

9 Public Involvement



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The development of this Watershed Management Plan (WMP) included and encompassed a wide range of efforts for public involvement opportunities, coordination between communities and entities within the watershed, and general awareness of the purpose of the project.

9.1 Inter-Municipality Committee Meetings and Workshops

The Ecorse Creek Watershed Inter-Municipality Committee (ECIC) met throughout the course of developing the Watershed Management Plan. From April 2004 through November 2005, 16 meetings were held, several of which were held jointly with the Combined Downriver Watershed Inter-municipality Committee (CDWIC). Subsequent to the February 16, 2006 MDEQ comments on the Watershed Management Plan as submitted October 31, 2005, two additional meetings were held in preparation for resubmittal of the plan. All meetings were open to the public and the schedule was provided on the project webpage. Committee meetings were used to conduct regular business of the committee, solicit information necessary for the completion of the WMP from committee members, provide updates and discuss the progress of the WMP, and provide information regarding on-going local and regional watershed activities.

ECIC Meetings April '04 – November '05

2004

April 20th
June 9th
June 30th
July 28th
August 25th
November 9th (Workshop)
November 23rd
December 6th

2005

February 9th (Workshop)
March 10th
April 13th
April 28th
May 18th
June 15th
July 27th
October 18th

2006

March 26th
April 27th

In addition to regularly scheduled ECIC meetings, two workshops were also held. These workshops were held jointly with both the CDWIC and Lower Huron River Watershed Inter-Municipality Committee. The purpose of these workshops was to provide general background information to the committees and to solicit input necessary for the development of the WMP.

- The first workshop, held on November 9, 2004, focused on finalizing the desired uses and goals of the watershed. The first portion of this workshop provided a characterization of each of the three watersheds and pointed out differences and similarities between the three. With this information in hand, representatives from the watershed came to a consensus on the designated and desired uses as well as goals for the watershed.
- The second workshop, held on February 9, 2005, focused on Management Alternatives. The desired outcomes of this workshop were to gain an understanding of the relationship between goals, objectives, and management alternatives; and to identify objectives and management alternatives to address problems and support the goals of the watershed. The first portion of this workshop focused on explaining the relationship between goals, objectives, and management alternatives and also provided an overview of different types of management alternatives. The watershed groups then divided and brainstormed short-term objectives to support the long-term goals for the watershed. In addition, the ECIC representatives reviewed a list of possible management alternatives and discussed and revised the list so it could be used for future selection.

9.2 Public Participation Process (PPP)

Early in the project schedule, the committee developed a Public Participation Process (PPP), which was subsequently approved by the MDEQ in August 2004 (Appendix J). The PPP is required by the MDEQ under the General Storm Water Discharge Permit (MIG619000). The purpose of the PPP is to facilitate the involvement of watershed jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and the general public in the development of the Ecorse Creek Watershed Management Plan. Special efforts were made by each of the entities to involve those with the authority, ability, and desire to bring about necessary change by developing and implementing the Watershed Management Plan. The PPP was posted on the project website and regular reminders were given at committee meetings that each individual community or agency was responsible for maintaining communication and encouraging participation regarding the development of the WMP. The PPP included the

development of a project website (www.ecorsecreek.com), an email distribution list that people could be added to as the project continued, press releases during development of the WMP, updates at local meetings, public information meetings (3), cable television announcements, etc.

9.3 Project Website

A website was developed (www.ecorsecreek.com) as part of the Public Participation Process requirements, and to serve as a repository for information on the project including the location of the watershed, the ECIC structure and purpose, meeting schedule, agendas, summaries, and general happenings in the area including river clean up days, upcoming conferences, press releases (Appendix L) workshops, training opportunities, etc. The majority of those entities that have their own websites provided a link to the watershed webpage as well. Press releases and informational pieces included the website address to raise awareness and use of the resource. Once a draft WMP was developed, it was posted on the project website for all to access, review and comment on.

9.4 Individual Community/Entity Meetings

In order to gain input on current practices, action items and potential improvement projects, individual meetings were held (March and April 2005) with the majority of communities/entities in the watershed. Meetings were held with the City of Allen Park, City of Dearborn Heights, City of Ecorse, City of Lincoln Park, City of Melvindale, City of Romulus, City of Southgate, City of Taylor, Wayne County, Wayne County Airport Authority, City of Westland, and the City of Wyandotte. Attendees at these meetings varied but included mayors, supervisors, directors, planners, engineers, and field staff. The purpose of these meetings was to review each community's individual Management Alternatives Selection Sheet, review the Codes and Ordinances Worksheet (COW), identify problem areas within the community or entity's jurisdiction and identify areas as possible sites for future improvements. These meetings proved to be invaluable in gaining a better understanding of the issues each community/entity is facing, as well as to brainstorm potential project ideas and locations (See Chapter 6).

9.5 Public Information Meetings

In addition to the efforts described above, 3 formal public information sessions were held during the development of this Watershed Management Plan (See agendas and summaries in Appendix K). The results of the public information meetings were utilized as another tool in understanding the issues and priorities in the watershed and in developing the action plan(s). Formal public involvement opportunities included:

Public Information Meeting #1 January 20, 2005 Hosted by City of Taylor at City Hall



Approximately 40 people attended the first public meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the watershed management plan process, present an overview of the watershed including general findings to date, and to discuss the next steps in the project and how to stay involved. The overview of the watershed included discussion regarding the percent of population within the watersheds by community, population density, land area within the watershed by community, the primary water courses, topography, pre-settlement vegetation, existing land use, future

land use, wetlands, flood prone areas, and general issues and concerns. Example goals for the watershed were also presented and participants were asked to indicate their priorities. All those in attendance were made aware of the project website address and how they can stay involved in the project. General input and comments were gathered from those in attendance. Comments and questions were received regarding partnering with schools and volunteers to assist in water quality monitoring, educating the public and youth regarding watershed protection, balancing the need to improve flows with the need to maintain habitat, the desire to develop and enforce tree ordinances, etc.

