

1. Chapter 1 - Introduction: Public Participation Process

1.1 Purpose of Plan

The Saginaw Bay is the single most important natural resource to the Bay County Community. The natural, economic and recreational resources provided by the Saginaw Bay make it critical to the future of the area and the State of Michigan. The Saginaw Bay Watershed has been the focus of environmental concern for many years. In 1973, the Saginaw Bay Watershed was recognized and designated as one of the areas most affected by human impacts in the Great Lakes Basin.

A sub-watershed of the Saginaw Bay Watershed, the Kawkawlin River Watershed (KRW) has seen significant problems over the last several years with *Escherichia coli* (*E.coli*) contamination, low dissolved oxygen (DO) resulting in fish kills, nutrient influx and other water quality issues. The primary rural and agricultural watershed influences the water quality of the urbanized area. Failing on-site sewage treatment systems, agricultural runoff and other development has led to the current condition of the resource.

In recent years, there has been substantial public unrest regarding human health concerns related to elevated *E.coli* levels in the Kawkawlin River. There is considerable local support for a holistic approach to restoring the river system. Furthermore, the Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative has recently brought attention to water quality and environmental concerns in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. Numerous studies and reports have been completed by various organizations and groups referencing the Kawkawlin River Watershed.

This Watershed Management Plan (WMP) seeks to identify and prioritize water pollutant sources and threats and the actions needed to manage storm water discharges in the Kawkawlin River Watershed. This WMP will also help governmental entities fulfill the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) Phase II National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations.

The plan will be based on previous studies conducted in the watershed by a variety of stakeholders. At the local and state level, watershed planning has resulted in plans for the South Branch, the Vision of Green Corridor Protection Plan and the 1998 Kawkawlin Watershed Impervious Surface Study. There have been numerous studies by DNRE, the Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association, Bay County Health Department and others. These past planning efforts, combined with past studies and the extensive inventorying completed by the Bay County Health Department for existing sanitary systems and on-site treatment systems, provide the basis for understanding the water quality impairments in the Kawkawlin River Watershed. This Watershed Management Plan will incorporate and serve as a focal point for these studies in order to develop a systematic plan of action anyone can use to find funding to implement action in the Kawkawlin River Watershed

The intent of this project is to assemble the goals, objectives and findings of the independent activities, reports and studies that have involved the Kawkawlin River Watershed into a comprehensive WMP. This document will serve as the roadmap to restoration and monitoring efforts on the Kawkawlin River, providing a unified vision of the future for the watershed and its stakeholders.

This plan is expected to result in long-term improvement of water quality for the Kawkawlin River and ultimately Saginaw Bay. The plan will identify critical areas for protection and enhancement of natural resources in the watershed. The watershed plan ultimately will provide others with the ability to use it to address problem areas to begin long-term recovery actions for the river.

Initial Planning Goals communicated in first watershed meeting:

- Develop a plan that identifies and prioritizes environmental concerns along the Kawkawlin River
- Identify measures and enhancement projects in the plan to address concerns along Kawkawlin River
- Leverage plan to obtain future funding for implementation of measures to address concerns

- Improve warmwater fisheries with northern pike, walleye and perch identified as primary species
- Increase participation in CREP and other vegetated buffer programs – education for the agricultural community
- Planning and implementation of stream restoration
- Study the watershed for stream restoration to prevent stagnant flow areas and low dissolved oxygen
- Restoration of the river, use of Ducks Unlimited and Saginaw Bay Walleye Club
- Reduction of sediment loads
- Look at zoning changes
- Agricultural practices and education
- Water recreation and public access

These goals were reviewed and refined during following stakeholder meetings and conversations with concerned landowners, public and technical representatives from various organizations.

