



St. Clair County Health Department

Storm Water Program
3415 28th Street
Port Huron, MI 48060

Kristen O. Jurs
Storm Water Coordinator
(810) 987-5306
watersheds@stclaircounty.org

Sheri J. Faust
Environmental Educator
(810) 987-5306
stormwater@stclaircounty.org

The Watershed Calendar



Native Plant Sale, June 5

Order your Rain Garden, Woodland Garden or Butterfly Garden kit now!
St. Clair County Health Department
For an order form visit www.RiverDayFun.com or call 810.987.5306.

Black River Canoe & Kayak Race, June 6

Riverside Boat Launch, Port Huron
9am Registration; 10am Race
Various race classes and entry fees
Visit www.RaceBlackRiver.net or email Jim Wier at jwier@RaceBlackRiver.net.

River Day, June 13

Across the rivers, lakes and bays of St. Clair County
How will you spend your day on the water?
Fish. Run. Clean. Discover.
Whatever you do, just get out and show some love to the water!
For a complete listing of events visit www.RiverDayFun.com or call 810.987.5306

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, phone number, email, and whether you wish to be added or removed from the mailing list.

This newsletter is distributed by the St. Clair County Storm Water Program for the Northeastern and Anchor Bay Watershed Groups.

Blue Watershed News

A publication of the St. Clair County Storm Water Program

Issue 10 • Summer 2009

What is a watershed?

A watershed is another word for a river basin. It's an area of land shaped like a bowl that drains streams and runoff to a larger body of water. We all live in a watershed! Find yours at www.stclaircountystormwater.org.

About us

The St. Clair County Storm Water Program began in 2003 due to federal requirements to improve water quality. This newsletter is just one way we're raise awareness of water quality activities in your community.

Mark Your Calendar...

June 5 - Native Plant Sale
June 13 - River Day

Visit us online

Visit our watershed website at www.stclaircountystormwater.org for information on:

- Watershed maps
- Septic system maintenance
- Hazardous waste disposal
- Beach closures

Help save trees

Please send us your e-mail address so we can send you an electronic copy of the *Blue Watershed News*. E-mail your request to stormwater@stclaircounty.org. Find current and past newsletter editions on our website.

St. Clair River Blueway Vision

Creating a system of water trails

The St. Clair County Metropolitan Planning Commission has applied for grant funding to develop the St. Clair River Blueway Vision which will create a comprehensive system of water trails along the St. Clair River corridor, from Anchor Bay to Lake Huron.

The project will seek to inventory



Canoeists take in the view along the scenic Pine River, part of the proposed Blueway Project.

and enhance water access points, bolster the protection of sensitive environments along the river and promote recreational opportunities along the entire blueway.

The proposed St. Clair River Blueway will encompass the six major watercourses that flow through St. Clair County, including the St. Clair River, Black River, Belle River, Pine River, Lake Huron and Anchor Bay.

The Commission has applied for grant funding through the MI Department of Environmental Quality's Coastal Zone Management Program for the development of this project. Cross your fingers that they receive this funding! Go to www.cis.stclaircounty.org/blueway.asp for more information.

Got Rain?

Make it work for you

Rain Barrels allow you to capture rainwater in a container and reuse it for lawn and landscape irrigation. In the summer, when water use is at its peak, a rain barrel can cut your water consumption by up to 40%! Simply connect your rooftop downspout to your rain barrel, attach a soaker hose and your work is done. And why not, it's a free water source!



A residential rain barrel collection system.

We are planning a large scale order of 55-gallon rain barrels expected to cost around \$50, which is half the price

you'll find anywhere else. Send us an email if you're interested in a rain barrel and we'll let you know when they come in!

View a map of your watershed on our website at www.stclaircountystormwater.org

Summer is here; Time to hit the beach!



Our beach monitoring program is designed to protect you from potentially unsafe water conditions as you head to your favorite beach on a hot summer day. From Memorial Day to Labor Day we monitor 19 beaches from Jeddo to Algonac, most of which are Great Lake shorelines or campground ponds.