Public Information Meeting #2
June 1, 2005
Hosted by Brownstown Township at the Community Center



Approximately 14 people attended the second public information meeting that was held during the development of this Watershed Management Plan. The purpose of the meeting was to present an overview of WMP process, the designated and desired uses, major goals of the watershed, the draft recommended action plan for the watershed, and methods to measure progress. The meeting was also held to gather additional input and ensure continued awareness and involvement in the development of the plan. The goal development process was reviewed as were

the priority pollutants and issues within the watershed. An overview of the actions and best management practices was given and a discussion took place regarding the number of actions being done or that will be done within the watersheds as part of the Phase II permit (short-term) as well as the numerous potential projects (long-term) that have been identified by the watershed committee. All those in attendance were made aware of the next steps in the planning process as well as the variety of methods to continue to provide input and review the draft plan including emailing or calling the watershed committee chair, the local watershed representatives, or project team members. The project website was also discussed as a means of staying up to date and aware of meetings, revised drafts, etc. Discussion also took place regarding how the watershed committee will move forward once the plan is completed to ensure its sustainability and implementation.

Public Information Meeting #3
September 22, 2005
Hosted by Friends of the Detroit River at the Westfield Center in Trenton

The purpose of the meeting was to present the final draft of the Watershed Management Plan and to gather any final comments and input prior to the plan being approved by the MDEQ. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Friends of the Detroit River Annual Meeting and approximately 52 people were in attendance. The components and process of developing the Watershed Management Plan were reviewed. An overview presentation was given regarding the designated and desired uses, priority pollutants and issues, goals, action items, related initiatives, how progress will be measured, and how the plan will be updated. Attendees were made aware that the draft plan is up on the project website and that the committee planned to submit the final plan to the MDEQ by November 1, 2005. Discussion took place about how the public participation meetings were published and advertised, what provisions are in place for

implementation, specifics about the Drain Code, as well as questions regarding the field work methodology.

9.6 Presentations to Councils/Boards

After the ECIC reviewed a complete draft of the Watershed Management Plan at their May 18, 2005 meeting, comments and edits were received and made. Presentations were then scheduled with 4 of the participating watershed members to provide an overview of the process and the recommendations of the draft plan. These meetings also served to further the awareness and education regarding watersheds, things that affect water quality, and what can be done, or is currently being done to improve water quality in the area and region. Presentations were made in June, July, and August 2005 to the following:

- City of Wyandotte
- City of Southgate
- City of Dearborn Heights
- Wayne County

9.7 Public Survey (SEMCOG)

The Southeast Michigan Council of Governments and the Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water conducted a water quality survey during the summer of 2004. The purpose of the survey was to provide a benchmark to gauge the effectiveness of regional and local public outreach campaigns, leverage resources, and provide the opportunity to compare results from different areas of the SEMCOG region.¹ Results specific for the Downriver area can be found in Appendix M. Example findings include the following:

- Forty-five percent of those surveyed indicated that they “didn’t know” where storm water goes after it enters a storm drain or roadside ditch.
- Only 15% of those surveyed knew that they lived in a watershed.
- More than three-fourths (78%) of those surveyed agreed with the statement that the quality of local streams where they live affects the Great Lakes and Lake St. Clair.
- Sixty-six (66%) percent of those surveyed indicated that their household uses a community collection site to dispose of household hazardous waste, such as old oil, fluids from vehicles, batteries, and pesticides.
- The top four ways residents preferred to receive information about what they can do to protect lakes and streams were from community newspaper (45%), television news (43%), major newspapers (40%), and municipal newsletter (28%).

It’s anticipated that a similar survey will be conducted again in the future and compared to the results of this initial survey to illustrate changes in public perception and knowledge over time.

9.8 Public Education Plan (PEP)

As required under the State of Michigan Phase II Watershed Based Storm Water General Permit (MIG619000), and individual communities/entities Certificate of Coverage, the members of the ECIC individually prepared Public Education Plans (PEPs) that were submitted to the MDEQ under separate cover (most by November 1, 2004). The PEPs were prepared to instill within the residents, commercial and industrial businesses, developers, visitors, officials and employees, a heightened awareness of the connection between individual actions and the health of the watershed and water resources. The objective of the PEPs is to promote, publicize, and facilitate watershed education for the purpose of encouraging the public to reduce the discharge of pollutants in storm water. Each of the individual PEPs address public education requirements of the MDEQ that fall under one of the six required categories:

- Personal Watershed Stewardship
- Ultimate Storm Water Discharge Locations and Potential Impacts
- Reporting of Illicit Discharges
- Personal Actions that can Impact the Watershed
- Waste Disposal
- Riparian Land Management

The PEPs are separate documents submitted to the MDEQ outside of this Watershed Management Plan. However, it is a goal of this WMP to raise the level of awareness and educate the community in regard to watersheds, what is being done to improve water quality, what an individual can do to help, etc.

To further this effort, and to continue to raise awareness, a board illustrating the location of the Ecorse Creek Watershed as well as a handout describing the watershed management plan process and project website were put on display and made available at a Friends of the Detroit River reception. The program was held at U of M Dearborn on June 16, 2005 with approximately 150 people in attendance. The primary purpose of the program was to update attendees about the plans for the International Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. It's estimated that approximately 110 copies of the Ecorse Creek Watershed handout were picked up by program attendees.

¹ SEMCOG Regional Water Quality Survey Findings Report. ETC Institute, Olathe, Kansas, September 2004.