

## Inside this issue:

- Welcome!
- Current Watershed Work
- Attend a Public Meeting
- Managing Your Waterfront Property
- Searching for Failing Septic Systems
- How Does Your Watershed Work?
- Seven Simple Steps to Clean Water
- Watershed Events

Visit Anchor Bay's Watershed Project on the Internet at:  
<http://awp.stclaircounty.org>

Visit the Black River, St. Clair River and Lake Huron Watershed Projects on the Internet at:  
[stclaircountystormwater.org](http://stclaircountystormwater.org)

## Welcome To Our First Watershed Newsletter!

**Welcome!** This newsletter is meant to keep a variety of people such as County Commissioners, Municipal Board Members, State Legislators, and interested citizens informed about water quality initiatives in St. Clair County.

As of March 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) put forth new water quality rules that regulate 17 municipalities, several school districts and county agencies within St. Clair County. Since that time, partnerships between 16 municipalities and two

school districts have been formed in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to save money on meeting regulations. These public entities feel that by working together across political boundaries, our water resources will be better managed. Consistent management activities through **all** the land in which the water flows will result in better protection of storm water **quality** and **quantity**.

As part of the new regulations, Watershed Management Plans must be developed across St. Clair

County. Watershed Plans provide an analysis of water quality data and management practices across the entire watershed. It provides a process for the communities, the public, and the County to determine the improvement and protection goals needed and the actions that must be implemented.

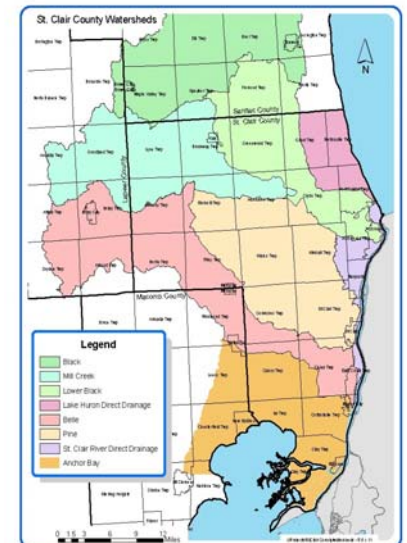
For more information about watershed planning or the preliminary goals and concerns of the watersheds, contact by email at: [watersheds@stclaircounty.org](mailto:watersheds@stclaircounty.org) or by phone: (810) 987-5306.

## Current Watershed Work

Currently, the Anchor Bay Watershed, in the southern part of St. Clair County, has already developed a watershed plan that was funded through the EPA. Additionally, they just received a \$95,000 grant from the EPA to study sources of identified pollutants and the hydrology of the waterways. Studying the hydrology, or flows, of the waterways will help the municipalities and the County identify whether the storm water retention requirements currently in place will prevent flooding and erosion as more land is developed.

Three new watershed plans are currently being developed in St. Clair County - the Lower Black River, the St. Clair River Direct Drainage and the Lake Huron Direct Drainage. Input is needed from **all** stakeholders! October Public Meetings will present the preliminary goals and concerns the municipalities and County agencies have identified and **ask for your input**. Find more information about the public meetings on page 2.

St. Clair County encompasses 7 different watersheds: Lake Huron, Black River, Mill Creek, St. Clair River, Pine River,



Belle River and Anchor Bay. Where do your streams and creeks drain to?

**Public Meeting Dates**  
7:00pm – 8:00pm

**October 12** - Burtchville  
Township Office,  
4000 Burtch Road,  
Burtchville

**October 13** – Indian  
Woods Elementary, 4975  
West Water, Kimball Twp

**October 19** – City of St.  
Clair Municipal Office, 547  
Carney Drive, St. Clair

**October 20** – City of  
Marysville Municipal  
Office, 111 Delaware,  
Marysville

**Attend a Public Meeting – “Your input is needed!”**

New regulations are forcing St. Clair County and seventeen municipalities to spend money and develop a list of actions needed to improve water quality. Tell us about water quality or land use problems you want us to act upon!

If you would like to give some input regarding the most significant **land use** and **water quality** issues you would like your municipality or the County to address, please attend a public meeting. Your

input of current water quality problems will result in actions taken. We need to hear your concerns and suggestions in order to put together an effective watershed management plan. **You can help!**

**Managing Your Waterfront Property**

If you are a **riparian** land owner - fortunate enough to own property on the banks of a stream, river, shore of a lake, or even along a drain or creek - you have a tremendous influence on the health of that waterway and the waterbody it drains to. The very thing that attracts you to living near water also entails an obligation to protect it.

With increased upstream development comes an increase in the *amount* of water and the *velocity* of water downstream. This increase in flow causes accelerated stream bank erosion. Techniques that citizens can use to protect their waterfront property are environmentally beneficial and low-cost.

**Riparian buffer strips** are areas of vegetation (non-turf) between a waterway and the immediate surrounding land. Buffer strips serve as a transitional area between the two and stabilize eroding areas. These areas have long been recognized as critical for maintaining water quality.



An agricultural buffer strip.

life, stabilize stream banks, reduce soil erosion, protect fish habitat and discourage geese congregation.

**Best Practices**

1. Do monitor your septic system. Systems should be pumped once every 3 to 5 years.
2. Do use low phosphorus and slow-release nitrogen fertilizers.
3. Do stabilize stream banks with vegetation. Plants native to Michigan tolerate dry weather and resist disease.
4. Do fence livestock to prevent access to streams.
5. Do eliminate fertilizing within a 20-foot buffer of the stream bank.
6. Do recycle grass clippings and leaves by mulching or composting. This eliminates the need to fertilize your lawn with synthetic nutrients. Yard waste dumped into a drain or waterway contributes to algae blooms.

