT modeling. The only exception was Brush Creek was identified by SWAT, but since the MDEQ biosurvey did not raise concerns, it was not identified in Craig's analysis as an impact area. It should also be noted that SWAT does not pick up altered hydrology very well.

**4. Workshops:** Amy Lockhart reported that *A Healthy Homes Workshop* is scheduled for July 11. She is also planning a one day conference called *Farming for the Future* in December 2007. This one day conference will focus on nutrient management, biofuels, marketing, and other farming issues.

**Watershed Management Plan Discussion:**

**Critical Areas:** The plan will identify critical areas (or priority areas for implementation) to guide management efforts in the watershed. These critical areas will help to focus efforts in the watershed. Critical areas have been structured into three categories – Natural, Agricultural, Built/Developing. Overall the committee agreed with the structure of the three categories and the focus and considerations for each category (see [handout](#)). The committee did recommend changing a few words and adding a few concerns such as invasive species and overall lake management. These changes will be incorporated. Even with overall agreement at this stage, the structure of the critical areas may evolve as more information becomes available during the planning process.

**Information/Education:** The Van Buren Conservation District has been contracted by the SWMPC to develop an information/education component for the watershed management plan. A committee has already been meeting for watershed education related issues. This committee will be asked to review and give input on the development of this plan component. New members to this committee are welcome. A committee meeting is scheduled for July 10 at 9:30 am at Bangor City Hall.

**REMINDER** – Several draft components of the management plan are available on-line at [http://www.swmpc.org/pprw\\_mgmt\\_plan.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/pprw_mgmt_plan.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....**

**Mill and Pine Creek Monitoring Meeting–** MDEQ held a public hearing to update the public on the monitoring plan and TMDL development for Mill and Pine Creeks. Unfortunately, with budget cuts,

the monitoring for this year has been canceled. The monitoring plan devised by MDEQ is extremely expensive (over \$100,000), but it should determine what the sources of E. coli are in the two sub-watersheds. A PDF of the plan is available here:

[http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/PPRW\\_Mill\\_and\\_Pine\\_CAFD\\_plan\\_final\\_1-17.pdf](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/PPRW_Mill_and_Pine_CAFD_plan_final_1-17.pdf)

MDEQ reported that Pine and Mill Creeks have extremely high levels of bacteria and are a top priority for the state. The PowerPoint presentation (2MB) from the meeting can be downloaded here:

[http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/PPRW\\_Pine\\_and\\_Mill\\_Stakeholder\\_presentation.ppt](http://www.swmpc.org/downloads/PPRW_Pine_and_Mill_Stakeholder_presentation.ppt).

**Paw Paw Wal-Mart** – The steering committee agreed to send Gary Stock a BIG thank you for the work he has done to ensure that wetland impacts were minimized and a conservation easement will be placed on the majority of the wetlands on the site. The easement will be held by MDEQ, but there will be an endowment to fund SWMLC monitoring and stewardship work on the easement property. This is a great success!

**Harbor Shores** - A kick off extravaganza was held in Benton Harbor for the project. Even with the permit issued, Harbor Shores still needs to find an acceptable stream mitigation site to compensate for the enclosure of the small stream (North Shore Drain) along Golf Road. A site has been proposed to MDEQ for stream mitigation – it is a covered drain entering the Paw Paw River just downstream of where the North Shore Drain enters the Paw Paw. Matt and Marcy went out to look at the area and had a hard time figuring out exactly where the mitigation would take place because of the proximity of several roads (M-63 and Higman Park Road in particular). Marcy is requesting more information from MDEQ regarding the proposed stream mitigation.

**Farmland Preservation – Van Buren County** – Dave Forester would like to include agricultural bmps in the farmland preservation selection process (for example a landowner would get additional points if a conservation plan has been completed for the farm) and would like to have a conservation plan be a condition of the easement that would be placed on selected properties. Pete DeBoer mentioned that Dave should contact Grand Traverse Land Conservancy as he thinks they incorporate these issues into their farmland preservation program.

**LID NEWS** – Another edition of a newsletter focused on Low Impact Development has been distributed to all municipalities in the watershed (along with those in the Black and Gun River Watersheds). Four editions of the newsletter can be viewed at [www.swmpc.org/lid.asp](http://www.swmpc.org/lid.asp) or you can call Marcy for additional copies.

**Next Steering Committee Meeting** – August 15, 2007 at 9:30am at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence.