

Davis Creek News

A newsletter for residents of the Davis Creek Watershed; Sponsored by River Partners Program, Forum for Kalamazoo County, Kalamazoo Conservation District and MI Department of Envir. Quality

YOUTH IN ACTION

Local Scouts “paint the town” to stay out of trouble!

Boy and Girl Scout Troops are helping the Davis Creek Watershed Steering Committee stencil storm sewer inlets in the Milwood neighborhood. **Boy Scout Troop 286, Cub Scout Pack 286 and community volunteers** met on an October morning at the Milwood Middle School, responding to the call to help protect Davis Creek.

The Steering Committee had earlier received permission from the Kalamazoo City Council to stencil watershed awareness information at roadway storm sewer inlets leading to the creek. Stencils consisted of the picture of a fish along with a reminder to “DUMP NO WASTE - DRAINS TO STREAM.” Team members also distributed literature to residents describing what they were doing and why. Jim Coury, a member of the Davis Creek Watershed Committee said, “Many people don’t realize that what goes down the storm sewer is deposited directly into their rivers and streams. It is not directed to a treatment plant like our sanitary sewer lines leading out of our homes.”

Babette Schmitt of Portage coordinated with the Boy Scouts and the older members of the Cub Scouts, the Webelos. “The Webelos are due to become members of the Boy Scouts this winter,” Schmitt said, “and this was a good opportunity to both educate them on how the storm sewer system operates underground and for them to start getting to know each other.”

Deb Werner of the County Human Services Division, who brought her two children, Megan (age 8) and Kyle (6), thought it was a good idea to let them

get involved with their community and protect the environment. “This is great!” said Kyle, “We get to paint the road and not get into trouble!”

Private companies also contributed to the day’s success, including **Ameritech, Kal-Blue Reprographics, Rathco Safety Supply and the Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport** who loaned orange safety vests to complement the traffic cones provided by Rathco.

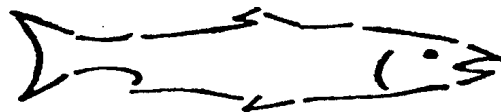
Unfortunately it began to rain and the **Girl Scouts**, who were scheduled to relieve the boys that afternoon, will have to wait until spring. **Actions we can all take** to minimize the wastes that drain into our creeks, rivers and lakes include: **1)** know that storm sewers discharge directly into a nearby body of water—the water you swim in, fish from

and enjoy for natural habitat; **2)** know that the water we drink is also fed by storm water; **3)** report illegal dumping and document it with photographs; **4)** compost your leaves and lawn clippings well

away from inlets and water banks; and **5)** organize your own stencil project.

This stencil, or ones saying “drains to lake” or “drains to groundwater,” can be borrowed by volunteers seeking to **organize their own stencil projects.** Call 337-7382.

Dump No Waste



Drains to Stream

INSIDE

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- ② Free Facility “Green” Evaluation
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PROGRAM INCLUDES KAL COUNTY

Urban Storm Water Rules Proposed

Kalamazoo County is among 20 developed counties in Michigan included with the latest federal effort to protect water quality. In January, EPA proposed new rules to manage urban storm water. Recognizing that developed areas are significant sources of water pollution, these long anticipated nationwide requirements seek to control pollution from contaminated storm water runoff.

That urban runoff carries pollution is hardly news for the many Kalamazoo residents who've witnessed a steady decline in lake front water quality. However, what is much harder to see is our community's damaging impact to streams, rivers and even Lake Michigan. These are the waters which receive most of our contaminated urban runoff.

Urban areas with public storm water sewer systems are being asked to comply with a national permit system similar to the program which regulates industrial and sanitary wastewater treatment plants—the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES).

The NPDES permit program is credited with having been largely responsible for the great improvements in our nation's waters since adoption of the 1972 Clean Water Act. However, as industrial and sanitary waste discharges were cleaned-up, we began to understand that storm water runoff and nonpoint source (NPS) pollution are **the nation's largest water quality problem**. To address the new understanding, Congress adopted the Water

Quality Act of 1987 and directed EPA to include storm water systems under the rules of the NPDES program.

Communities larger than 100,000 have been under the NPDES system since 1992. These latest **federal rules extend the existing program to smaller communities, including Kalamazoo, Parchment Portage, and all urbanized portions of the County.**

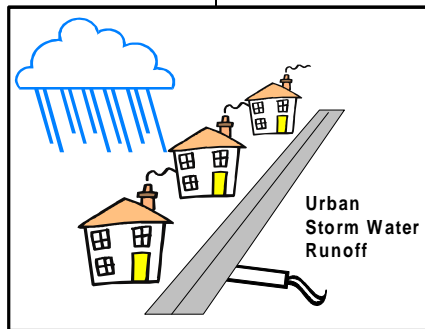
NEW SW RULES MAY AFFECT YOU

What Must My Community Do?

