

State grant will fund Paw Paw River water trail

By **ANDREW LERSTEN** - HP Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, June 17, 2016 6:00 am

COLOMA — A \$100,000 state grant will help fund the creation of a navigable canoe and kayak water trail along the Paw Paw River.

State Rep. Al Pscholka, R-Stevensville, this week announced the grant through the state Department of Natural Resources to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission.

Pscholka has been working with the planning commission and the local group of citizens and public officials who have been planning the effort since last year.

“This is great news for northern Berrien County and Van Buren County,” said Coloma Township Supervisor Ken Parrigin. “It will open up lots of opportunities for more visitors to discover our communities.”

Pscholka said the water trail will help spotlight Southwest Michigan’s natural beauty and resources.

“This project is a big win for Southwest Michigan,” he said. “Opening up the Paw Paw River between Benton Harbor and Paw Paw will attract outdoor enthusiasts from near and far.”

The 66-mile-long river is a natural water trail, but downed trees and other debris in the river has made it difficult to navigate at times.

“By working together – state government, local government, river advocacy groups and planners – we are going to get the job done,” Pscholka said.

The funds are expected to be available Oct. 1 and should be enough money to have the water trail planned and created, complete with signage, said Kris Martin, an associate planner with the SWMPC.

“We’re working together with all the communities along the river,” Martin said. The project will begin when the grant is available, and continue throughout 2017,” he said.

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