

SUGAR CREEK SCOOP



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Why Do We Need a Watershed Plan?

Adapted from the Indiana Watershed Planning Guide

Watersheds serve as logical landscape units for environmental management (See **Back to Basics – What is a Watershed** on page 2). Approaching nonpoint source pollution problems in a watershed framework helps communities evaluate and prioritize problems affecting the watershed.

The development of a watershed plan will allow the watershed stakeholders:

- To be able to make it easier to obtain grant funds for existing programs and problems identified;
- To enable the community to get additional agency support;
- To provide ways to track progress with measurable results; and
- To improve the quality of life for people in the watershed by helping ensure clean water and healthy natural resources.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Why Do We Need a Watershed Plan?	1
Goals of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan	1
Back to Basics - What is a Watershed?	2
The Elements of a Watershed Management Plan	2
Characteristics of the Sugar Creek Watershed	3
Who are the Stakeholders?	4

The mission statement of the Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District reads:

The Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is a local unit of state government responsible for the conservation and development of our soil, water, and related natural resources through education, public information, leadership, technical assistance, and development of innovative programs.

The development of a watershed plan will allow the Hancock SWCD to achieve this mission by identifying solutions to existing problems to ensure clean water in the Sugar Creek watershed.

Goals of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan

The county, mostly in agricultural production, is seeing many changes in land use. Urban development is increasing as Hancock County is experiencing significant increases in population. Based on the change in population from the 2000 Census to the 2006 population estimates, Hancock County is the third fastest growing county in the state. Because of this, the watershed is being impacted by environmental problems associated with both urban and rural landscapes.

The Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan is intended to be a guide for the protection and

enhancement of the environment and quality of the Sugar Creek watershed while balancing the different uses and demands of the community on this natural resource.

The goals of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan include:

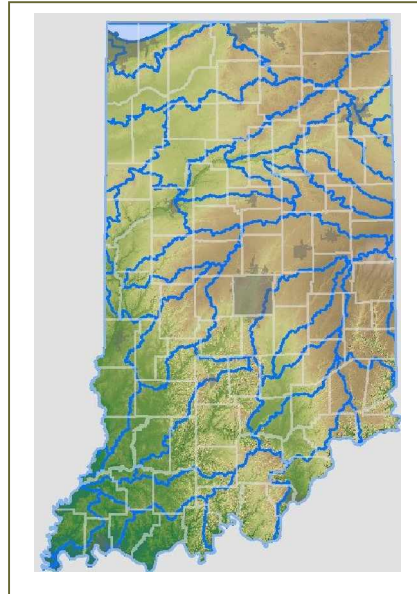
- Understand the overall nature of the watershed;
- Education and outreach;
- Preserve, protect, and benefit from the unique resources; and
- Develop a plan to achieve results through proper management and implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Back to Basics – What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area from which water drains to a single point in a natural basin and contributes flow to a place or point on a body of water. Depending on the scale of the discussion, a watershed can range in size from thousands of square miles (i.e. the Ohio River watershed) to a few acres (i.e. a farm pond watershed). Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes and can cross city, county, and state borders.

Hydrologic unit codes (HUC) were developed by the US Geological Survey in cooperation with the US Water Resource Council and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. HUCs are a way of cataloguing portions of landscape according to their drainage. Landscape units are nested within each other and described as successively smaller units.

The entire country has been mapped to the eight-digit hydrologic unit code level. Indiana is divided



Indiana 8-digit
Hydrologic Unit
Codes

into 39 watersheds at this level. In Indiana, these larger watersheds have been divided into 11-digit watersheds, and smaller 14-digit watersheds.

The Elements of a Watershed Management Plan

The Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) is charged with the conservation and development of the soil, water and related natural resources throughout Hancock County which includes a large portion of the Sugar Creek watershed. To help accomplish this goal, the SWCD applied for and received an EPA Section 319 watershed planning grant through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to study the Sugar Creek watershed and develop a management plan that would evaluate the present state of the resource, and provide guidance on how to improve and protect this vital aspect of their community.

All watershed plans prepared with Section 319 funds require certain elements to be included. The

requirements are set forth by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and are consistent with USEPA guidance.