Municipalities in Kalamazoo County will be required to develop local, storm water management programs under newly proposed federal rules. Local programs must include best management practices (BMP's) and the following components.

- a public education and outreach program;
- efforts to achieve active, local citizen involvement;
- actions to detect and eliminate illicit discharges;
- runoff controls for construction sites;
- assurance programs for post-construction storm water management;
- pollution prevention and good housekeeping programs for municipal operations; and
- measurable goals for evaluating each of the preceding components.

In response to these new proposals, Kalamazoo County has convened a working group of local officials to work towards creating new, local partnerships for managing urban storm water runoff.



SIGN YOUR BUSINESS UP TODAY

How Green is Your Business?

Environmental performance is an essential part of good business. How does your business rate? Pollution Prevention Checklist and Strategies are available from the Business Environmental Education & Assistance Program of Kalamazoo County (373-5389).

Mini grants are available to provide small businesses in Kalamazoo County the opportunity to participate in an environmental evaluation of their business. An environmental consultant will do an ON-SITE evaluation and recommend pollution prevention practices. It is free, confidential and non-regulatory. Call 373-5389 and ask about the Facility Evaluation Program.

RECOGNIZING LOCAL STEWARDSHIP

Watershed Stewardship Awards for 1998

Citizen nominations are being sought for a newly established **Kalamazoo Area Watershed Stewardship Award** sponsored by the Kalamazoo Conservation District, Kalamazoo County Drain Commission, Forum for Kalamazoo County and other local watershed partners.

Awards given for local accomplishments in watershed stewardship will include five different types of organizations: business; government, community groups, (including non-profit organizations); and individuals.

Judging will be based upon the nominee's contributions to watershed protection in five areas of watershed management. **The simple, one-page Nomination Form can be obtained by calling 616-337-7382. All nominations are due by April 24, 1998.**

DISPLAY YOUR ARTISTIC TALENT

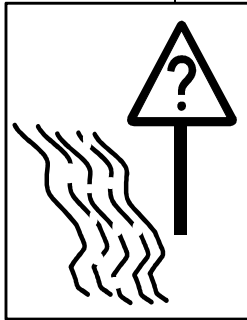
Can You Design a Watershed Sign?

Davis Creek needs a special sign to remind citizens to protect and care for this often overlooked watershed.

The Davis Creek Watershed Steering Committee is inviting 5th through 8th graders to create a sign for Davis Creek. An independent judging panel will review creative submissions, select the winning entry, and arrange for the construction and installation of signs in the Davis Creek Watershed.

The youth with the winning design will not only receive community recognition, but will also bask in the knowledge that their creation will stand proudly beside this important water resource for years to come. Other prizes include a guided canoe tour of the Kalamazoo River and a \$50 savings bond.

Designs must be submitted on 8-1/2 by 11 inch paper by May 22, 1998. To enter or to volunteer, call the River Partners Program, Forum for Kalamazoo County at (616) 337-7382.

**BUILD YOUR OWN BOAT!**

River Do-Dah Parade June 27th!

The second annual River Do-Dah Parade will be held on Saturday, June 27 to **celebrate community collaboration and river connections.** Participants must register by June 10 and provide a \$10.00 entry fee per float. Any craft, meeting basic guidelines specified for personal safety, is welcome to join. Prizes will include

a \$500 cash donation to the charity of your choice. **Call 337-7002 for registration forms.**

BUILDING WATERSHED AWARENESS

Highly Successful Local Watershed Short Course Held

Over eighty people attended the 1998 Watershed Short Course held at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. This 20-hour course introduced the basic principles of environmental conservation through watershed management.

The Course, funded largely through the Sustainable Community Watershed Fund of the Kalamazoo Foundation, covered topics ranging from the hydrologic cycle, groundwater protection and the building of community-based watershed partnerships. Developing voluntary partnerships was presented as critical for fostering successful individual- and community-base stewardship practices.

APPLYING WATERSHED STEWARD-

Earth Day Creek Clean-ups: Sat. April 25th!

Saturday morning, April 25th is "Spring Cleaning" day for our neighborhood creeks and streams! Once again the Kalamazoo Conservation District and the Forum for Kalamazoo County, in partnership with the Davis Creek Steering Committee, is seeking volunteers to help clean-up trash which has washed into our creeks and rivers.

