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**ST. JOSEPH RIVER GROUP RECEIVES GRANT
FOR WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS**

Cost-Share Incentives Available for Backyard Conservation Efforts

FORT WAYNE, IN – The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative received a \$274,500 grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to improve water quality in the Lower St. Joseph River and Bear Creek watersheds in Allen and DeKalb Counties. Grant funds will provide cost share assistance on public and private property for a variety of water quality improvement projects within the urbanized area of the watersheds and fund educational workshops and events.

“This grant will help fund implementation of the Lower St. Joe/Bear Creek Watershed Management Plan that was prepared by the Initiative and approved by IDEM in April 2008” said Doug Fasick, Executive Director of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative.

The Lower St. Joseph subwatershed lies in Allen County and is predominantly urban and suburban. It includes a large portion of central and northern Fort Wayne. The Bear Creek subwatershed includes the towns of Leo-Cedarville and Grabill in Allen County and the towns of St. Joe and Spencerville in DeKalb County. Water quality monitoring by the Initiative has shown that these subwatersheds exhibit the same issues found in the St. Joseph River watershed as a whole – high levels of *E. coli* bacteria, spikes in pesticide pollution found particularly during the spring planting season, and impairment of habitat due to sedimentation and total suspended solids.

“Funding from the State of Indiana will allow us to provide incentives to people who want to install backyard conservation practices such as rain barrels, rain gardens, and naturalized shorelines, as well as to public entities such as park boards and public works to implement green infrastructure

practices to manage storm water runoff and capture nonpoint source pollution prior to it entering the St. Joseph River or its tributaries,” Fasick said.

The money received from IDEM will pay for 60% of the total project investment of \$457,500.

Projects committed to date include the installation of pet waste receptacles at local parks and the construction of a covered hitching post in the Town of Grabill both of which will reduce the amount of animal waste being washed into local waterways when it rains, a goose deterrent/shoreline naturalization project at a pond, vegetated swale and rain garden to demonstrate a train of best management practices to the public and local developers in Leo-Cedarville’s Riverside Gardens Park, and bioswales and tree planting at two large scale road projects in Fort Wayne. After these projects are completed there will still be nearly \$40,000 in cost share dollars available which will be used primarily for backyard conservation efforts.

If you would like more information about the project, or to learn if you are eligible to take advantage of the available cost-share incentives contact Kyle Quandt, Environmental Coordinator and Project Manager at 260-449-4226 or kyle.quandt@co.allen.in.us.

The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative serves a six-county area in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan. The Initiative works to develop partnerships that promote economical and environmentally compatible land uses that improve water quality in the 694,400-acre watershed. The Initiative’s office is housed with Fort Wayne City Utilities at 200 E. Berry Street, Suite 250, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

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