Lawn care practices from both private and public landowners can also impact the health of the riparian corridor. Healthy lawn and garden care can build fertile soils and increase water filtration. Leave a buffer strip of long-rooted vegetation (native shrubs) between the land area and the water and it can guard against lawn chemicals and harmful bacteria from reaching the waterbody.

**The Benefits**

The benefits to **riparian buffer strips** are that they filter sediment run-off, reduce the turbidity (cloudiness) of water, provide for aquifer recharge, provide shade for aquatic



This buffer strip between the home and the street filters and treats stormwater runoff before it enters a storm drain.

**“Riparian”** – related to living on or located near a waterway, as in a river, creek, stream or lake

## On the Lookout for Failing Septic Systems

In May 2002, teams of St. Clair County Health Department and Drain Office inspectors began walking drains, ditches and waterways looking for illicit discharges. An illicit discharge is the release of untreated wastewater (sewage or laundry) entering a storm drain or waterway. Illicit discharges contaminate our waterways with harmful bacteria.

Inspectors are testing for *E. coli* at outlets that drain into these waterways.

Waterways and outlets indicating the presence of an illicit discharge are followed upstream until a suspected source is located.

From March 2002 to September 2004, over 1,000 miles of streams, shorelines and road ditches have been surveyed in the Anchor Bay and Pine River Watersheds, locating 3,615 outfalls in 17 communities. Of these 3,615 outfalls, 295 were identified as failing septic

systems.

Once all these systems are corrected, 14.1 million gallons of untreated sewage will be eliminated annually from surface waters that drain to Anchor Bay and the Pine River.

### Help us—Help you!

Report suspected illicit discharges on our Hotline. The quicker we find these problems, the more efficiently we move toward cleaner water for everyone to enjoy.



Inspectors are walking waterways looking for illicit discharges.

**Call our 24-hour  
Water Quality Hotline!**

**810.987.5236  
877.504.SWIM**

*Failing septic systems  
Beach closings  
Suspicious dumping  
Illegal discharges*

## How Does Your Watershed Work?

A watershed is all the land that catches rain or snow and drains it to a common stream, river or lake. We all live in a watershed!

The land where you live has a shape like a large bowl. All of the water that falls on this area of land flows down to the lowest point. As water runs off our lawns, rooftops and

driveways, it enters either a storm drain, a roadside ditch or nearby stream. This water is called storm water.

Storm water picks up oil, trash, road salt, animal waste, fertilizers and pesticides as it flows to a storm sewer system or ditch. This untreated water

drains directly to the water we use for drinking, swimming and fishing.

### Consider this...

Is there anything that could wash off your property that you wouldn't want in a stream or lake? How do people use the water once it leaves your property?



All the storm water within a watershed will eventually run off the land and drain to a river or lake.

## "Our Water ... Our Future ... Ours to Protect ..."

St. Clair County, along with the Southeast Michigan Partners for Clean Water, has introduced the **Seven Simple Steps to Clean Water** through a series of posters and tip cards. The seven tips are:

1. Help keep pollution out

of storm drains.

2. Fertilize sparingly and carefully.

3. Carefully store and dispose of household cleaners, chemicals and oil.

4. Clean up after your pet.

5. Choose earth friendly

landscaping.

6. Practice good car care.

7. Save water.

More information, along with the tip cards and posters, is accessible from the SEMCOG home page at [www.semco.org](http://www.semco.org) and by clicking on the "Ours to Protect" logo.

**Our Water. Our Future**



## St. Clair County Health Department

Division of  
Environmental Health  
Storm Water Program

3415 28<sup>th</sup> Street  
Port Huron, MI 48060

PHONE  
(810) 987 - 5306

FAX  
(810) 985 - 2150



We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.stclaircounty  
stormwater.org](http://www.stclaircountystormwater.org)

## Happenings In the 'shed

### October 12

Water Quality Public Meeting  
Burtchville Township Office  
4000 Burtch Road, Burtchville  
7:00pm–8:00pm

### October 13

Water Quality Public Meeting  
Indian Woods Elementary School  
4975 West Water, Kimball Twp  
7:00pm–8:00pm

### October 19

Water Quality Public Meeting  
City of St. Clair Municipal Office  
547 Carney Drive, St. Clair  
7:00pm-8:00pm

### October 20

Water Quality Public Meeting  
City of Marysville Municipal Office  
111 Delaware, Marysville  
7:00pm – 8:00pm

### October 28

Annual Fall Workshop: *Agricultural Preservation*  
Hosted by: Metropolitan Planning Commission  
St. Clair County Administration Bldg  
200 Grand River, Port Huron  
6:30pm-9:00pm

### December 4

Wadhams to Avoca Trail Cleanup  
Meet at Goodells County Park  
9am – 12noon  
Contact: Deb Maxwell (810) 325-9022

*For more information about any of these events, please contact St. Clair County Health Department at (810) 987-5306 or [watersheds@stclaircounty.org](mailto:watersheds@stclaircounty.org).*

If you no longer wish to receive **The Blue Watershed News** by mail, or you are not yet on our mailing list and would like to receive the newsletter electronically or by mail, please call 810.987.5306 and leave your name, address, email, and whether you wish to be added or removed from the mailing list.

This newsletter is being distributed on behalf of the St. Clair County storm water program for the Black River, St. Clair River, Lake Huron and Anchor Bay Watershed groups.

St. Clair County Health Department  
Division of Environmental Health  
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