

2014 ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION MEETING SCHEDULE

MARCH 4
JUNE 3*
SEPTEMBER 9**
DECEMBER 2*

May 16, 2014—Annual Indiana-Michigan St. Joseph River
Basin Symposium

All meetings are open to the public and begin at
10:00 a.m.

*Elkhart County Public Services Building
4230 Elkhart Road (US 33), Goshen, Indiana

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**Elkhart County Administration Building
117 No. Second Street, Goshen, Indiana

Consult website for agendas and possible meeting changes—
Meeting presentations are also linked at this site when available.

PLANNING, PLANNING, PLANNING

It takes more than making a wish, blowing out the candles, and seeing all our water quality issues disappear. It takes a plan!

There are watershed management plans, stormwater management plans, transportation improvement plans, nutrient and manure management plans, comprehensive plans, conservation plans, and the list goes on. All can provide an opportunity to incorporate practices and policies that serve to control pollutants and safeguard our water resources from current or future degradation due to increased contaminants.

It is critical that one planning document does not negate the purpose, goals and objectives of another planning document. Working together conserves manpower and funding, making overall efforts to protect and improve both our land and water resources stronger.

In the last *Basin Bites* we discussed the details and advantages of a “watershed management plan” which serves to identify water quality stressors and actions to improve and protect the water resources. In this edition, we’ll explain other plans that may be developed individually for different purposes, but can easily incorporate water quality improvement and protection components in it as well.

The plans highlighted in the newsletter do not represent a complete list, but rather emphasize some

of the more frequently used planning documents.

SITE PLANS

A **Site Plan** is a detailed drawing of proposed changes to the land surface of a parcel. It is an engineering or architectural drawing used to illustrate what will be located on the parcel, and how the designed land use changes will meet planning, building and other laws, ordinances and codes.

STORMWATER POLLUTION PREVENTION PLAN

A **Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan** commonly called a “swip” or “swippy” is a project-specific document that identifies sources of stormwater pollution, describes measures that will be in place to control those sources, and addresses how the owners, developers or a construction company will implement the measures to meet permit requirements and reduce pollution or added runoff from leaving a construction site or an industrial site. The goal is to minimize disturbed soils, keep them on site, and reduce pollutants carried away by increased stormwater runoff.



CONSERVATION PLANS

Prime agricultural land is dwindling, and it is important to plan for the preservation of those acres that remain. That’s what a **Conservation Plan** is all about. Used in farming operations, it serves as a written record of management decisions that will aid in reaching specified goals. Such goals could be as specific as expecting a certain production level from the soils or the conversion of certain parcels for wildlife habitat. It could be a grander goal of insuring that the farm will be preserved for the family. A conservation plan also identifies the natural resources on the parcel and lays out steps to insure the soil, air and water are protected.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

Setting a vision for what a community will be in the future defines a **Comprehensive Plan**. Each is unique depending on the community, but all have a number of elements that define the community--including existing and future land uses, existing and projected demographics, housing, infrastructure, education, and recreation.

A Comprehensive Plan is an official document, usually developed with ideas and information contributed by many, and used by



community leaders to establish policies and make decisions. It emphasizes orderly growth, sustained economic prosperity, compatibility of land uses, and finally management and protection of natural resources and historically significant lands and structures.

NUTRIENT AND MANURE MANAGEMENT PLANS

Achieving a balance between crop needs and nutrient input defines a **Nutrient Management Plan**. Officially, a Nutrient Management Plan manages the amount, source, placement, form and timing of the application of nutrients and soil amendments. A good plan will maintain and improve the physical, chemical and biological condition of soil while reducing contaminant impacts to neighboring waterbodies.



A **Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan** is unique to a livestock operation. The Plan includes six parts which all serve to protect water quality and soil health. Those components include the Handling, transfer and storage of animal waste; The application of animal waste on cropland; Land management practices that prevent runoff of animal waste and its nutrient components; Keeping good records; and Managing feed so as to provide proper nutrition without adding manure mass or increased phosphorus content to manure.

CONCLUSION

As we continue to change our land surfaces, it is critical to recognize the interconnectivity between land and water and acknowledge how changes we make to accommodate our needs, desires, and conveniences, can inadvertently impact the quality and quantity of our surface and ground water. Planning safeguards against these adverse impacts, by protecting our current resources, and restoring those that have been threatened or destroyed in the past.

Need help? Technical assistance in developing a workable document is specific to the particular planning needs. Numerous agencies, organizations and consultants provide guidance on the elements unique to each plan. Contact your local Natural Resource Conservation Service, MS4 agencies, Planning agencies, Ag Extension Agents, fertilizer dealer, or nutrient management specialist for more information.

WATER QUALITY TESTING BEGINNING IN THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN

Starting in 2014, the St. Joseph River Basin Commission will begin a water monitoring program. The goal is to evaluate the streams in the Indiana portion of the Basin that have historically never been sampled or infrequently sampled. The first 10 sites chosen are located in the south eastern part of the River Basin.

Over the next three years, 10 sites will be chosen per year. Each will be sampled twelve times under a combination of baseflow (dry) and wet weather conditions. Water samples will be evaluated for 10 standard general chemistry parameters such as total phosphorus, nitrates and total suspended sediment, along with *Escherichia coli*. The sampling regimen should capture seasonal influence on water quality.



Data will be analyzed and posted on the website--linked to a sampling location map. Evaluating the data for water quality trends will aid in identifying where improvements are needed or where high quality water bodies may need an added layer of protection. After the first three years of sampling, the Basin Commission will return to the first set of sample sites and retest, in order to develop historic data for each site and strategize of actions to take as it relates to the changes in water quality. Additional testing sites will be incorporated into the program if funding is available.

St. Joseph River Basin Commission

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