

Grantee Name: Van Buren Conservation District **Contact Person:** AJ Brucks, Executive Director
1035 E. Michigan Ave. Paw Paw, Michigan 49079 (269)657-4030x5

Project Name: Paw Paw River/Black River Watershed Volunteer Stream Monitoring Project (VSMP)

Project #: VSM2015-03 **Project Location:** Van Buren County (*see map*)

Period Covered: June 2015-June 2017

Grant Amount: \$11,000 **Matching Funds:** \$9,456

Project Partners: Van Buren Conservation District (VBCD), Two Rivers Coalition (TRC), Cardno, Pokagon Band, Village of Lawrence, Boy and Girl Scouts, 4-H, Residents.

Project Goals: (1) Continue the VSMP in VBC, strengthening and further developing it following the success of the MiCorps Start Up Grant. (2) Outreach and educate residents of Van Buren County (VBC) about water quality, current issues and the importance of healthy habitat and benthic macroinvertebrate populations in our local rivers and streams. (3) Provide volunteers with an opportunity to become involved in a project, have hands on experience which allow individuals to feel a sense of ownership in both a project in their community and to water quality and our natural resources. (4) Select site locations within the Paw Paw River and Black River Watersheds that will generate useful data for MDEQ, VBCD, and local agencies and organizations. (5) Host training and monitoring events on collection and identification. Follow MiCorps protocol and standard operating procedures to ensure proper data is collected and entered into the registered database to be used by MDEQ as a monitoring screening tool and used at the local level. (6) Develop a presentation of VSMP, data collected, an event summary and opportunities for the future which can be presented to county commissions, municipalities, partnering organizations, agencies, schools, volunteers and at resident workshops or educational events. (7) Recruit, train, manage and retain volunteers for future monitoring efforts and work to obtain resources that will support a long term VSMP. (8) Coordinating use of data that can be utilized to further prioritize and target area for best management practice (BMP) implementation work perform by the VBCD and to track BMP efficiency and progress in improved water quality. **Accomplishments:** Project oversight committee meetings were held, program development, outreach, and events were discussed and planned. Project partners participated in the MiCorps training/conferences to gain knowledge, learn collection techniques, network, and brain storm to help in the development of a solid program. Educational outreach about the program was released to the public via newsletters, press releases, social media, flyers, emails, Channel 3 News interviews, radio interviews and word of mouth to create awareness of the program and the recruitment of volunteers. Resident volunteers participated in the local training, collection and identification events. Data was collected and reports were published. Partners worked with MDEQ on locations of sampling sites. Priority of sites were places where MDEQ currently does not have data and locations where data will be beneficial to VBCD's current grants and future grant proposal that focus on education and implementation on farming BMPs that have a direct connection to water quality. **Monitoring Activities:** Four VSMP collections were hosted in the Paw Paw River and Black River Watersheds during the VSMP Full Grant followed by Identification Sessions that were held at the VBCD the next day. The spring events were scheduled for the first Sunday/Monday in May and fall events were held for the first Sunday/Monday in October. Event details were as followed: October 4, 2015; 12 sites were monitored, six teams completed two sites each, one river/one stream, with a total of 25 trained participant volunteers for the collection. Seven volunteers helped with the following identification sessions. May 1, 2016; 12 sites were monitored, six teams completed two sites each, one river/one stream, with a total of 25 trained participant volunteers for the collection. Six volunteers helped with the following identification sessions. October 2, 2016; 12 sites were monitored, six teams completed two sites each, one river/one stream, with a total of 27 trained participant volunteers for the collection. Four volunteers helped with the following identification sessions. May 7, 2017; 12 sites were monitored, six teams completed two sites each, one river/one stream, with a total of 43 trained participant volunteers for the collection. Nine volunteers helped with the following identification sessions. **Measurable Results:** Additional partners were added throughout the program and volunteer participation and interest grew. Ninety-six individuals volunteered for the program. Fourteen

sites were assessed and ranged from fair to excellent. Many of the locations identified highly sensitive species showing that water quality is of high standard in areas of the Paw Paw River and Black River Watersheds. Most of the river sites ranked higher than close by streams. All data has been reported on the MiCorps data exchange.

Photos:



Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8

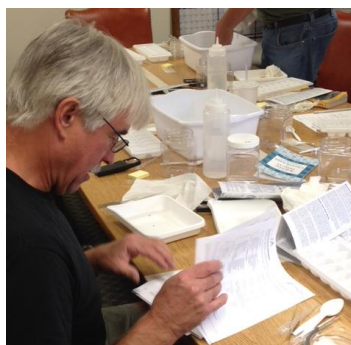


Photo 9



Photo 10

Photo Captions: 1- President of TRC, Kevin Haight, starts off the collection event at the Lawrence River Park with an explanation of why the quality of our rivers and streams are important to our community. 2- Volunteers wade in the Paw Paw River and work together to net macroinvertebrates. 3- Young volunteers pick through debris and catch macroinvertebrates. 4- VBCD technician, Colleen Forestieri, smiles with excitement to have great volunteers and perfect weather for a spring macroinvertebrate collection. 5- Volunteers work together to capture macroinvertebrates in the Paw Paw River, Hay's Park, Waterliet. 6- Volunteers work on the bankside to sift through buckets and bins to find all sort of macroinvertebrates. 7- Largest Toe Biter found yet! 8- Volunteers from the Pokagon Bands Department of Natural Resource help identify a variety of collected macroinvertebrates. 9- Dedicated volunteer, Nate Strong, studies up to correctly identify insects found during the collection. 10- Map of Paw Paw River and Black River Watersheds.