The following are the proposed **goals for the watershed:**

- Protect and improve the warmwater fisheries and conditions for the river system
- Protect and improve habitat and conditions for other aquatic life and wildlife along the river
- Determine causes and correction of sediment loading in the river
- Identify and protect quality natural features including forested areas, floodplains, wetlands, riparian buffers and contiguous greenway buffers
- Provide for flood management
- Provide and improve water recreation opportunities and public access to the river
- Preserve rural character (farmland and open spaces) of the watershed
- Maintain and/or increase the aesthetics of the water resources for property owners along the river system

1.2 Identifying and Engaging Local Agencies and Citizens

The Bay County Drain Commissioner previously met with local municipalities, stakeholders, conservation groups and regulatory agencies from the county and state levels to begin development of a Kawkawlin River Watershed Management Plan and promote interest. The first project meeting was held on October 23, 2008, to establish an interest and initiate participation from stakeholders in the watershed. This group of stakeholders served as the steering committee to provide input and decision making assistance and input at the quarterly meetings. The interest level has remained high throughout this process and these quarterly meetings were well attended.

An initial step in the development of this watershed management plan was identifying a stakeholders group consisting of individuals and organizations with a common long-term interest in improving the water quality of the Kawkawlin River watershed. The group includes:

- Bangor Township
- Bay Area Storm Water Authority
- Bay County Board of Commissioners
- Bay County Drain Commissioner
- Bay County Health Department
- Beaver Township
- Charter Township of Monitor
- Frankenlust Township
- Garfield Township
- Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association
- Kawkawlin Township
- Little Forks Conservancy
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE)
- Mt Forest Township
- National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Saginaw Area Storm Water Authority (SASWA)
- Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy
- Saginaw Bay Coastal Initiative
- Saginaw Bay RC&D
- Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (SBWIN)
- Williams Charter Township

Additionally, the cities of Bay City, Midland and Auburn were invited to participate in this planning effort; however, representatives did not become involved in the process.

This stakeholders group includes an assemblage of elected officials, community leaders, volunteers and individuals who work in, reside in, or have a general interest in the Kawkawlin River watershed.

- County Homebuilders Associations
- Bay County Farm Bureau
- FEMA
- Gladwin County Drain, Road, and Twps
- Lone Tree Council
- Midland County Drain Commissioner
- Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- MSU Cooperative Extension Agency
- Mt. Forest Township
- Bay & Saginaw County Road Commissions

- Saginaw Band of Chippewa Native Americans
- Save Our Shorelines
- Saginaw County Public Works
- Tittabawassee Township
- Tri-County Contractors Association
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Williams Charter Township

1.3 *Establishing the Steering Committee and Subcommittee*

A steering committee was formed based on actions implemented by the Bay County Drain Commissioner (BCDC) in 2006 and 2007. These contacts, conversations and meetings coordinated by the Bay County Drain Commissioner resulted in the development of interested parties willing to participate in the planning process as a stakeholder/steering committee group. The steering committee decided to form subcommittees by the second stakeholders meeting to allow for additional support in completing the tasks outlined in the work plan. By creating subcommittees, work will be completed more effectively than having one large group trying to complete all tasks. The subcommittees will provide review and comments of data collected, reports and studies. They will further develop goals and objects and will review best management practices. The subcommittees created were Public Outreach, Pathogen/Nutrient Management, Riparian Corridor and Watercourse. Each subcommittee will report at quarterly meetings. The following outlines each subcommittee and the members involved.

1.3.1 Public Outreach Subcommittee

The public outreach committee was created to be a liaison between the Steering Committee and the general public. The subcommittee is in charge of the WMP website. They will solicit public comment and use surveys to gather information related to the project. Another feature of this subcommittee is public education development. They will review Best Management Practices (BMPs) and will recommend targeted audiences for education. Subcommittee members include:

- Joseph Rivet, BCDC (Chairperson)
- John VanOchten
- Valerie Roof
- Corrine Bloomfield
- Tom Roesler

1.3.2 *Pathogen/Nutrient Management Subcommittee*

The Pathogen/Nutrient Management Subcommittee is responsible for the assessment of *E.coli* problems that plague the Kawkawlin River Watershed. They will coordinate and compile existing data and develop a map summarizing the results of sanitary service investigations. Water quality testing will be entered into a GIS database for tracking purposes. The subcommittee will investigate and recommend best management practices (BMPs) to improve the watershed. Subcommittee members include:

