

NEWS RELEASE

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Watershed Planning to Protect Water Quality—Wabash River Watershed Management Planning Underway Public Meeting: April 23, 2009 7 p.m. Holiday Inn City Centre

Land from 478 square miles drains into the Wabash River in the Greater Lafayette area. Cleaning the river will necessitate appropriate land use practices in this entire area. To determine what practices are appropriate and where they should be located a watershed planning process has been undertaken. Your input is necessary to develop the community-based plan.

The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC) and Purdue University's Living Laboratory on the Wabash (LLOW) are leading an effort to develop a plan to manage the water quality in the Wabash River and its drainage. The plan specifically focuses on the portion of the Wabash River downstream of Wildcat Creek to upstream of Big Pine Creek and includes all of West Lafayette, Lafayette, Shadeland, Otterbein, and Linden, and portions of Attica, New Richmond, Dayton, Clarks Hill, and Battle Ground. The project is funded in part by a grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and through local efforts from project partners.

The focus of the project is to develop a watershed management plan and education and outreach program for the 478 square mile drainage. The project will include documentation of the public's perspective on the river and the land that drains to it, assessment of the water quality within streams draining to the Wabash River in the Greater Lafayette Area, and identification of areas where projects can be implemented to improve water quality. The end result will be a step-by-step plan which project partners can use to implement projects both through on-the-ground efforts and through education and outreach to improve water quality within the Wabash River. This planning project goes hand-in-hand with WREC's on-going Wabash River Corridor Master Planning Project. Stan Lambert, Executive Director of WREC stated that "many people are aware of the corridor planning project, which addresses the urban corridor along the Wabash River. The corridor planning effort focuses on the use of the land around the river—how we can access the river, what we want to see along the river, how we can use the river recreationally, aesthetically, economically, and environmentally. The watershed planning project will focus on water quality within the river and its tributaries—what is the water quality, how people feel about the water quality, and what we can do watershed-wide, in all 478 square miles, to improve that water quality."

The first phase of this effort includes documentation of the public's concerns about the river, its tributaries, and the land that drains to the Wabash River and

identification of goals for the Wabash River and its watershed. A public meeting will be held April 23rd to gather this information and to share very preliminary ideas and options for the future of the Wabash River. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. when Purdue University Forestry and Natural Resources capstone students will present their take on the watershed and suggest potential projects for public consideration. Linda Prokopy, professor of the Forestry and Natural Resources capstone class stated "the students developed a number of creative ideas for the future—we need to know which ones resonate with the public to help set the course for the planning process. This plan will belong to the citizens of the Greater Lafayette area, so we hope lots of people will come out to comment."

The public meeting offers the first opportunity for public input into the project. Sara Peel, watershed coordinator for the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation believes that this effort is key in developing the long-term plan. "A watershed management plan is a community-driven effort, without community input we will not have everyone's input and not all interests will be represented. Your opinions are crucial for laying the groundwork in this effort." Peel emphasized the need for public input to guide the plan's development indicating that public opinion on the Wabash River and its drainage will guide the implement plan of projects in the future. Peel stated that "without this plan, we cannot obtain funding to implement project and without public input we don't know for which projects or types of projects we should be requesting funding."

Development of the watershed management plan offers many opportunities for public involvement. Peel indicated that volunteer efforts to sample water quality, inventory the status of the watershed, staff educational booths and attend public events will be an important component of the project. If you are interested in volunteering your time and energy or participating in this exciting project, contact the Watershed Coordinator, Sara Peel at speel@lafayette.in.gov.

Additional information about the project's progress and public meetings can be found at www.WabashRiver.net.

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Sources: Sara Peel, Stan Lambert, Linda Prokopy

Related Web site: www.WabashRiver.net