

# Public Participation Plan for the Middle Huron River Subwatershed (Washtenaw County)

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The Public Participation Process is required by Part I, Section A.3.a. of the MDEQ NPDES Wastewater Discharge General Permit #MIG610000 (Watershed General Permit).

The purpose of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to facilitate the involvement of watershed jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and the general public in the revision of the Middle Huron River Subwatershed Management Plan. A watershed management plan was submitted for this subwatershed previously and approved by the MDEQ using criteria under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (US EPA's) "Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories (Oct. 23, 2003)". That approved plan will be revised to comply with Watershed General Permit requirements and reflect the current planned activities of the permitted entities listed below. This PPP is designed to involve all entities with the authority, ability, and desire to carry out the revision and implementation of the Watershed Management Plan.

## I. General Information

This Public Participation Process is submitted by the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) on behalf of the following Phase I and II watershed-based permittees within the Middle Huron River Subwatershed:

City of Ann Arbor	Washtenaw County Water
Pittsfield Charter Township	Resources Commissioner
Village of Dexter	Washtenaw County Road
City of Ypsilanti	Commission
Ypsilanti Charter Township	Ann Arbor Public Schools
Eastern Michigan University	

In addition to these "primary" communities and agencies, the Middle Huron River Subwatershed also includes portions of several other communities that are either not regulated under Phase II, not covered by a jurisdictional permit, or have, to this point, chosen not to participate in watershed group planning. The following "secondary" communities are considered stakeholders and will be encouraged to participate in the planning process:

Ann Arbor Charter Township	Scio Township
Baron Hills Village	Sylvan Township
City of Chelsea	Superior Charter Township
Dexter Township	Webster Township
Freedom Township	Washtenaw Intermediate School
Northfield Township	District
Lima Township	University of Michigan
Lodi Township	Washtenaw County Community
Salem Township	College
Sharon Township	

## II. Communication During the WMP Revision Process

The Middle Huron River Stormwater Advisory Group (SAG) will oversee the implementation of the Public Participation Plan in conjunction with the HRWC, which is facilitating the revision and submittal of the Middle Huron River Subwatershed Management Plan. The SAG includes representatives from each of the primary permittees listed above and many of the secondary entities as well. Significant effort was engaged by these entities under the previous stormwater permit to reach out to potential stakeholders and the public at large. Further, public involvement was considered in the development of two iterations of the Watershed Management Plan. As part of these efforts and others, a number of on-going citizens groups have been formed. These include creek groups for the following drainages: Allens Creek, Fleming Creek, Malletts Creek, Millers Creek, and Ford Lake. The SAG will continue to participate with and recruit representation from these important citizens groups.

The practices listed in this section will be used to solicit public participation during the watershed management plan revision process. Public input shall be encouraged in all aspects of the storm water management program. Appropriate BMPs for this minimum measure and measurable goals for each BMP shall be submitted to the Department in accordance with Part I.B.1.a.2. The following minimum actions shall be taken to encourage public input:

1. The watershed permittees shall follow local public notice requirements, as appropriate, when notifying the public that a storm water management program must be implemented. Copies of the approvable watershed management plan shall be available for public inspection, and the public shall be notified of when and where it is available.
2. The permittees shall participate in the citizen advisory committee (described below) for the purpose of encouraging public involvement in all aspects of the storm water management program.
3. The permittees shall cooperate with local stream or watershed protection organizations (in this case the HRWC), by informing them of activities under the storm water management program, providing copies of the storm water management program plan and pursuing input on the plan, seeking volunteer assistance including water quality monitoring assistance, and seeking ways to meet general permit requirements by assisting the local organizations with their ongoing programs for water resource protection and enhancement.

The following Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be carried out to meet these requirements:

### Public Notice

#### BMP 1.1. Public Notice

Description: HRWC, in conjunction with SAG partners, will notify the public that a watershed management plan was developed and encourage public input in the revision process. This will be done primarily through:

- Printing a notice in the local news media.
- Sending out an electronic notice to Huron River Watershed Council lists.
- Posting the Plan on partner websites.

In addition, several other means of communication will be utilized for announcing progress and soliciting input. These may include any of the following (described in detail later in this

document):

1. Media/press releases
2. Announcements/updates to local boards, associations, and other interested groups by SAG members
3. Articles in local newsletters
4. Public meetings
5. Web site(s), RSS and social networking sites
6. Announcements at major public events

Timeline: Year one of permit

Evaluation: Publication of notice in news media, hits on main website.

Responsible Parties: HRWC primarily, with SAG partners

### **BMP 1.2 Public Access to the Watershed Management Plan**

Description: HRWC and/or the SAG partners will publish and make available copies of the Watershed Management Plan on the HRWC website, HRWC offices and SAG partner offices.

Timeline: Year one of permit

Evaluation: Number of people who review the plan at various locations

Responsible Parties: HRWC and SAG partners

### **Citizen Advisory Committee**

#### **BMP 1.3 Citizen Advisory Committee**

Description: The Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner's (WCWRC) office will oversee the implementation of the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) in conjunction with the Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC). The CAC was originally formed and the beginning of the original Phase II permit process. It continues to meet three times a year on an as needed basis. Representatives from the municipalities covered under Phase I and II in Washtenaw County will be solicited to reconvene the CAC and the SAG will develop a list of interested stakeholders to invite to join in CAC meetings. Representation from existing citizens creek groups will be particularly sought. This group will meet to review the Watershed Management Plan and provide feedback. It will also facilitate the implementation of the plan by meeting on a regular basis.

