

# ST. JOSEPH RIVER REVIEW

Volume 10, Issue 2

Quarterly Newsletter of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative Partnership

Spring, 2008

Newsletter Editor: Tina Puitz



## *Water Quality Information for the St. Joseph Available Online*

Thanks to support from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and Tetra Tech, Inc., both historic and current water quality data produced by sampling the St. Joseph River will be available to the public via the Internet, starting in July.

A Section 319 grant from IDEM supported the majority of costs required to create a web-based access for the data. Contractor for the project, Tetra Tech, provided additional discounts to their services. Advisory and technical support was provided by the Fort Wayne-Allen County Health Department, IPFW Biology Department, the Fort Wayne Water Filtration Plant, the Fort Wayne Water Pollution Control Plant, and SRJWI Board Member Dr. Jerry Hohla.

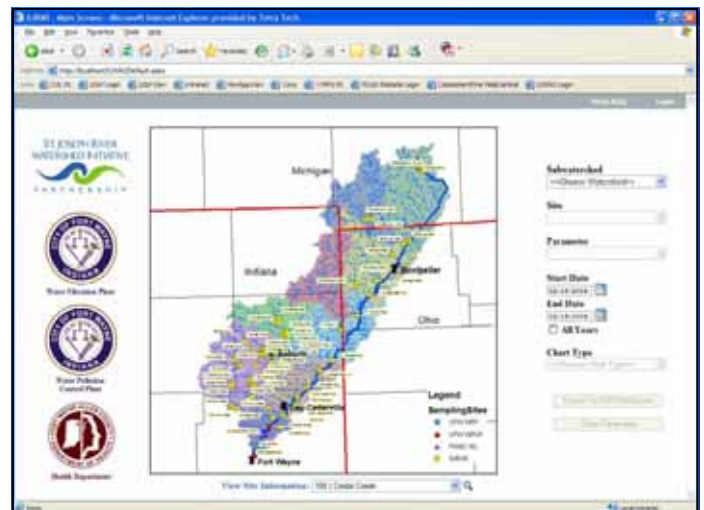
By logging on to the Initiative's website, [www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org), you can access a link to the database, which contains data from several agencies and multiple sites. There are approximately 40 current and historic sites. These sites are located in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan in all of the St. Joseph River's subwatersheds. Two ditches in Allen County are monitored by the Fort Wayne-Allen County Health Department for E. coli. The Fort Wayne water filtration plant monitors raw water intake at the St. Joseph River dam. And the Fort Wayne Water Pollution Control plant samples at two locations, Mayhew Road and Tennessee Street bridges in Fort Wayne.

"The data generated from these sites has provided a powerful tool for citizens, government representatives and researchers to answer important questions about the state of water quality in the St. Joseph and to better diagnose the causes of water quality problems. Providing access to these data will put a valuable resource in the hands of users who are concerned about the health of the St. Joseph Watershed and in the hands of those who can help improve its integrity," said Dr. Bob Gillespie, Department of Biology at IPFW.

All sampling sites are presented on a map for easy location; specific site information is available, as well as further information about sampling methods, date ranges and analysis. Data is presented temporarily (by date) and spatially (by location), and is presented in tabular form in downloadable Excel spreadsheets or, for single locations and parameters, in graphs. Data parameters vary by site and agency, but include analysis of pesticides, bacteria, and nutrients, as well as field data including turbidity, water temperature, pH, conductivity, and dissolved oxygen.

"This has been a long time coming," said Jane Loomis, executive director of the Initiative. "In 2002, we began to move our data from paper files to an electronic Access database. The long-term vision at that time was to make this data easily available to the public via the Internet. It's taken more than five years, but we've finally achieved our goal."

To access the database, log onto the Initiative's website, [www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org), and select the Water Quality Data link. ■





## SJRWI Annual Meeting set for July 28

*Loomis Retires from Executive Director Position*

The annual meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Monday, July 28 at the Rieke Park Lodge, 1600 N. Indiana Avenue, in Auburn. The event will begin with meet and greet at 5:00 p.m. followed by a pot-luck picnic at 6:00 p.m.. There is no charge for the event, but reservations are requested. RSVP to Tina Puitz (phone 260-484-5848 Ext. 117 or email [tina.puitz@in.nacdn.net](mailto:tina.puitz@in.nacdn.net)) by July 22.