The required elements include:

- Introducing the Watershed;
- Identifying Problems and Causes;
- Identifying Sources;
- Identifying Critical Areas;
- Setting Goals and Selecting Indicators;
- Choosing Measures/BMPs to Apply; and
- Monitoring the Effectiveness

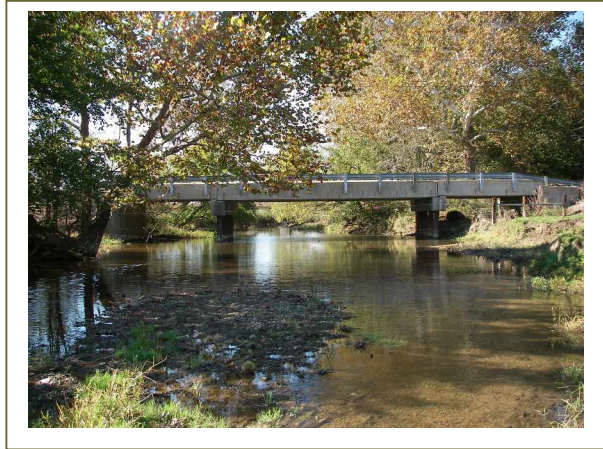
The first element, Introducing the Watershed, is described in Characteristics of the Sugar Creek Watershed on page 3. Each additional element will be described in subsequent newsletters.

Characteristics of the Sugar Creek Watershed

The first element within the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan is Introducing the Watershed which includes a detailed description of the watershed. This article will focus on a few of the physical features including the location, size, land use, and significant natural areas within the Sugar Creek watershed.

The Sugar Creek watershed encompasses approximately 84,750 acres of mixed land use. It occupies portions of Henry, Madison, Hancock, and Shelby counties. The watershed extends from the west-central portion of Henry County into south-east Madison County and north-east Hancock County. The watershed then extends through the east-central portion of Hancock County into north-west Shelby County.

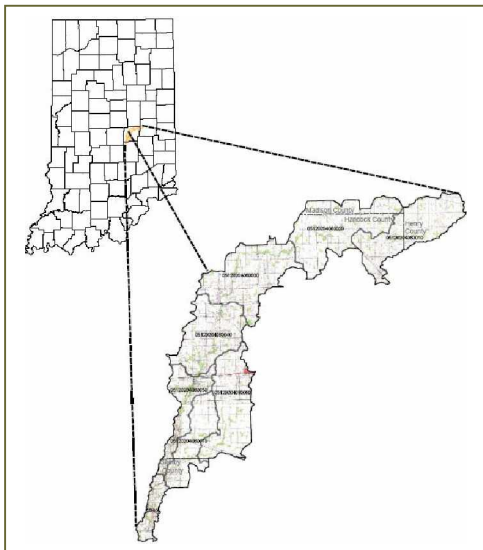
The Sugar Creek watershed consists primarily of agricultural and pasture land; however it is experiencing rapid growth in portions of the basin. The majority of the watershed is within Hancock County. A significant increase in population within Hancock County is driving increases in urban development. Based on the change in population from the 2000 Census to



the 2006 population estimates, Hancock County is the third fastest growing county in the state. As the watershed changes from a largely rural setting to one that is increasingly more urban and residential, water quality and other natural resources within the basin have become an issue of concern.

There are also a number of recreational and natural areas scattered throughout the Sugar Creek watershed. They range from parks and conservation clubs to camping activities and school grounds. Sugar Creek itself is also a significant natural area. This unique surface-water resource is home to several endangered species and species of special concern. Many portions of Sugar Creek have natural riparian zones adjacent to the river that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife and afford opportunities for wildlife viewing and enjoying the natural beauty of nature.

In the development of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan, the changes in land use and the existing natural areas will be discussed, and the existing problems and concerns will be identified. The plan will serve as a tool for the watershed stakeholders to protect and enhance the environment and quality of the Sugar Creek watershed while balancing the different uses and demands of the community on this natural resource.



Who are the Stakeholders?

In order to begin the process of identifying concerns among stakeholders in the Sugar Creek watershed, the Steering Committee met and determined who the major stakeholder groups in the watershed were.

The stakeholder groups include:

- Local homeowners and farmers
- SWCD Board of Supervisors
- County Surveyors/ Drainage Board Members
- County & Municipal Planners and Engineers
- County Health and GIS Departments
- County and City School Systems
- County Solid Waste Districts
- City, County, Town Boards
- Purdue Cooperative Extension
- Environmental Organizations
- Crop Mate and Ag One CO-OP
- USGS, IDNR, ISDA, NRCS and FSA
- City and County Park Systems
- Eli Lilly Corporation
- Hancock Regional Hospital

In the Next Issue...

Identifying Problems and Causes
Back to Basics – What is Non-Point
Source Pollution?

From this list a specific representative from each of the stakeholder groups was identified and invited to a stakeholder meeting to update them on the watershed planning process underway, and to begin gathering information on concerns people had related to Sugar Creek and its watershed.

A public meeting was held in May of 2007. At this meeting the process was again outlined and the public was given an opportunity to expand on the list of priority resource concerns. The priority resource concerns that were identified in both of these meetings will be addressed within the Watershed Management Plan. Stakeholder meetings are held monthly and periodic public meetings will be held to update the stakeholders on the progress of the Sugar Creek Watershed Management Plan.



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