

**Lower St. Joseph River Watershed
Stakeholder Meeting
September 19, 2006 – Psi Ote Barn, Bob Arnold Northside Park, Fort Wayne, IN**

Attendees: Thomas Tobey (YLNI); Audrey Stevenson, Dan Wire (Northside Neighborhood); Ray Steup (WFWA); Cathy Robb (City of FW Flood Control); Brandi Wallace (City of FW); M. Rumschley (SCO Engineering); Janet Kelly (IPFW grounds dept.); Karen Goldner (NNA); Matt Jones (ACPWQ); Tom Stieglitz & Deb Nice; Mac & Joyce McConnell (Harvester); Jim Schweickart (Grabill IN); George Mack (citizen); Amy Anstead (YLNI); Jane Loomis (SJRWI); Mary Jane Slaton (City of FW water utilities).

St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Executive Director Jane Loomis gave a presentation on the elements of a watershed management plan and some of the data on the Lower St. Joe (and Bear Creek) watershed that has been collected thus far.

Development of the Lower St. Joseph and Bear Creek watershed management plans is being funded with a Section 205(j) grant awarded to the City of Fort Wayne. The City has subcontracted the management plan development to the St. Joe Initiative.

Questions related to the Power Point presentation:

Dan Wire – In the Lower St. Joe, there are 2.3 acres of filter strips. How wide are the strips? A more meaningful number might be the number of riverbank miles that have filter strips applied. Can that information be developed?

Karen Goldner – What is a filter strip? What does it do? Are they good or bad?

Dan – Does the Initiative do river water quality sampling inside the City limits or do you just trust the City to do that?

Tom Tobey – Where does the e.coli in the river come from? Is it mostly from agricultural sources?

Tom – When you talk about connecting homes to sewers, does that mean inside the house or outside?

Dan – What is an MCL?

Karen – When you see a big spike in a pesticide or e.coli, what do you do with the information? Is there testing in real time so that you can tell a land owner what they need to do to fix the problem or do you just put the information in a report?

Identification of Issues and Concerns of Interest to Stakeholders:

Geographic Areas of concern

There were several suggestions of areas that should be added to the map of “Possible sampling stations for LSJ-BC critical areas”:

- The ditch through (what used to be called) Coliseum Park Apts – same ditch also runs through Johnny Appleseed Park, Turners and crosses Parnell. Heavily residential. (Add to map as site 21)

- State Boulevard bridge over the St. Joe (Add to map as site 22)
- Parnell Avenue bridge over the St. Joe (Add to map as site 23) Acc to Janet Kelly this is Stony Run (Creek)
- Where does Glenbrook Mall drain to – City can provide maps of storm sewer system
- California Road/Stoney Run Creek – Stoney Run Creek flows from behind Wal-Mart on Coliseum Boulevard, through Northcrest Neighborhood, behind Northcrest shopping center, and crosses Clinton Street near University Medical Park.
- Geese congregate along Spy Run Avenue Extended south of State Boulevard
- Geese are an issue at the IPFW campus; also at Lakeside Park; IPFW worked with the insurance co. at Triangle Park and with Canterbury Green on a goose discouragement process using noise but it wasn't successful.

Discussion about the possibility that the US Fish and Wildlife Service may expand the hunting season. The issue of nuisance geese is a national problem – not just isolated to northern Indiana.

River Levels

Karen -- The City does not seem to realize that when it arbitrarily raises or lowers the river levels, it affects recreational opportunities. I don't consider recreation on the rivers to be being able to walk across the river. The rivers are most affected by what the City is doing and not so much by rain. Can we include this issue in the plan and work with the City to try to address it?

Suggested the city needs a full-time staff person to focus on recreational opportunity/use of the river for the City.

Dan has been giving presentations to many community groups regarding river levels and having a City policy on when river levels are raised in the spring and lowered in the fall. What is the recreational season? To Dan, it is longer than the recreation season defined by regulators as April – October. City seems to give an inappropriate amount of time to contractors to do work that requires river levels to be lowered – for example, 300 days to complete work on the tainter gate at Hosey Dam.

Karen – ridiculous to lower the river weeks or months before the work is to be done. We wouldn't close West Jefferson for weeks just waiting for the contractor to get ready to show up to do the work.

Dan – Condition of river banks. I'm aware that there needs to be a balance between using trees and grass along the river banks to help filter contaminants and the need to clear things like large trees for flood control purposes. Concerns about rivers and drains being shown as straight lines with 90-degree angles on maps. Indicates that our rivers and streams are being channelized.

Karen – once the plan is written, who takes ownership of getting the plan implemented? If nothing happens to implement the plan, then what?

Access

General consensus – not enough access points for boat launching. Existing access points need major improvements. Shoaf Park is nice. Johnny Appleseed is a good location but ramp needs work; a downtown access point for the St. Joseph would be nice. Guilden Park on the St. Mary's – too far to walk and carry boat from parking area to ramp. Access is really limited as a result of the Army Corps flood control project. Ramp across from IPFW is too shallow.

Areas where boat ramps are desired:

- Trader's Point Park on 4th Street is not user-friendly

- IPFW – on the campus side would be preferred by boaters; however, J. Kelly indicated that the draft plan is to have an access point on the west side of the river near the new (planned) pedestrian bridge.

CSO/Sewer Projects

Karen – It's a nice goal to clean up the rivers, but at the same time we discourage people from using the rivers. People have to work very hard to use the rivers, so they don't really care about the quality. People are not focused on recreational use. When the City created a Greenway Manager position, it's no surprise that things started to happen with the greenway system. Maybe the City should create a job to promote recreational use of the rivers.

Sediment

Dan – Has the river always been as shallow as it is now on the west side at IPFW? Until we get a handle on sediment, we will have to continue to scoop it out.

Questions about sediment and MS4s, urban construction is depositing sediment into the storm sewers and river.

Public Education/Outreach

Karen – Two things people here are sentimental about – loss of shopping downtown and loss of the TRF Raft Race. Could we create other activities on the river such as a boat parade, water taxis, and float trips during TRF where people might not swim in the rivers but could at least get cost to them? People seem to think that the rivers are so polluted that they can't even walk along them or look at them.

Tom -- Will the watershed management plan focus on re-educating the community about the fact that the rivers are not as dirty as people think they are?

Tom – What can volunteers do to help the St. Joe Initiative? The YLNI is creating a brochure to help educate citizens about the river. Draft copies were available and he asked for input.

Submitted by M J Slaton
Additions by J Loomis