- Joel Strasz, Bay County Public Health Department (Chairperson)
- Todd Sutton
- Bobbi Allen
- Gayle Reaume
- Brian Wieland
- Charlie Bauer, DNRE
- Terry Watson, Bangor Township Supervisor
- Patrick Castillo
- Darryl Steiner
- Tom Young, MDA
- Jeanne Place
- Alan Kennedy

1.3.3 *Riparian Corridor Subcommittee*

The Riparian Corridor Subcommittee will identify critical areas and their causes/sources. They will be in charge of the wetland assessment which will also include an ecological assessment. The committee will review best management practices and make recommendations as to which BMPs shall be implemented. Subcommittee members include:

- Jim Hergott, NRCS Resource Conservation and Development (Chairperson)
- Elan Lipschitz, Little Forks Conservancy
- Gary Carvey
- Alan Kennedy
- Charlie Bauer, DNRE
- Gracie Moreno, NRCS
- Jeanne Place
- Greg Eagle, Saginaw Basin Land Conservancy

1.3.4 Watercourse Subcommittee

The Watercourse Assessment subcommittee will be responsible for assessment of geomorphology, hydrology, hydraulics and the floodplain within the watershed. During the assessment process, the subcommittee will identify critical areas and review them. Best management practices will be reviewed that apply to this subcommittee's area of study.

Subcommittee members include:

- Russ Beaubien, Spicer Group (Chairperson)
- Glenn Rowley
- Ernie & Cindy Liebetreu
- Glenn Knochel
- Jack Hetherington
- Gary Brandt, Monitor Township Supervisor
- John Roszatycki
- Jerome Bartkowiak
- Jeff Staudacher
- Doug Enos, Midland County Drain Commissioner
- Dave Bledsoe
- Duane Scheuerlein, Bay County Farm Bureau

Steering Stakeholder Committee	Corridor Subcommittee	Watercourse Subcommittee	<i>E.coli</i> / Nutrient Subcommittee	Public Outreach Subcommittee
Oct. 23, 2008	Mar. 18, 2009	Mar. 5, 2009		
Jan. 20, 2009	Apr. 22, 2009	Mar. 26, 2009	Oct. 13, 2009	June 30, 2010
May 4, 2009	May 20, 2009	Sept. 22, 2009	Nov. 4, 2009	
July 21, 2009	June 24, 2009	Feb. 11, 2010	May 10, 2010	
Oct. 19, 2009	Sept. 2, 2009	Mar. 2, 2010	June 7, 2010	
Jan. 25, 2010	Nov. 4, 2009	Apr. 19, 2010		
Apr. 19, 2010	Jan. 19, 2010	Aug. 4, 2010		
July 26, 2010		Aug. 25, 2010		
Dec. 16, 2010				

Meetings were held with the Bay County Farm Bureau with representatives from the townships of the County. The first meeting coordinated by the Bay County Drain Commissioner was held on the morning of December 11, 2009, and was well-attended. A follow up meeting to assist with BMP design was held on March 2, 2010. At this meeting, a

field inspection tour was set up and a day was spent with members of the Farm Bureau on March 12.

Progress reports on the planning activities were made at the annual meetings of the Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association. The dates where presentations and progress reports were delivered were April 21, 2009, and April 20, 2010. Presenters at these meetings were Charles Bauer, DNRE, Joel Strasz; Bay County Public Health Manager; Russ Beaubien, Spicer Group. This property owners group is very active on the river and has over 232 members as of April 16, 2010.

1.4 Public Input on the Watershed Management Plan and Process

A website was created as part of this watershed management plan to assist with communication. The website announces meeting information and also provides meeting minutes from all previous meetings. For informational purposes, the website contains various maps related to the Kawkawlin River Watershed. The public is provided with a link for questions and comments to the steering committee. Additionally, the draft chapters of the WMP will be posted on this site for constructive public comments. The website is located at:

www.baycounty-mi.gov/DrainCommissioner/KawkawlinRiverWMP.aspx

Additionally, public information was provided to the Kawkawlin River Watershed Property Owners Association at their annual meetings. Key project personnel provided WMP progress reports at two annual meetings, the first in 2009 and the second in 2010. These meetings were well-attended and the information well-received by this Association's members. It should also be noted that the officers of this Association serve on the planning subcommittees and have been very helpful in providing information and context to this plan.