

**Portage/Arcadia 319 Watershed Planning Steering Committee
Meeting Summary: September 19, 2001
Kalamazoo Conservation District Offices, Portage**

Attendees: Mark Kieser, John Olech, Paul Olexia, Marion Hill, Nicole Ott, Tom Small, Jeff Reicherts, Jenny Molloy, Pat Holton, Peter Maas, Bill Reed, Dave Heinicke, Kathy Buckham, Jim Coury, George Heffner, Larry Leach, Bruce Callen

* * * * *

Bill Reed, Administrator for the Project, provided greetings and invited participants to introduce themselves, as some new participants were present. Minutes from last month's meeting were distributed and perused by participants for accuracy. It was noted that the name of the USGS contact mentioned on page 2 is "Jay Lunsford", not "Unsford".

Mark Kieser provided an update on the development of the Project web site. Meeting summaries and all relevant materials will be posted shortly. The information is open to any viewer. However, Steering Committee members are encouraged to log in so that they can receive email alerts when new information is posted on the web site. Additionally, an on-line discussion board is available. Those who have registered will receive email updates regarding communications on this board. A discussion board may also be created exclusively for Steering Committee members.

An in-kind submission form is also being made available on-line. Currently, a news ticker is present on the main Kalamazoo River web page. One will be added shortly to the Project web site. A data base format is being considered for the site so that GIS map images and an interactive virtual tour of the watershed can be created on-line. The basic architecture of the site is nearing completion. Information will be uploaded after it is checked for quality. It was noted that school groups will be encouraged to visit the web site. Initial thoughts on the educational component of the Project will be discussed at the next Steering Committee meeting. A press release regarding the Project was sent to the Kalamazoo Gazette and the Western Herald. It may have not been printed yet, due to the national events occurring last week. The press release will be posted on the Project web site.

Bill Reed reminded the group that the Project web site will serve as the focus of communications. It was asked whether the MDEQ supports the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council web site. Jenny Molloy stated that the MDEQ does not provide web support for any groups. The site is supported by the Kalamazoo County Government.

In-kind submission forms were distributed to the group. Participants may use the hard copies or the electronic version, whichever is more convenient for each individual.

Outreach to new participants was discussed. When will the group seek input from new participants? Bill Reed has talked with residents of the Stuart Neighborhood, who experience periodic flooding from Arcadia Creek. One home owner had five feet of flooding in his basement during the last large storm and was concerned with the ways in which this Project would address that issue.

KIESER & ASSOCIATES (K&A) will meet with Steering Committee members individually to discuss their data needs and interests in the Project. The Project is in its early stages. K&A

is in the process of synthesizing information, and input from participants at Steering Committee meetings and in one-on-one meetings will help to shape the next steps. Therefore, these early meetings are to be interactive as opposed to prescriptive. Participants are encouraged to share their watershed concerns so that the final plan addresses all appropriate strategies accordingly.

It was asked which other entities should be invited to participate in the Project. Township participation was mentioned. Oshtemo Township has indicated its commitment to the Project. Texas Township has expressed interest. Kalamazoo Township is not participating, as they are not in the watershed. However, they may wish to be involved, as the final plan may be beneficial to their planning efforts. The West Fork of Portage Creek lies in primarily agricultural areas. The Conservation District will be beneficial in reaching out to these areas. It was mentioned that the Roto-Kiwan Boy Scout Camp should be contacted, as it covers a large portion of riparian land along the West Fork.

Many area teachers include a water quality component in their curriculums. Students from Portage Northern Middle School recently toured the Consolidated Drain Stormwater Quality and Trailways Facility to learn about local watershed protection efforts. Kathy Buckham has contacted one teacher about educational opportunities, but noted that the Project needs to progress further before any further educational outreach is performed. She also mentioned that Texas Township has a groundwater guardianship award. She will contact someone from that program.

Jim Coury asked whether any participants have contacts with the home building and contracting community, as construction activities and an increase in imperviousness in the watershed can impact water quality. Kathy Buckham indicated that she has spoken with Bernie Mein (Texas Township Trustee?). Ernie Best has also expressed interest in the Project. Bill Reed indicated that he has been a Realtor for over 20 years and has served as President of the Real Estate Board, which has an environmental committee. Hannah McKinny has been working with Convening our Community, a land use planning organization. The group's web site contains a lot of useful information and can be linked to the Project web site. The group is seeking more citizen participation to identify areas that need preservation. She is also a member of the Wild Ones, which encourages native landscaping. Libby Cogswell, a landscape architect, serves on the Oshtemo Township Planning Board and could be another contact.

Local greenhouses and golf courses should be involved. The Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) was instrumental in protecting an area of Portage Creek west of Oakland Drive from being clear cut in order to improve canoe access. The SWMLC has recently hired a new staff person to manage their Kalamazoo County properties. His name is Jody Simoes, and he has been busy gathering information about lands in the county. He would make a good contact/participant.

Stratford Hills, a private development in the county, is an example of a development that wishes to design the community's roads with minimal impervious surfaces, primarily for economic reasons. The County Road Commission is pressuring them to build in the traditional manner to aid emergency vehicle and snow plow access. Their participation is of value, as construction of clustered developments will have an effect on water quality. The use of septic systems in these communities is also a concern for water quality.

The Kalamazoo Nature Center was also mentioned as a potential partner. The Center's Wildlife Management Team has worked with Pharmacia. Randy Grey has worked on prairie restoration at a school near Whites Lake. Steve Allen has worked with Chuck Ide of Western Michigan University's Environmental Research Laboratory on a community wildlife program. The Center also provides consultations to area golf courses.

Mark Kieser discussed how the 319 Project will identify land uses in the watershed and along riparian lands to estimate runoff and loading to the creeks. This work will tie in with the field surveys conducted for the Natural Features Inventory. An assessment of areas where wetlands have been lost was suggested by John Olech. Wetland mitigation obligations appear to frequently not be enforced by the MDEQ. It was also discussed how the study may be integrated with the USGS study on water withdrawals from the area.

Mark Kieser and Nicole Ott shared some observations from the Natural Features Inventory surveys that have been performed to-date. The purpose of the surveys is to document riparian vegetation, identify apparent areas of loading (including storm water outfalls and areas of erosion), locate locations for water quality sampling and take photographs for a "Virtual Tour" component of the Project web site. Images of the Arcadia Creek headwaters and of areas of pollutant loading were displayed for the group. A notebook listing all of the photographs (and illustrating some of them) taken to-date was circulated among the group. Permanent water quality sampling locations will be installed at the mouths of Portage Creek and Arcadia Creek. Additionally, "grab" samples will be taken from ten locations on both the West Fork/Portage Creek and the Arcadia/Axtell Creek complexes.

Future meeting dates were changed to the second Wednesday of each month to alleviate schedule conflicts with the previous schedule. Meeting times will remain the same. The next Steering Committee meeting will be on October 10 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. A location will be announced shortly.