According to the Initiative's by-laws, election of Board officers must take place at the annual meeting. Current Board Chairperson Mary Jane Slaton has indicated that she will step down from her position. Other officer positions include vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Those positions are currently held by Bill Word, Martha Ferguson, and Jerry Hohla, respectively. One representative each from Indiana, Ohio and Michigan will be appointed by the new chairperson to serve along with the officers on the Initiative's Executive Committee.

This year's annual meeting will also serve as a farewell to retiring executive director Jane Loomis. Loomis, who retired July 1, has served as director of the Initiative since December, 2002, guiding the completion of the Cedar Creek and Lower St. Joseph-Bear Creek watershed plans, as well as the update of the St. Joseph River Watershed Plan.



Jane Loomis, SJRWI Executive Director

"This has been a fantastic job and a great experience," Loomis said of her time with the St. Joseph Initiative. "I will especially miss all of the wonderful people that I have worked with all across the watershed – the agency people, business people, landowners and the general public. These folks are open to new ideas, they're energetic, cooperative, and they're doing great work to protect our natural resources. They are the Initiative and they deserve a lot of credit for being leaders in the watershed protection arena." ■

## Fall Equipment Available

The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative has a JD 9520 with RTK auto steer and an 8 row Brillion strip/zone till for rent this fall. This unit is set up on 30 inch rows and runs 14 inches deep leaving an 8 inch strip to plant into in the spring. The soil in the strips warms and dries faster in the spring giving a good seed bed for planting. The one pass tillage saves on fuel for farmers who might normally work the ground two or more times before planting.

In addition to its agronomic and economic benefits, zone/strip-till qualifies you for several conservation programs such as EQIP and CSP, as well as benefiting the environment by reducing soil loss and nutrient movement. Renting the equipment provides an opportunity to try the equipment without a large expense to you.

For more information or to sign up for strip-till contact Jason Buuck at 260-484-5848 x108.



## Agronomy Field Day 2008

Waterloo Research Farm, County Road 28

**July 30 8:30 — 3:00**

### Plot Tour Topics

Strip-till & No-till Management  
Nitrogen & Starter Fertilizer Management  
Soybean Spraying & Application

### Guest Speakers:

Dr. Tony Vyn • Dr. Fred Whitford

**RSVP by July 25, 2008**

260-837-8162 or 1-800-988-8091

## Upcoming Events

### St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative

- **July 28 Annual Meeting**, Rieke Park, Auburn, IN.
- **July 30 Field Day**, The Andersons, Waterloo, IN, 8:30 a.m.—3:00 p.m.
- **August 19 Tree ID & Fun Facts at The Hague**, The Hague Nature Area, Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.

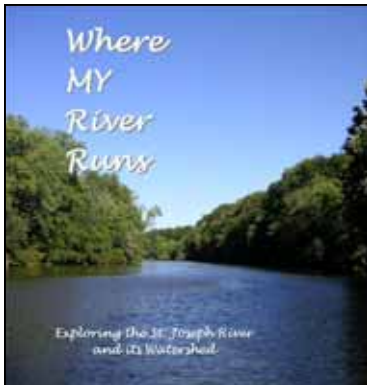


SAVE THE DATE

**Tri-State Conservation  
Farming Expo  
February 25, 2009**



## Cedar Creek Subwatershed



### St. Joseph River Watershed Curriculum Takes Shape

Are you smarter than a fifth grader when it comes to local knowledge of your river and watershed? If not, you have a few months to study before your fifth grader will be teaching you all about the St. Joseph River, its tributaries, history, landmarks, and water quality. "Where My River Runs – Exploring the St. Joseph River and its Watershed," a curriculum focusing on the St. Joseph River, is scheduled to be completed and introduced to local area teachers this summer and fall.

Surveys and work with local residents and young students during the first phase of the Cedar Creek watershed planning effort revealed that few people understood the watershed concept and the geography of this area. "It was surprising that so few people knew the source or the outfall of the St. Joseph," remarked Jane Loomis, executive director of the Initiative and

watershed planning coordinator for the Cedar Creek project. "Many guessed that our water flows to the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico, maybe because it flows south from Michigan through Indiana."

