

ST. JOSEPH RIVER REVIEW

A PUBLICATION BY THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER WATERSHED INITIATIVE

St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative - 2010 Inwood Dr. - Ft. Wayne, IN 46815 - (260)426-4637, ext. 3
www.sjrwi.org

Volume 5, Issue 3

June, 2003

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tom Crowe, Chairman

Allen County SWCD

Dan Easterday,

Vice-Chairman

Hillsdale County, MI farmer

Rodney Renkenberger,

Treasurer

Maumee River Basin

Commission

Joe Draper, Secretary

The Nature Conservancy

Brian Custer

Custer Grain Co.

Marvin Dietsch

Williams Co Farm Bureau

Rick Dunbar

Edon Farmers Co-op

Robert Gillespie

IPFW Biology Dept.

Bob Koerner

Williams Co., OH farmer

Chris LaLonde

Edgerton OH Wastewater

Treatment Plant

Roger Moll

Purdue Coop Ext. Service

Greg Meszaros

City of Fort Wayne, IN

Dan Wire

Fort Wayne, IN

Bill Word

Hillsdale Co Drainage

Commission

Timothy Word

Steuben Co. SWCD

Other board positions are open to new partners.

STAFF

Jane Loomis

Executive Director

J. Kirby Thompson

Natural Resources

Programs Administrator

See back page to learn how to become more involved with SJRWI!

Fort Wayne joins SJRWI and IPFW to Launch Water Quality Database

On April 16th, Fort Wayne Mayor Graham Richard joined with the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative and IPFW staff to launch a new water quality database with Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities. The city partnered with the SJRWI and IPFW to create this water quality database. The project began in 1996 and has been funded with grants from IDEM. "Water quality has a direct impact on the growth and vitality of our community," said Mayor Richard. "The City of Fort Wayne is proud to be a leader in the efforts to improve and protect water quality in our watershed."



L>R: Dr. Bruce Kingsbury(IPFW), Dr. Robert Gillespie (IPFW), Bill Lambert (NRCS), Joanna Gibson (IPFW), Steve Hall (Goode & Assoc.), and Jane Loomis, Executive Director SJRWI all worked together to make this project a reality.



Mayor Graham Richard speaks at City-Co. building in support of water quality.

The database is a tool to determine the causes of water pollution in the St. Joseph River, provide assistance in developing plans to solve contributing problems, and "get individuals to think about what they do, not just on their own land, but on the watershed".

Water Resource Specialist Hired for SWPI Project

Mr. Aaron Wartenberg has been hired as the Initiative's Water Resource Specialist. Aaron, who is assisting the USDA Agricultural Research Service on the Source Water Protection Initiative (SWPI) project, earned a B.S. degree in Environmental Geology from Indiana University in 2001. A California native Aaron moved to Fort Wayne six years ago with his wife Katie. Arron and Katie have two boys, Thomas, age 4, and Henry, age 1. You might see Aaron any work day driving a blue van throughout the Cedar Creek Watershed.



**COMMUNITIES
of the St. Joseph
River Watershed**

INDIANA

Altona
Ari
Artic
Auburn
Avilla
Butler
Butler Center
Cedar
Cedarville
Cold Springs
Concord
Corunna
Ege
Fairfield Center
Fort Wayne
Garrett
Grabill
Hamilton
Huntertown
Hursh
Laotto
Leo
Metz
Newville
Newville Center
Orange
Sedan
Spencerville
St. Joe
St. Johns
Steubenville
Summit
Swan
Waterloo

MICHIGAN

Bankers
Cambria
Camden
Frontier
Hillsdale
Montgomery
Osseo
Ransom
Reading
OHIO
Angier
Berlin
Blakeslee
Bridgewater Center
Columbia
Cooney
Edon
Edgerton
Montpelier
Nettle Lake
Pioneer
West Jefferson

SJRWI Annual Meeting Set for July 28

On July 28th the Annual Meeting of the Saint Joseph River Watershed Initiative (SJRWI) will take place at the Fish and Game Club located at the Fish Creek Trail Park in Hamilton, Indiana. The meeting will begin at 3:00pm with a tour of the Source Water Protection Initiative (SWPI) project and a walk through the Fish Creek Trail. Refreshments and dinner will be provided at the Fish and Game Club from 5:00 to 6:30pm, followed by a brief business meeting and presentations highlighting the varied activities and accomplishments achieved by the SJRWI during 2002.

Formed in 1995 by local agencies, organizations, and citizens committed to promote economically and environmentally compatible land uses that improve water quality throughout the St. Joseph River Watershed, the SJRWI welcomes new Partners and members.

The SJRWI Annual Meeting is open to the public and all are welcome and encouraged to attend. This meeting is an excellent opportunity to get information on SJRWI projects, meet with our members and staff, and find out how you or your organization can be part of this important work. To reserve your place for part or all of the meeting's activities please contact the SJRWI Office.

SJRWI Provides Public Meetings For Cedar Creek Management Plan

Three Cedar Creek "stakeholder" community meetings have taken place in Auburn, Indiana over the last few months to discuss what those in attendance believe are the needs of their watershed. The result has been the beginnings of a Cedar Creek Management Plan developed by those within the watershed who are concerned about their water quality.

At the first two meetings, held this spring, watershed residents, landowners, and agencies identified and prioritized concerns about erosion, logjams, ground- and surface-water quality, failing septic systems, combined sewer overflows, wildlife habitat and a lack of environmental education in the watershed.