This year, scheduled clean-ups will be held in the Olmsted/Lake Street area of Kalamazoo Township and the Chateau Acres neighborhood of Portage.

Clean-ups will start at 9:00 a.m. and end shortly before noon. Volunteers will meet at the Chateau Acres Office (5374 Deadwood Dr.) or the Kal. Twp. Fire Station (3100 Lake St).

Participants and volunteers are asked to dress appropriately, and to bring rakes or hoes to help snag trash from the creek banks. Trash bags and disposable plastic gloves will be provided on-site. Arrangements are being made for the final disposal of all collected garbage.

Please call the River Partners Program at 616-337-7382 for further information or for guidance on how we can assist you in organizing your own creek cleanup effort.

LOCAL EYESORE REMOVED

Partnered Clean-up Continues at Lakeside Refinery

Residents are rejoicing at EPA's removal of abandoned buildings and oil storage tanks located at the former Lakeside Oil Refinery, on Davis Creek at Cork Street. Having long been an environmental concern, local residents are pleased to see this eyesore removed. Removed hazards include: •270,000 gallons of oil; •32,000 tons of scrap metal; •1,400 cubic yards of asbestos; •33,000 gallons of flammable liquids; •15,000 gallons of caustic liquids; •25,000 tons of contaminated soil; and 18 tons of miscellaneous waste.

EPA's \$7 million contribution towards improving the Davis Creek watershed has removed most surface contamination, however many environmental hazards remain. Additional hazards being addressed by the MI Department of Environmental Quality include contaminated groundwater, impacted subsurface soils and contaminated sediments at the Lakeside dam. Call Wim vanLeeuwen (616-692-2890) for additional information.

18 Things

You Can Do For Clean Water

In our last issue we learned that human activities on the land cause nonpoint source (NPS) pollution and contaminated runoff. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality reports the 95% of our state's waters are impacted by NPS pollution. We now understand that the primary method to prevent NPS pollution from impacting watersheds are Best Management Practices (BMP's). Below, we present additional ideas for best management practices which you can adopt in your daily habits. If we all adopt BMP's, we will individually be doing our fair share in protecting the both the surface and groundwater resources of our community.

Building & Buying a Home or Office

Many water quality impacts are determined by our life activities and by how and where we live.

- Chose a home located close to where you work, go to school or shop, etc. - Seek locations where you can frequently bicycle, walk or use public transit in your daily activities.
- Chose locations where sanitary sewer and public wastewater treatment is available.
- Planned unit developments (PUD) are usually more environmental friendly than traditional checker board, single-family urban lots. [PUD's use less total paved surface area and consolidate greenspace/wildlife areas into larger protected units.]
- Develop the building site in a manner which manages storm water on-site, rather than conveying runoff to a drain/stream.
- Preserve trees, shrubs and other natural vegetation to maximum extent possible to encourage storm water retention and natural infiltration.
- Place buildings and other urban improvements at safe distance from

creeks, streams and lakes and maintain a natural vegetative buffer area.

- Use porous pavement alternatives to promote ground water infiltration.
- Prevent construction site soil erosion. - Limit the total disturbed area, seed and stabilize as soon as possible; install a crushed stone entryway to prevent vehicles from carrying mud and silt out onto the public road.

Household Hazardous Waste

Many of the products found in your home contain harmful chemicals which are classified as household hazardous wastes when disposed.

- Always read the label to know what you are purchasing and what the potential dangers are.
- Use less, or use substitutes which are less harmful.
- Store products in original containers to preserve label and handling instructions.
- Dispose excess wastes and residue products properly. Participate in your community household hazardous waste program. [For information, contact your local government, or the Kalamazoo County Household Hazardous Waste Program at 373-5211.]

- Never put unknown and/or hazardous chemicals into septic or sewer systems unless the label explicitly says this is acceptable.
- Never bury chemicals or other hazardous wastes in your yard.

Gardening & Yard Maintenance

Garden/yard herbicides and pesticides are toxic chemicals which commonly end up in our waters. Some studies indicate that urban users apply 10 to 15 times the amount, per acre, as do farmers.

- Till garden soil thoroughly and keep free of grass for 30 days or more to eliminate noxious weeds and insects.
- Regularly rotate plantings; relocate your garden frequently.
- Select only healthy and insect free transplants.
- Avoid using pesticides as a preventative; treat the problem only when necessary.

Next Issue
Watershed Stewardship
Award Winners!



Kalamazoo County



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