

**Paw Paw River Watershed Planning Project
Steering Committee Meeting
October 25, 2007**

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Marcy Colclough	SWMPC	Laurence Picq	Kieser & Assoc
Matt Meersman	SWMPC	Emily Wilke	SWMLC
Dave Foerster	VB Farmland Pres	Pete Deboer	SWMLC
Chuck Nelson	Sarett Nature Center	Erin Fuller	VBCD
Mindy Walker	Sarett Nature Center	Gaye Blind	MI Dune Partnership
Joe Parman	VB Drain Comm.	Gary Stock	Antwerp Twp
Lawrence Hummel	VB Road Comm.	Lou Gibson	PP Lake Foundation
Julia Kirkwood	MDEQ – ESSD	Doug Stiles	Almena Twp
Nancy Edwards	Almena Twp	Bob Harvey	Paw Paw Village
Bob Becker	Paw Paw Lake Assoc.	Mark Parrish	Pokagon Band
Steve Petersen	Hamilton Twp PC	Larry Neilsen	Paw Paw Village
Amy Lockhart	VBCD	Jean Ketchum	Watershed Resident

Project Updates

1. **I/E update** – Amy Lockhart – Amy reviewed the audiences and issues that will be addressed in the I&E plan. A draft of the I&E plan will be available at the next steering committee meeting. ****Next I& E meeting scheduled for Nov. 14.**

2. **Workshop Update – Backyard Habitat Expo** is scheduled for **Oct 30** at LMC in South Haven from 6-9 pm.

Farming for the Future workshop planned for **December 10** from 9am-4pm at the Van Buren Conference Center.

Horse Sense is scheduled for **November 7** from 4-8pm at the Van Buren Conference Center and is hosted by Allegan, Cass and Van Buren Conservation Districts.

3. **A Land Protection Open House** was held on Oct 10 at 6:30 PM at the Paw Paw Library. Over 200 invitations were sent out targeting landowners in priority land conservation areas. About 20 people attended the event. There was a lot of interest in land protection options.

4. **EPA on-line watershed training** is available for FREE. The on-line training would be good for those that took the Watershed Short Course and wanted a quick review or for someone who has not had any real watershed training. If anyone tries the courses out, please let Marcy know.

The EPA's Watershed Academy Distance Learning Program website offers a variety of self-paced training modules that represent a basic and broad introduction to the watershed management field. Approximately 50 modules are available, and are organized into Introductory/Overview Modules, Watershed Ecology Modules, Watershed Change

Modules, Analysis and Planning Modules, Management Practices Modules, and Community/Social/Water Law Modules. Modules vary in the time they to complete, from ½ hour to 2 hours. Fifteen of them are the core modules for the Watershed Academy Certificate Program. Check it out at www.epa.gov/watertrain.

5. Critical Area Discussion -

A map of the [Critical Areas for Preservation](#) was reviewed. The consensus was that this map was adequate.

The next discussion focused on critical areas for agriculture. A [GIS model was constructed](#) to identify priority areas for agricultural BMPs on a Quarter-Quarter (QQ) section basis (~40acres). The analysis assigned values based on the following information: amount of agricultural land cover, impaired water bodies (based on MDEQ non-attainment water bodies), pollutant loadings (from SWAT analysis and agricultural impact areas identified by TNC) and lost wetland functionality (from MDEQ wetland function assessment). Several maps were presented showing each criteria with the accompanying values. [Statistics were calculated](#) based on the average QQ score for each subwatershed as well as the number of high ranking QQs in each subwatershed.

There was a consensus to include the 7 highest ranking sub-watersheds, a special area around Red Creek and a special area around the Mentha Flats (North Branch headwaters) on the final Agricultural Critical Areas map. An [example](#) of how this map would look was presented.

The Mentha Flats area ranks very high and has just a few landowners with large parcels. There are a large number of drainage ditches leading to a trout stream and this area could be ideal for wetland restoration due to some interest by one or more of the landowners in the past.

There was also consensus on adding a special area around Red and White Creek in the Brush Creek subwatershed. This area has highly erosive soils, relatively steep topography, and historical problems with sedimentation. The Brush Creek system above the confluence of these creeks has cobble and gravel with little sedimentation. Below the confluence there is rather severe sedimentation.

There was some discussion about what the critical areas should be called, such as “Agriculture Concern Areas Related to Water Quality” or some other term that did not imply that agriculture was negative. There was also discussion about what to call the special areas around Red Creek and Mentha Flats.

6. Other items:

- a. **Green Mapping** – SWMPC has recently received a study by the Michigan Natural Features Inventory of potential conservation areas for Berrien, Cass and Van Buren Counties. The study is part of SWMPC’s green infrastructure program. The report and associated county maps can be found at www.swmpc.org/greenmapping.asp and more on the green infrastructure program can be found at www.swmpc.org/growgreen.asp. The potential

conservation area maps will be helpful for communities working on master plans and recreation plans. The maps will also be helpful with every day planning and zoning decisions.

- b. **River Oaks Development** - Greg Powell is in the process of building a new residential development along the Paw Paw River in the city of Watervliet called River Oaks. Greg is interested in energy efficiency homes and low impact development. He is utilizing several best management practices such as rain gardens in his development.
- c. **Paw Paw Lake Study** –Bob Becker, Paw Paw Lake Association. – Paw Paw Lake Association and the Paw Paw Lake Foundation are currently contracting with the Spicer Group on a \$39,000 study of Paw Paw Lake. The Lake Association wants to determine the amount of nutrients and sediment coming from lakeshore properties and from the drains that enter Paw Paw Lake. They are partnering with the Berrien County Drain Commissioner, Sarett Nature Center, Watervliet and Coloma Townships and SWMPC to improve the water quality in the lake. Spicer Group and volunteers have completed a sediment survey and a bathymetric survey. It seems that the largest contributor of pollutants is the Branch/Darby drain system. The Lake Association/Foundation is promoting zero Phosphorus fertilizer, rain gardens, and buffers and soft engineering instead of seawalls to homeowners along the lakeshore.
- d. **Paw Paw Wal-Mart** – According to Wal-Mart, the project is on hold until 2009-2011 along with 2/3 of the Wal-Mart projects in Michigan. SWMLC was working with Wal-Mart on an agreement for monitoring the easement that will be held by MDEQ. SWMLC communicated to Wal-Mart the terms of an agreement and SWMLC has not heard back from Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart has resolved an issue with MDOT regarding the road access to M-40. Wal-Mart and the Village have not come to an agreement on the costs for municipal water service. The Village estimated upgrades to provide water to Wal-Mart would cost about \$1.6 million. Wal-Mart was only willing to pay \$200,000 of this cost.
- e. **Harbor Shores** – The National Parks Service has written a letter to Harbor Shores rejecting their request to convert Jean Klock Park. The letter stated that mitigation parcels offered are not sufficient because they do not have equal utility. The mitigation parcels must have public access and offer a viable recreation area. The NPS had several concerns with the language in the agreement between Harbor Shores and the City of Benton Harbor. The NPS was also concerned that there was not sufficient public comment opportunity.
- f. **Road Crossing** – Larry Hummel, VB Road Commission, reported that a road crossing in Alemna Township over the N. Branch at County Road 653 (near LeDuc's Blueberries) may be abandoned. The VBCR has received permission from MDOT to reroute the road to M-43. Larry wanted to bring this to the attention of the group and is looking for potential funding to compete this project.

Next Steering Committee meeting: Tuesday, November 27th - 9:30AM at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence.