

Huron Watershed Boundaries Marked by New County Signs

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For Additional Information contact:
John Basch
248-858-4934 or 248-431-0179

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Communities throughout the Huron River watershed in Oakland County have participated in a signage initiative aimed at increasing the public's awareness level of local water resources. The watershed signs indicate to motorists and pedestrians which watershed they are in.

The goal of the signage initiative is to help increase the public's awareness of the watershed terminology.

"Unfortunately, most people don't know what a watershed is," said Oakland County Drain Commissioner John P. McCulloch. "This sign initiative is a way to spark their interest and research some unfamiliar terms."

A watershed is an area of land which drains to a particular lake, river, or stream. "Understanding the watershed concept is important because much of what we do with land management can have an impact on water quality," McCulloch said. "All of the precipitation that falls onto impervious surfaces such as roadways, parking lots, and even turf grass, picks up pollutants along the way and runs off into the nearest catch basin or roadside ditch. This water is then discharged directly to the nearest waterway without prior treatment. We call that 'nonpoint source pollution' since it's hard to pinpoint the pollution source to one place – it comes from many diffuse sources throughout an entire watershed area."

McCulloch explained that the way homeowners and businesses manage their landscape through practices such as construction, lawn and garden care, or vehicle maintenance, can make a big difference in either adding pollutants or keeping them out of the water.

Twelve of the 15 communities in the Oakland County portion of the Huron River watershed participated in the signage program. A total of 156 signs were purchased with the help of an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant. Participating communities include: the townships of Commerce, Highland, Lyon, West Bloomfield, Springfield, Waterford, and White Lake; the villages of Milford and Wolverine Lake; and, the cities of Novi, Walled Lake, and Wixom.

All of other counties in Southeast Michigan, including Livingston, Macomb, St. Clair and Wayne, have put up similar watershed signs. All of the signs have the “Ours to Protect” message along the bottom ensuring a consistent water quality message throughout the region. To learn more about the “Ours to Protect” campaign, visit the Southeast Michigan Council of Government’s (SEMCOG) Web site at:

www.semcog.org/ourstoprotect.

Environmental Planner Jacy Garrison and coordinator for the signage effort, spearheaded the project. She can be reached at 248-858-5264. Her e-mail address is: garrisonj@oakgov.com.

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