

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

GRANTEE NAME: Friends of the St. Clair River Watershed
PROJECT NAME: FOSCRW Stream Leaders
PROJECT #: 3003-VSM2008-01

EVALUATION OF PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The project had three overarching goals and two objectives for each goal. The evaluation of each goal and objective follows:

Goal 1: Support Habitat Restoration Efforts of the St. Clair River AOC

Objective 1.a. Increase BPAC's knowledge of habitat conditions and restoration needs of the St. Clair River Watershed.

The knowledge of habitat conditions and restoration needs was presented to the Bi-National Public Advisory Council (BPAC) through the distribution of photos and data from monitoring activities via the website, emails, newsletters, and discussions at meetings.

The data was used by BPAC to prioritize Cuttle Creek in Marysville as one of ten restoration projects that were needed to delist the Fish and Wildlife Habitat impairment in the AOC. In 2010, the city of Marysville was awarded a \$1.3 million dollar Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to restore the St. Clair River shoreline just north of the Cuttle Creek outlet. If funding continues, this project is envisioned as the first phase of restoring Cuttle Creek, a tributary to the St. Clair River that also lies within a municipally owned golf course.

Unfortunately more monitoring locations could not be located in the AOC, as originally planned in this project. All other waterways/ shoreline locations within the AOC did not have good access, were too deep, too flashy, or were enclosed in pipe.

Lesson Learned: * When scouting potential monitoring locations prioritize locations where restoration activities will most easily be funded.

Objective 1.b. Increase public knowledge of habitat conditions and restoration needs of the St. Clair River Watershed.

Without a doubt volunteers gained significant knowledge about the habitat conditions and restoration needs in the St. Clair River Watershed. Volunteers were commonly heard remarking about how much they learned and how much they enjoyed the activities. Several volunteers were even inspired to initiate related activities beyond monitoring day: distributed fliers, made presentations to neighboring municipalities, built a rain garden, and made changes along a creek to improve riparian habitat.

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Lesson Learned: * The large time commitment needed to support a volunteer stream monitoring program is well spent when one considers the experience, impression and amount of knowledge each volunteer gains from participation, the interest it generates in other watershed activities, and the knowledge about habitat conditions across watersheds gained by project staff.

Goal 2: Support Habitat Restoration and Protection activities of St. Clair County's Watershed Advisory Groups

Objective 2.a. Increase local Watershed Advisory Groups' knowledge of habitat conditions and restoration needs

Overall monitoring information provided to Watershed Advisory Groups (WAGs) did not generate significant interest from partners except for at Cuttle Creek. As already mentioned the city of Marysville, a leader in the local Northeastern Watersheds Advisory Group, was awarded a \$1.3 million dollar Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant to restore 2500 feet along the St. Clair River shoreline. More watershed group members would be interested in habitat conditions at monitoring locations if there was funding to implement restoration.

Lessons Learned:

* It is especially difficult to establish monitoring locations in heavily urbanized areas and areas with heavy clay soils. Flashy flows make the streams almost none existent in the fall and too high in the spring.

* When scouting potential monitoring locations prioritize locations where restoration activities will most easily be funded. (Repeat)

Objective 2.b. Increase public knowledge of Northeastern Watersheds (NEW) and Anchor Bay (AB) habitat conditions and restoration needs

The NEW watersheds are approximately 144,000 acres, the AB watershed is 109,000 acres, and the Belle River Watershed is 145,000 acres. Five monitoring locations were established in the NEW, two in AB, and one in the Belle. While information gained from scouting and assessing all of these locations was immensely helpful to project staff's understanding of the various conditions across the watersheds, the public's knowledge was generally limited to the lessons learned at particular locations. The *Friends* board feels that the final volunteer recognition event went a long way towards helping volunteers understand how each monitoring location is part of a bigger picture. More monitoring locations, more volunteers, more time, more funding opportunities for restoration, and more watershed planning work is needed to help the public gain a better understanding of habitat conditions and restoration needs across the local watersheds.

Lesson Learned: * Do not expect to understand your watershed after monitoring for a few years; it's just the beginning.

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Goal 3: Recruit/ Retain Volunteers for St. Clair River Watershed Monitoring

Objective 3.a. Recruit and retain volunteers to monitor seven sites in the NEW and AB.

Seven monitoring locations were established in the NEW and AB and later one was established in the Belle River Watershed.

Seventy-four volunteers completed 32 sampling events at 8 monitoring locations. Each season had an average of 31 volunteers that were exposed to habitat and macroinvertebrate monitoring in the St. Clair River Watershed - a huge success for a new organization.

Lesson Learned: *Starting with a limited number of monitoring locations is very important. Coordination of volunteer stream monitoring at only seven or eight locations takes A LOT of time.

Objective 3.b. Increase volunteer participation in habitat and macroinvertebrate monitoring in the NEW and AB.

Previous to this grant project, volunteer participation in habitat and macroinvertebrate monitoring in the St. Clair River Watershed was limited to St. Clair County MSU Extension's Adopt-A-Stream program that targets scout and 4H groups.

The Stream Leaders program targeted adults and older students to avoid competition with MSU Extension and also to collect quality assured data. MSU Extension's Adopt a Stream program continues to this day, with about 40 - 60 participants per year, and now Stream Leaders has an average of about 60 participants per year too. Volunteer participation in habitat and macroinvertebrate monitoring in the St. Clair River Watershed has increased by 100% over the last three years because of this grant project.

The interesting fact is that the majority of Stream Leader volunteers came to know about *Friends* and the volunteer stream monitoring opportunities through presentations at MSU Extension's Master Gardener program series. The two have completely different target audiences.

Lesson Learned: *MSU Extension's Master Gardener program is a great source of volunteers that share interests in plants, water and the natural world and it does not have to compete with Adopt -A-Stream programs.

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PARTNERS

The primary partners of Friends of the St. Clair River Watershed for this project were the St. Clair County Health Department and the St. Clair County Community College.

This grant would not have been possible without assistance from the Health Department's Storm Water Coordinator and Environmental Educator, who are also part of the Friends board of directors. While their participation was expected, the assistance provided from sanitarians at the Health Department was not originally planned. After Monitoring Day was completed each season and most volunteers had already visited one location, the Health Department's Environmental Health Director allowed the sanitarians to help *Friends* monitor locations, as their schedule allowed. This way *Friends* was able to monitor more locations and sanitarians learned about a new way to monitor water quality. This informal partnership with the sanitarians will go a long way towards helping to sustain Stream Leaders in years to come. Their field assistance was invaluable.

The St. Clair County Community College was a partner in this grant by providing equipment storage and all laboratory facilities for identification of macroinvertebrates. This partnership was invaluable as the facility was well equipped for more than ten volunteers to examine the macroinvertebrates under a microscope. This partnership was also useful for exposing SC4 professors to the program which resulted in a few volunteers for the program.

PRODUCTS

- ◆ *Final Quality Assurance Program Plan (QAPP)*
 - Finalized Dec 8, 2008
- ◆ *Website www.scriver.org*
- ◆ *Stream Leader certification exam and Stream Leader Training materials*
 - *Previously provided as part of quarterly reports*
- ◆ *Outreach Information provided to the WAGs/ BPAC* Included in this report.
- ◆ *Examples of outreach information provided to the public* Included in this report.
- ◆ **Progress Reports**

• Apr 1, 2008	- July 31, 2008	previously submitted	
• Aug 1, 2008	- Dec 31, 2009	"	"
• Jan 1, 2009	- August 31, 2009	"	"
• Sept 30, 2009	- Sept 30, 2010	"	"
• Oct 1, 2010	- Mar 31, 2011		Included in this report.
- ◆ **Final Report** Included in this report.
- ◆ **Fact Sheet** Included in this report.
- ◆ **Release of Claims letter** Included in this report.
- ◆ **All data has been entered into the MiCorps database.**

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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

During this project, *Friends* spent a lot of time promoting volunteer activities to support and recognize volunteers, achieve better visibility and support in the community. Over the last three years, *Friends* developed a close knit group of stream volunteers, became well known for its stream monitoring activities, and developed a small base of financially contributing “members”.

This grant has allowed *Friends* to acquire the equipment and expertise necessary to continue monitoring streams for years to come. The biggest hurdle for long term sustainability of the program is the staff time needed to coordinate activities. The donor income at *Friends* is not consistent enough each year to hire a staff person or consultant who can coordinate the Stream Leaders program. The St. Clair County Health Department plans to continue coordinating the program but as the program continues to grow the time needed to coordinate the program will also grow.

It is hoped that future grants will be provided to help organizations such as *Friends* to hire staff that can provide program coordination and/or expertise on building an organization that can financially support hiring a coordinator for monitoring activities.