Water samples at the beach are collected and tested for *E. coli* bacteria which can indicate sewage contamination. When the water reaches unsafe levels, the beach is temporarily closed.

To find out if the beach you're heading to is open or closed call our 24-Hour Hotline at 810.987.7253 or 877.504.SWIM or visit www.deq.state.mi/beach.

Winning student artwork highlighted

"Protect our water its all we have" and "Help clean the water up" are messages the winning students from our 2009 Water Quality Poster Contest want you to know.

Brandon Allen Dean, a 4th grader at Pine River Elementary and Jacob Kapanowski, a 5th grader from Millside Elementary placed first in our poster contest. Judges selected the winners from 500 fourth and fifth grade entries in the Algonac and East China school districts. We thank these students for presenting the simple things we can do to keep our water clean. Request a copy of the poster for your office today!



Sheri Faust congratulates Jacob Kapanowski, Dayna Gerow and Kaley Leuffgen from Ms. Blais' 5th grade Millside Elementary class.

Riparian Buffer Zones

A tool for protecting water quality



A riparian buffer is a zone of vegetation that protects a watercourse. It can improve water quality, protect swimming and fishing downstream, and improve the beauty of waterways in our communities.

The width of the riparian buffer is highly variable and depends on the water body being protected. It is generally recommended that a riparian buffer along a river be 100 feet from the banks with additional buffer added for protection of floodplains and steep slopes that extend beyond 100 feet. A buffer for a pond may be as small as a twenty-five foot zone of unmowed vegetation between your lawn and the waterbody.

For larger riparian buffers, like those along a river bank, it is recommended that three distinct management zones are established.



Zone 1 includes *natural* vegetation adjacent to the water which may include grasses, shrubs and trees. Zone 2 includes managed forest, and Zone 3 includes longer grasses before residential landscaping or agricultural uses begin. Cleared paths through the riparian buffer are allowed for access to the water as long as they are not causing erosion.

Riparian buffers can be required by local government through a natural feature preservation ordinance or residents can establish buffers to improve the value of their property and water resources in their community. More information on riparian buffers can be obtained by emailing watersheds@stclarcounty.org.

Leaders of the Stream



Volunteers at Burtch Creek in Lakeport take a moment to pause for the camera while collecting bugs in the stream.

Perhaps this past spring you weren't consumed thinking about all the tiny bugs thriving in the mud in the bottom of a stream about to hatch and become adults. In fact, you may be asking yourself, *was anyone really thinking about that?* Of course! We were! Each May and September we lead teams of novice and experienced volunteers out into seven county streams looking for benthic macroinvertebrates.



The team of volunteers at Cuttle Creek in Marysville work together to collect bugs in the stream and record the data from dry land.

These macroinvertebrates, or more simply put - *bugs*, are our windows to the health status of a stream. Depending on the bugs we find, we can tell if we have clean or polluted water.

After a full year's worth of monitoring data, we are ready to release the findings of our work. However, all results are preliminary until three years of data are collected.



The mayfly is an ideal species because it thrives in clean water.

Each of the seven streams received a score based on the quantities and species of macroinvertebrates we collected. Streams were given a high score if we found bugs sensitive to pollution, such as mayflies, stoneflies and caddis flies. Then there are the species that tolerate higher amounts of pollution, such as leeches, aquatic worms and water striders. We assign low scores to these streams which indicate there's a potential water quality problem.

Volunteer water quality monitoring can provide pollution assessment and can identify problem areas that need further investigation. Solutions can be implemented and pollution prevented. With help from volunteers like you we will continue monitoring these sites each spring and fall.



Health Department staff, Michael Malcolm and Sheri Faust, compare notes for bug identification at the SC4 Biology Laboratory.



Volunteer Christina Hemphill carefully picks through the water sample to place the bug she found under the microscope for identification.

Join us at Stream Monitoring Day on Saturday, September 26th! Go to www.scriver.org for more information.