The watershed planners decided that reaching the children would help to build the local knowledge for future generations. Kids are also a great avenue for influencing the activity of their parents and grandparents.

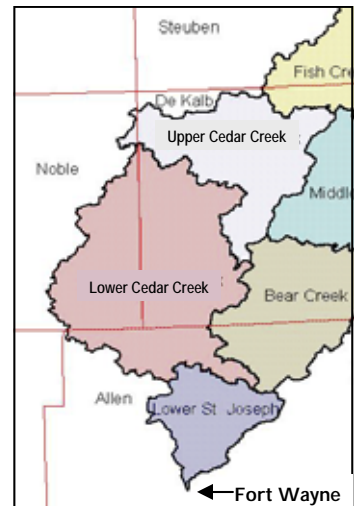
Funded by the Section 319 grant that supports Phase I of the Cedar Creek Plan implementation, the St. Joseph River watershed curriculum has been designed by educational consultants Nancy Leininger and Pam George with assistance from the Initiative staff. The curriculum, which spans approximately five days, is designed to introduce the concept of watersheds to fourth and fifth graders through various classroom activities that explore main basins and tributaries, emphasizing the impact of daily actions that influence the quality of the water. Participation in a simulated stakeholder meeting helps students understand the critical role of all watershed residents who use effective and sustainable watershed management practices.

Under the terms of the grant, the curriculum package will be distributed free of charge to all elementary schools in the Upper and Lower Cedar Creek watersheds. Production and distribution to other school districts in the St. Joseph River watershed would require additional funding from local or regional sources.

The curriculum activities and resources have been developed to align with Indiana academic standards for Science, Social Studies, and Reading, and could be adopted by other watersheds with minimal changes.

"The core of the program is applicable to most of the watersheds in the state and the Midwest," said Loomis. "Of course the maps and the history are specific to the St. Joseph, and those would need to be edited to reflect another watershed should it be adopted in other major watersheds of the State or basin."

For more information about the curriculum, contact Tina Puitz at the SJRWI office, 260-484-5848 x 117. ■



### Cedar Creek Stakeholder News Briefs

#### National Night Out

Tuesday, August 5, Eckhart Park  
Cedar Creek stakeholders will participate by conducting a follow-up survey regarding public

knowledge of watershed issues and changes in their behavior based on environmental concerns.

#### Habitat Workshop

A public workshop on aquatic and riparian habitat and the species it supports is being planned for September. The Cedar Creek Wildlife Project is looking for a high school science program which would like to help plan and host the event. Any interested individuals should contact Jane Loomis at [jane.loomis@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:jane.loomis@in.nacdnet.net).



## SJRWI Water Quality Reports Released

Since 1996, the Initiative has been monitoring the water quality of the St. Joseph and its tributaries to assess the current water quality and to track changes in water quality. The data helps us to find "hot spots," areas that show high levels of pollutants and need improvement, as well as "best spots," areas in the watershed that are high quality and need to be protected or can serve as demonstration areas for best management practices.

Over the years, approximately 40 separate sites have been monitored by the Initiative. For the last several years, approximately 24 sites have been monitored annually through weekly grab sampling.

Since 1996, the weekly water sampling has been carried out by Initiative staff, interns and contractors. For the last two years, the Initiative has been working with the IPFW

Department of Biology. The IPFW technician (Erin McKinney) works under the supervision of Dr. Robert Gillespie to collect samples, analyze data, and prepare the Initiative's annual water quality report.

The Initiative recently released the 1999-2006 report, a document which completely revamped the presentation of the data and gives a much more scientifically-based picture of the water quality. The document can be found on the SJRWI's website ([www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org)) under Publications – Water Quality Reports.

The 2007 report will be released before the end of July. Data collection for 2008 began in early April and will continue through the month of October. The 2008 report is expected to be released by the end of the year.

For more information about the history, sites and data collected under the Initiative's water sampling program, check the Initiative's website, [www.sjrwi.org](http://www.sjrwi.org) and click on Water Quality Monitoring. ■

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## Upcoming Board of Directors Meetings

**October 6 at the DeKalb County Annex Building in Auburn, IN, 6:30 p.m.**

Board of Directors meetings are on the first Monday of Feb., Apr., June, Oct. and Dec. Public welcome.

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