The Cedar Creek is the largest tributary of the St. Joseph River (which is the drinking water source of the city of Fort Wayne) and can affect groundwater that serves local communities. The landscape surrounding the Cedar creek is unique and beautiful, supporting a wide variety of wildlife and fauna, the beauty of which has led the state to designate the area as an Indiana Natural and Scenic Stream. But water quality testing done by the SJRWI, IDEM, and other agencies has shown that the creek struggles with high levels of E. Coli and other pollutants.

The third meeting, held June 10, provided a forum for the more than 18 different non-profit organizations and government agencies that have been attending these meetings to present information to the public regarding efforts currently underway that address water pollution concerns in the Cedar Creek. "The idea was to get a handle on who is doing what in the watershed", said Jane Loomis, Executive Director of the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative.

"These meetings are a way for the public to provide input on their resources," said Loomis. "The next step is to write a management plan for the Cedar Creek. This will allow the stakeholders to apply for public and private grants to fund solutions to the problems which they identify in their watershed."

The community meetings are organized by the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative and local partners including the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water. Finding solutions to the problems identified through these meetings is the long-term goal behind the development of a community led management plan for the Cedar Creek.



Focus on the Watershed:

Blakeslee, Ohio: "A Half Mile of Smile"



Within the St Joseph River Watershed lies the village of Blakeslee. A small community, self proclaimed on the signs outside of town as "A half a mile of smile," Blakeslee is made up of 128 citizens comprising 46 families. Blakeslee's water sheds into the Bear Creek which goes directly into the Saint Joseph River. Mr. Lyle



Mr. Lyle Hug

Hug, local producer and long time Blakeslee resident is correct when he said "everything I do up here ends up in Fort Wayne." He also wished to say "hello" to his two sisters who live in Fort Wayne.

I stopped by "Sam's Place" to get more information about the town for this article and spoke with Randy Mohre, third generation owner /operator of the well known local tavern-restaurant. Less than five minutes after Randy made a short phone call Mr. Mose Mohre walked into the establishment. Civil defense director, local historian, and Randy's father, Mose carried a file full of historical documents and articles about the village. As he passed the info on to me, Mose quipped, "some of its true and some of its not."

"Founded by John Bowman and named after attorney S.E. Blakeslee, a post office was established at the store front of John Chilcote in 1880. Eli Swagart was the postmaster." So says the centennial flyer of 1995 given to me by Mr. Mohre. It seems the Wabash Railroad laid tracks in the 1880's turning the village into a "bustling rural business center". By 1895 Blakeslee was incorporated.



Today the railroad still crosses Washington Street just north of downtown, only now it does so some twenty feet above the ground on an overpass built in 1937 after "a number of bad automobile-train accidents." After more than 100 years Blakeslee can boast "having its own school, post office,

bank, church, fire department, and business district" including "Sam's Place". The business was established in 1922 by Mose's father and Randy's grandfather, Sam Mohre, who came, according to Mose, from "the old country".

You'll find Sam's fine likeness hanging above the register of the landmark along with many other photos highlighting the history of the family and the town. According to Randy (and others who know), inside you'll also find "the best T-bone steak you've ever eaten in your life." I've put it on my list of things to do this summer.



The SJRWI wishes to thank the citizens and businesses of the Village of Blakeslee for the opportunity to highlight their community as part of the St. Joseph River Watershed. If you would like to suggest another town within the watershed to be featured in future newsletters, please contact our office with some details or email me directly at kirby-thompson@iaswcd.org .

by Kirby Thompson
Natural Resources Programs Administrator for SJRWI



St. Joseph River Watershed

is a non-profit organization formed in 1995 by local agencies, organizations, and citizens committed to clean water and a healthy environment to promote economically and environmentally compatible land uses that improve water quality throughout the St. Joseph River Watershed.

If you would like more information about the SJRWI, have you or someone you know added to our mailing list, or if you would like to help support the work done by the SJRWI with a tax-deductible donation, please complete the information below, clip out this section of the news letter and mail it to the SJRWI.

Name _____

Address, City, State, zip _____

Phone # (optional) _____

Check all that apply:

Please add me to your newsletter mailing list. (2003 back issues will be sent right away!)

Please send me more information about the SJRWI (includes Strategic Plan and info on all current projects)

I am interested in becoming a SJRWI partner, board member, technical advisor, or volunteer (we will contact you with details!).

YES! I want to help SJRWI's work to improve water quality throughout the St. Joseph River Watershed.

Enclosed is my gift of:

\$500

\$200

\$100

\$50

\$20

Other \$ _____

Your contribution is completely tax deductible and will be gratefully acknowledged.

Please make checks payable to SJRWI and send to: 2010 Inwood Dr., Ste. 103, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46815

THANK YOU!

The St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative wishes to thank all partners, sponsors, exhibitors, and participants for making the 2003 Tri-State Conservation Tillage Expo a success. Special thanks to Pepsi Cola and Scott's Supermarkets contributions, and to the Country Chef for once again providing an outstanding lunch meal to everyone at the Expo.

The Expo was sponsored by the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative (SJRWI), the Allen and Dekalb counties SWCDs, Upper St. Joseph River Project – The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Indiana Department of Environmental Management, and associated partners including Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Natural Resources – Division of Soil Conservation, and Cooperative Extension Service – Purdue University.

If you did not get a chance to attend this year's Expo and would like to learn more about Conservation Tillage and/ or the Equipment Cost Share program, contact the St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative or the Allen County Soil and Water Conservation District at 260-426-4637 ext 3.

St. Joseph River Watershed Initiative

2010 Inwood Dr., Suite 103, Fort Wayne, IN 46815

Tel: 260-426-4637 x3 Fax: 260-424-9209

website: www.sjwri.org



Non Profit Bulk Rate
US Postage
PAID

Harlan, IN 46743
Permit No. 30