

## **PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

### **Protection and Enhancement of the Kalamazoo River Watershed**

This document is a non-regulatory Partnership Cooperation Agreement between various units of government, businesses and private sector organizations dedicated to long-term, sustainable protection and enhancement of the broad range of values found within the Kalamazoo River Watershed. The partnership is not a contract. It is a statement of intent, support and willingness to participate at a level appropriate to the respective interests of the individual partners.

The groups committed to this partnership jointly recognize the need for improving, maintaining and protecting the quality of the Kalamazoo River Watershed. They share a desire to protect and enhance the designated and desired uses of the watersheds. The parties do so in the unanimous belief that restoring these assets to their full potential will provide significant aesthetic, recreational, economic and environmental benefits to the area for years to come.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Kalamazoo River is a major feature of southwest Michigan, and has played a crucial role in the exploration, settlement, and economic growth of our region. It remains among our most valuable resources. Presenting unparalleled cultural, recreational, aesthetic, and ecological benefits, the land and water resources within the watershed contribute immeasurably to the quality of life for all Michigan citizens and visitors, present and future.

The watershed has had a history of pollution problems, many of which still linger today. Working with and for, local communities, business and industry, state and federal agencies, educational institutions and non-profit organizations, local citizens have shown great commitment and significant success in enhancing the quality of the watershed's resources. Recent efforts to address water quality concerns of the Kalamazoo River system are nationally recognized for their watershed-wide, community based approach stressing voluntary, cooperative strategies.

While there are numerous organizations working on a particular watershed issue, or a portion of the watershed, there really is no single organization that attempts to deal with all issues throughout the watershed, or that speaks on behalf of the entire watershed. Through a series of public forums, workshops and other discussions in recent years, there is strong support for an overall, watershed wide "umbrella" organization. After many meetings of a wide variety of concerned citizens, the following outlines what this organization should, and should not, be:

It should:

- Provide a common, single voice for the entire watershed and its citizens;
- Serve as an information clearing house on all watershed related issues, including action alerts when appropriate;
- In certain circumstances, serve as the fiduciary agent for those organizations without that capability;
- Coordinate overall educational and watershed planning efforts;
- Provide overall watershed leadership.

It should not:

- Attempt to be a "super" or "supervisory" organization;
- Hinder, conflict or interfere with other organizations working on behalf of the watershed;

- Attempt to speak for another organization, unless requested by that organization and/or part of an overall agreed upon watershed strategy;

This partnership agreement is intended to provide structure to this coordinated effort to provide long-term, sustainable protection and enhancement to the environmental, economic, aesthetic, recreational and environmental values of the Kalamazoo River Watershed.

**PRINCIPAL ENTITIES AND THEIR ROLES**

**Umbrella organization**

The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council (Council) has agreed to serve as the overall “umbrella” organization. The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council\* is a public, non-profit 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to work collaboratively with the community, government agencies, local officials and businesses to improve and protect the health of the Kalamazoo River, its tributaries, and its watershed. The goals of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council are to: 1) Promote wise stewardship and use of the natural resources of the Kalamazoo River and its watershed through education about its environmental, social, and economic issues; 2) Promote and celebrate the river as a recreational, aesthetic, and economic resource; 3) Facilitate, support, and provide technical assistance to partners addressing river and watershed issues, management planning, and funding; 4) Develop and implement resource protection and ecological enhancement projects; and, 5) Continue to function as the Public Advisory Council for all matters related to the problem of contaminated sediments in the Kalamazoo River system, advocating long-term solutions that will help produce a cleaner and safer river environment.

\* The Kalamazoo River Watershed Council is the assumed name of this organization, which was incorporated under the name of the Kalamazoo River Public Advisory Council.

**Partner organizations**

What follows is a description, in their own words, of each of the partner organizations:

- Who they are, what they do and how they do it; and
- How they envision interacting with, serving and being served by the Watershed Council acting as the “umbrella” organization.

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 Steven K. Hamilton, President  
 Kalamazoo River Watershed Council

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 Date