

**Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project
Steering Committee Meeting Summary
September 19, 2007 9:30 – 11:30 AM**

PRESENT:

| Name | Representing | Name | Representing |
|-----------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| Marcy Colclough | <i>SWMPC</i> | Laurence Picq | <i>Kieser & Assoc</i> |
| Matt Meersman | <i>SWMPC</i> | Joe Stepich | <i>Paw Paw Lake</i> |
| Don Main | <i>Watershed Resident</i> | Pete Deboer | <i>SWMLC</i> |
| Chuck Nelson | <i>Sarett Nature Center</i> | Erin Fuller | <i>VBCD</i> |
| Mindy Walker | <i>Sarett Nature Center</i> | Kyle Mead | <i>VBCD</i> |
| Joe Parman | <i>VB Drain Commissioner</i> | Gary Stock | <i>Antwerp Twp</i> |
| Chris Bauer | <i>MDEQ – WB</i> | Gary Soper | <i>Benton Charter Twp</i> |
| Julia Kirkwood | <i>MDEQ – ESSD</i> | Dave Diget | <i>Wolf Lake resident</i> |
| Pete Vincent | <i>MDEQ</i> | Doug Stiles | <i>Almena Twp</i> |
| John Legge | <i>TNC</i> | Jon Mills | <i>VBCD</i> |
| Steve Petersen | <i>Hamilton Twp PC</i> | Bob Harvey | <i>Paw Paw Village</i> |
| Amy Lockhart | <i>VBCD</i> | | |

Project Updates:

1. Information & Education Plan update – Amy Lockhart: Developing I/E component for the PPRW management plan that can also be used by the Black River Watershed project. The I/E committee has identified problems/issues that can be addressed with educational efforts. The plan will include recommended educational efforts/products that can address the major issues. Today Amy was looking for Steering Committee input on [existing educational efforts](#) in the watershed.

Existing Efforts identified: Paw Paw Lake every year does a program with Coloma Public Schools reaches 40 students/year, Lawton Public school participates in Enviro-thon, most public schools require 40 hours of community service for graduation

Distribution ideas: canoe rental places, Trout Unlimited, tax bills, drain office sends out assessment notices, lake association newsletters, identify municipalities with a newsletter and website, student logo contest for the PPRW, put up watershed entrance signs (priority I-94 and Red Arrow Highway) (add to existing well head protection signs)

The topic of “cheater pipes” and their identification was discussed. Finding high risk areas based on the date of septic system permits was suggested. Julia reminded the committee that we need to have pollutant load reductions associated with educational activities.

Next I/E committee mtg - Oct 17th 9:30 AM at Hartford City Hall

Volunteers for the I/E committee: John Legge, Julia Kirkwood, Del Sipes

2. Workshop Update – Amy Lockhart: Amy briefly described the Backyard Habitat workshop series which will take place every Tuesday night in October. There is also an Ag Expo workshop being planned for December.

3. Grant Extension – Marcy Colclough: The PPRW Planning Grant will be extended until May 2008 (was to end Dec 31, 2007). Several aspects of the project have taken longer than expected; however the final product should be better than originally expected. There was some discussion on eligibility for the next 319 grant cycle. Marcy and Julia explained that we will not be able to apply this round because the plan is not yet CMI approved, however this is not because of the grant extension. The PPRW Management Plan should be approved and ready for next year's grant cycle.

3. Land Protection Open House – Pete Deboer: A Fall Open House will be held on October 10th at 6:30 PM at the Paw Paw Library to explain land protection options/tools. Everyone is welcome, please invite your neighbors and friends. Over 200 invitations were sent out. Landowners in the eastern half of the watershed were targeted using the Conservation Priority model produced for the PPRW project. Chuck Nelson reported that the Spring Open House targeting the western half of the watershed resulted in 30 acres along Blue Creek/Paw Paw River being added to Sarett Nature Center.

4. PPRW Volunteer Inventory Report – Matt Meersman: All of the PPRW inventory data has been entered into a database created by SWMPC for the PPRW Planning Project. Over 200 sites were surveyed and photographed. Matt demonstrated how the database can be used to get information and pictures of different areas in the PPRW.

One particularly interesting component of the inventory was the Bank Erosion Hazard Index (BEHI) ranking. As part of the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) 40 volunteer sites were rechecked by Berrien County Conservation District staff for quality control. There was a considerable amount of variability in BEHI scores on the first order streams, so after discussions with MDEQ, these sites were removed from the final BEHI dataset.

The [BEHI results map](#) shows the BEHI rankings for the remaining 98 sites. The good news is no sites received a “high” or “very high” ranking for erosion potential. The Brandywine Creek subwatershed scored the worst due to several “moderate” rankings. This dataset provides a good baseline for future assessments. Matt mentioned that the results of the Volunteer Inventory seemed to be consistent with a recently released MDEQ flashiness report. In the report, the PPRW had a very low flashiness index compared to other watersheds in SW Michigan, but the PPRW's flashiness does seem to be increasing.

Watershed Management Plan Discussion:

Critical Area Discussion: A [draft preservation critical areas map](#) and selection process was reviewed. Critical areas were selected by combining 3 datasets: 1) the PPRW Conservation Priority model, 2) TNC's Priority Floodplain Forest study, and 3) MDEQ's Wetland Functional Assessment. Quarter quarter sections (QQ's) were scored based on the amount/quality of “preservation priority features” from those datasets. Sub-watersheds were ranked based on the number of high scoring QQ's. After questions and discussion, a consensus was reached as to how the Preservation Critical Areas map would be displayed. The [resulting map](#) will highlight the top 6 subwatersheds and a corridor along the mainstem of the Paw Paw. It will also show the individual QQ's with high preservation value.

Agricultural Critical Areas will be addressed at the next Steering Committee meeting.

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

Harbor Shores – Matt attended a public hearing regarding the withdraw of water from the Paw Paw River for irrigating the golf course. Concerns were raised about the intake pipe going 20 feet into the Paw Paw river and being a problem for navigation. Also there was concern about larvae fish not being able to escape the force of the water withdraw. Engineers had redesigned the intake pipe with a screen

to decrease the impact on the fishery. However, Matt was concerned that MDNR might not get the chance to review and comment on the changes. There was discussion about the navigation issue and Harbor Shores plans to dredge and put in marinas upstream. Julia recommended taking stream morphology measurements to be prepared for future dredging permit applications.

Ducks Unlimited NAWCA Grant: Matt and Marcy attended a meeting sponsored by the MDEQ and Ducks Unlimited to discuss the formation of a committee of stakeholders interested in habitat conservation in southwest Michigan. DU has placed a high conservation priority on a 20 county region of southwest Michigan. Their goal is to conserve more than 13,000 acres of wetland and associated habitats in this region over the next five years. They hope to be able to secure grants through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). NAWCA provides federal matching grants up to \$1 million in support of public-private partnerships for wetland and associated habitat conservation. Marcy was especially excited about the flexible rules for eligible local match.

North Point: Update on the status of the Van Buren County Commissioners selling North Point Conservation Area (not in PPRW – direct drainage to Lake MI).

Next Steering Committee Meeting – October 25, 2007 at 9:30 AM at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence