

5. Community Outreach



A watershed plan stands little chance of ever being implemented unless broad consensus is reached among the many stakeholders that might be affected by the plan.

(CWP 1998)

Source: Rapid Watershed Planning Handbook, 1998

Introduction

This section provides information on how outreach was conducted to foster public involvement during the watershed planning process. The general public and specific stakeholders were involved in the development of the watershed management plan (WMP). The bulk of their input was obtained at community forums and stakeholder workshops. At these meetings, the participants were asked to provide a list of their goals and concerns in the watershed. This information was then used to develop the goals and objectives that are outlined in Section 6.

Public Participation Process

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) outlines the roles of the steering committee, stakeholder groups, and the general public in developing the WMP and how the information will be used during the decision-making process. For more information on the steering committee, please refer to Section 10.

The goal of the PPP was to effectively involve stakeholders throughout the watershed management planning process so that they contribute during the process, understand the plan, and support plan implementation. To foster involvement and participation within the community, key stakeholders in the watershed were identified and invited to participate in the planning process. The aim of this process was to engage a wide variety of agencies and interests, including those most affected by the plan or able to help implement the plan.

Obtaining sufficient public input on watershed projects takes creativity, persistence, and commitment. As such, the Public Participation Plan was developed with adaptive management in mind, allowing for the watershed committees to be flexible as they develop a WMP. While the PPP for this watershed outlined specific activities to be completed, these activities were modified as a better understanding how to obtain local public input was gained.



Red Cedar Public Meeting Sep. 23, 2004

Initial Public Meetings

Three public meetings were held at various locations throughout the Red Cedar River Watershed:

- The Hannah Community Center, September 22, 2004
- The Ingham County Fair Grounds, September 23, 2004
- The Foster Community Center, September 29, 2004.

The number of meeting participants ranged from approximately 10 to 40 people. In total, the public identified 19 concerns and problems within the watershed. The following is a compilation of goals and concerns from the public meetings held September 22, September 23, and September 29, 2004.

1. Pollution of Cedar Street Lake (gravel pit) including:
 - a. Turbid/cloudy water, first time in seven years

- b. Black water developed at 10-12 ft depth in Aug 2004
 - c. No oxygen in water, no plant life
 - d. Salmon spawning and fishing area now in jeopardy
 - e. New drain (Cook & Thorburn) enters waterbody
2. High Turbidity levels in local waterways
 3. Septic system overflows and failures
 4. Fish contamination
 5. Waterfowl impacts
 6. Bacteria and *E-coli* contamination
 7. Pollutants (e.g. mercury)
 8. Invasive species (Purple Loosestrife, Zebra Mussels)
 9. Citizens education needed on:
 - a. Current status of water quality and how citizens can make a difference
 - b. Not adding to the pollutant load
 - c. Storm drains are not garbage cans
 - d. Problem of sanitary sewer overflows
 10. Inadequate tree management/log jams in local waterways
 11. Trash/dumping of yard waste (leaves and grass clippings) into river
 12. Flooding
 13. Existing negative or non-interested attitudes regarding the river
 14. Costs and who will pay
 15. Lack of interest or awareness
 16. Rising development pressure across the watershed
 17. Lack of recreational opportunities, swimming, low quality fishing
 18. Water quality concerns (taste, iron content) on MSU campus
 19. Flashiness – peak flows and relationship to CSOs
 20. Water quality concerns (taste, iron content) on MSU campus
 21. Increase River status for restaurants, businesses



Red Cedar Public Meeting Sep. 23, 2004

Public Comment on Draft Plan

A draft copy of the WMP was posted on the www.mywatersheds.org website for review and comment by the general public. A newspaper press release and announcement at municipal board meetings were made to advertise the availability of the plan. Comments received were addressed appropriately.

Stakeholder Workshops

A stakeholder list, including contact information, was developed prior to the stakeholder workshops. This list is included in Appendix B. Prior to each of the four workshops, a letter of invitation was mailed to each of the stakeholders. Approximately one week later, each stakeholder was called and personally invited to attend the meeting by one of the watershed committee members. This method led to solid attendance and stakeholder participation.

The first workshop was an overwhelming success with approximately 40 diverse stakeholders representing various parts of the local communities. They included business owners, developers, local nonprofit and environmental groups, county conservation districts and drain commissioners, school superintendents, community planners, and



Red Cedar Stakeholder Workshop Oct. 10, 2004



Red Cedar Stakeholder Workshop Feb. 2, 2005

interested citizens. After a brief introduction to the watershed management planning process, attendees were divided into four workgroups and were asked to brainstorm together to answer two questions:

- What concerns or problems have you seen within the watershed?
- What desired uses and goals do you think are appropriate for the watershed?

After identifying the concerns, problems, uses, and goals, the lists were voted on and ranked.

For the second stakeholder workshop, watershed characteristics and data that had been obtained were presented. A number of goals and desired uses had been identified by the stakeholders and the committee members during the first workshop. These goals were consolidated and presented to the stakeholders as a concise unit. Goals were also added to assure that Phase II requirements would be met. Once these goals were presented, workshop attendees ranked the goals as a method to prioritize for the action plan.

The third and fourth stakeholder workshops were held jointly by the Red Cedar River Watershed Committee, the Grand River Watershed Committee, and the Looking Glass River Watershed Committee. Because these plans were being developed on a similar time frame, the committee members felt that time and money would be saved by combining the workshops.

Representatives from the Grand River, the Red Cedar River, and the Looking Glass River Watersheds came together for their third stakeholder workshop on June 3, 2005. The purpose of the workshop was for stakeholders to respond to proposed actions designed to meet the previously determined goals and objective for each of the watersheds. Over 60 individuals attended the workshop.



Combined Stakeholder Workshop Sep. 9, 2005

The fourth and final workshop was held on September 9, 2005. The workshop provided stakeholders with an overview of the tri-county watershed planning process. Workshop attendees were provided copies of the draft Watershed Management Plans (WMP) from the three watersheds. Over 40 individuals attended the workshop.

Meeting Fact Sheets

Meeting fact sheets were developed for both the stakeholder workshops and the public meetings. The factsheets served as a meeting summary as well as an educational tool. Factsheets were provided to municipal officials and stakeholders to demonstrate what the public view as critical water resource issues in the watershed. Each factsheet contains a schedule of upcoming meetings to promote participation and input during the planning process.

Report to Municipal Officials

Local appointed and elected officials are critical players in adopting the WMP and allocating resources toward its implementation. Obtaining buy-in and providing education to this group will help ensure the success of implementing the WMP. Local government leaders value the advice, concerns, and issues that community residents vocalize in terms of the watershed conditions of the past, present and future.

Various presentations to municipal officials have been conducted throughout the watershed management planning process. These presentations are given during regular City Council, Township Board, and County Commissioner meetings. These meetings are a great way to provide information on future meetings and improve participation. Many of the people that attended these meetings are potential community participants in public education meetings. A PowerPoint presentation for these meetings was developed by the consultant and presented by a community representative.

Focus Group Meetings

Participants in the combined third stakeholder workshop for the Grand River, the Red Cedar River, and the Looking Glass River Watersheds requested additional time to discuss the draft Action Plan. Tetra Tech conducted focus groups in three key areas including; public education, future development and agriculture. The purpose of the focus groups was to clarify and supplement items contained in the Action Plan.

Key stakeholders in each of the three areas were asked to participate; the idea being that a small group of well informed people would be able to better communicate needed adjustments. Significant effort was made to bring people from different backgrounds and perspectives to each of the focus groups while keeping the size to 6-8 participants. The focus groups took place on July 11 and 12, 2005 and each ran for approximately two hours.

The input received from the focus groups clarified proposed action items and enriched the overall action plan. In the case of the agricultural focus group they opted to continue meeting in the future with the aim of improving water quality by combining and partnering on existing agricultural conservation programs.

Public Education Plan

Public education is inherent in the public participation process. Before the public is interested or willing to participate, they need to have a basic understanding of the issues. The Public Education Plan (PEP) is designed to promote, publicize, and facilitate education to help the public initiate positive watershed management activities.

The DEQ explains that "an adequate PEP will implement the necessary amount of educational activities to ensure that the targeted sectors of the "public" or audiences are reached with the appropriate message(s) for each education category."

The educational activities that have been completed and the materials that are being developed as part of the PEP were designed using the six major requirements in the Permit and on feedback from the public meetings, stakeholder workshops, and focus group sessions. This gave the watershed planning committee a more effective approach to reach individuals and groups that are critical to the long-term success of the watershed planning effort. (For more details about the PEP refer to the specific Plan for each community).

2002 Red Cedar River Survey

In February 2002, a questionnaire was mailed to a stratified random sample of 1000 residents of the Red Cedar River watershed. The sample was made up of 200 agricultural and 800 residential landowners and the overall response rate was 53.4 percent.

The survey produced several significant findings relevant to efforts to educate the public as well as protect and restore the Red Cedar River. One significant finding was that the Red Cedar River is a severely under utilized resource because of its poor water quality. Respondents were aware of the negative water quality impacts associated with urban sprawl but were not as cognizant of the issues surrounding erosion and sediment control. There was a high level of support (> 90%) for instituting best management practices to improve water quality. There was strong support for governmental action to improve water quality as indicated by support for stricter regulation of construction practices (≥ 75%), for increased enforcement of current regulations (≥ 74%), and for the zoning of open space (≥ 61%). Respondents also indicated that a preference for regional planning to protect the watershed.

Coordinating future public education efforts with this watershed management plan is key to successful implementation. The Greater Lansing Regional Committee (GLRC) has formed a public education committee that will facilitate public education ideas for each subwatershed in conjunction with the PEP and the WMP.

The GLRC is currently working on several major public education and involvement projects that are briefly described below.

- **Storm Drain Stenciling:** The GLRC has purchased curb markers for storm drain stenciling. Storm drain stenciling involves marking storm drain inlets with plaques or stencil painted messages to deter dumping of pollutants down the storm drains. Messages include "No Dumping, Drains to Water Source," "Drains to River," and "You Dump It, You Drink It. No Waste Here." Stenciling allows volunteers to get involved and become more educated and to spread awareness.
- **Watershed Signage:** Another effort by the GLRC to educate the public is to provide signage around the watershed boundary. These signs create an understanding of the extent of connections and distances from one waterbody to another within the watershed. Currently, the committee is in the process of determining locations to post the signs. Once this decision is made, the signs will be posted.
- **Brochure Development:** The Public Education Committee has developed a number of educational brochures that will be distributed to provide education for local citizens.

Many other programs currently exist to educate the public and to help foster public involvement with watershed awareness, storm water management, and water quality protection. These programs are described in detail in Section 7.

Clean Water is Important to All of Us!

It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years sources of pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now more than 60 percent of water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms, lawns, and gardens, pet waste, residential car washing and failing septic tanks.

All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too—and that adds up to a pollution solution!

Why Do We Need Clean Water?

Having a clean environment is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean waterways provide recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, and add beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water—and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ground waters clean.

Protect Our Watersheds One Drop at a Time

Your actions can help keep our water clean. Find out how and spread the word!

Motor Oil

WHEN YOUR CAR'S LEAKING OIL ON THE STREET, REMEMBER IT'S NOT JUST LEAKING OIL ON THE STREET

For more information about protecting our water visit our website or contact the agency listed below.

Clear Image Courtesy of Puget Sound Action Team, a cooperative venture between the Washington State Department of Ecology, King County and the cities of Bellevue, Seattle and Tacoma

"Only Rain Down the Storm Drain!"

What's the problem with motor oil?

Leaking oil goes from car to street. It then washes from the street into the storm drain and into our rivers, lakes, and streams.

Oil does not dissolve in water. It lasts a long time and sticks to everything from soil and rocks to bird feathers. Oil and other petroleum products are toxic to people, wildlife and plants.

One pint of oil can make a slick larger than a football field. Used motor oil is the largest single source of oil pollution in our lakes, streams and rivers. Americans spill 180 million gallons of used oil each year into our waters. This is 16 times the amount spilled by the Exxon Valdez in Alaska.

When you dump automotive fluids into storm drains, it has the same result as dumping the materials directly into our waterbodies.

Where Do All of These Storm Drains Lead?

Did you know that most storm drains are NOT connected to sanitary sewer systems and treatment plants? The primary purpose of storm drains is to carry rainwater away from developed areas to prevent flooding. Untreated storm water and the pollutants it carries flow directly into creeks, rivers, and eventually the Great Lakes.

How Can You Use and Change your Motor Oil and Help Keep Our Environment Clean?

You can help keep our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater clean by applying the following tips.

- Stop drips. Check for oil leaks regularly and fix them promptly. Keep your car tuned to reduce oil use.
- Use ground cloths or drip pans beneath your vehicle if you have leaks or are doing engine work. Clean up spills immediately. Collect all used oil in containers with tight fitting lids. Do not mix different engine fluids.
- Never dispose of oil or other engine fluids down the storm drain, on the ground or into a ditch.
- Recycle used motor oil. Many auto supply stores and gas stations will accept used oil.
- Buy recycled (re-refined) motor oil to use in your car.
- To find out more about where you can take used oil for recycling in your community, call the number listed on the back of this brochure.

Together we can stop water pollution at the source!

Draft Motor Oil Brochure: GLRC 2005

References

Center for Watershed Protection, Rapid Watershed Planning Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide for Managing Watersheds. 1998.

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