Timeline: on-going; start in year one of permit

Evaluation: Document citizen participation; annual survey of citizen advisory committee for feedback

Responsible Parties: WCWRC, HRWC

#### **BMP 1.4 Watershed Management Plan Review**

Description: A copy of the current Watershed Management Plan will be made available to the public as indicated in BMP 1.2. Initial feedback will be solicited through a variety of means, including a CAC meeting. Separate meetings may need to be scheduled to review different sections of the WMP. Once the review is complete, feedback will be incorporated into a second draft and redistributed for further public review. A final copy will be made available to the public and submitted to the MDEQ following a 30-day review period of the second draft.

Timeline: Completed in year two of the permit

Evaluation: Comments from the CAC and general public.

Responsible Parties: HRWC and SAG partners

In order to ensure diverse and comprehensive public participation, many mechanisms need to be employed to reach the public. At the same time, numerous opportunities for public input and feedback in the watershed management planning process are necessary.

The Middle Huron River permittees and the HRWC seek to incorporate into this plan four assumptions:

- the process we develop holds the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision,
- that we will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected,
- that we will try to involve the public in defining how they participate (this entails that we build some room for flexibility in the proposal), and
- that we will communicate to the public how their input affected the plan.

The following techniques/mechanisms will be used in the Middle Huron River subwatershed:

1. **E-mail Distribution List:** An e-mail distribution list already exists for the Middle Huron River Subwatershed group. It is used for meeting notices and agendas to members of the steering committee and other individuals who have requested to be included on this list. This email list will also be used to get the word out about public meetings, workshops and training opportunities, and news updates. HRWC will also administer another e-mail distribution list for stakeholders who have expressed an interest at the public meetings about being more involved and for secondary local governments. This list serve will notify members of the watershed planning meetings.
2. **Press Releases:** Press releases will be used at various points in the watershed management plan revision process. At the beginning of the project, a press release will serve to kick off the process and announce the first public meeting. As the process progresses, other releases will be made on public involvement opportunities such as volunteer monitoring events and when there are major findings. When applicable, calls to local press with story ideas (major findings, land use changes, new regulations, etc.) will be made. Press releases will go to news media, radio and cable TV outlets.
3. **Announcement and Updates:** SAG members will make announcements and updates on the watershed management planning process to local boards, councils, associations and other interested groups. HRWC will also give updates and announcements at their Board meetings and other respective meetings. Announcements will come at key milestone points, such as prior to a public meeting or following the release of a WMP iteration. HRWC will coordinate these announcements and SAG members will deliver them.
4. **Newsletter Articles:** Articles in local government, utility, and HRWC newsletters will be published to communicate progress and solicit input from the public. HRWC will provide the article text and any images, and SAG members will publish where appropriate.
5. **Public Meetings:** Multiple public meetings will serve as a main forum of communication with the public about the watershed management plan revision process. The initial meeting will provide an overview of the plan and present the progress made to date under current and previous iterations of the WMP. Initial feedback will be solicited, and a plan for more detailed input will be provided, based on the interests of those present. Subsequent meetings will be driven by stakeholder interest and focus on different

sections of the WMP. The final meeting will give interested stakeholders a chance to comment on the complete, revised version of the WMP.

6. Website: Websites have been developed for this WMP at both HRWC and WCWRC. Each site will reference the other and one will be selected as the main information site, to avoid duplication and confusion. This site will be referred to in all announcements and press releases. It will allow anyone to find out more about the WMP and its status. Website links from other local government home pages will be made to the main website. Hits to this site will be tracked and evaluated.
7. Major Public Events: Several communities host public events that provide an opportunity for educating the public about watershed planning efforts in their community and encouraging their involvement. Major public events include Huron River Day, the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival and Pride Day, Pittsfield Township Business to Business, and various Earth Day events. Flyers will be made available at displays at such events to encourage public participation in the WMP review process.

#### IV. Timeline for the Review Process

The following schedule outlines the timeframe for soliciting participation in the watershed plan review process, including estimates of timing and frequency of each activity identified in Part III and milestones for watershed plan revision. Implementation of the PPP will begin immediately. Soliciting public participation will be on-going throughout the project with increased activity before the public meetings in an attempt to reach the broader public.

Tasks	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter 2009	Q4 2009	Q1 2010	Q2 2010	Q3 2010	Q4 2010	Q1 2011
Soliciting participation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Quarterly meetings of the SAG	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CAC meetings				X		X	X
<b>WMP Revision</b>							
1. Posting of existing WMP	X						
2. Public review and comment				X	X	X	X
3. Revision and posting of new draft					X	X	X
4. Finalize and submit to MDEQ							X
<b>Communication Mechanisms</b>							
1. E-mail distribution list	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2. Press Releases			X			X	X
3. Announcement and Updates			X		X		X
4. Articles in newsletters			X			X	X
5. Public meetings				X		X	X
6. Website	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7. Major Public Events			X	X	X		

The successful implementation of this public participation plan will help to ensure that the overall planning process is a success, and most importantly that the health of the Middle Huron River Watershed improves by including a proactive approach to public participation.

## **V. Dovetailing Watershed Management Planning with Public Education Plan**

This PPP is intended to provide a mechanism to change people's behavior in order to improve the quality of the subwatershed. The PPP that we implement during the planning process can make the task of changing people's behavior easier by exposing them to the messages and images they will be seeing as part of each permittee's on-going Public Education Plan (PEP). An average individual must be exposed to a message between 7-10 times before they begin to notice it, and upwards of 20 times before they actively consider acting on the message.

The PPP and PEP will complement each other in conveying the same messages over and over again to reinforce positive behavior changes and involvement. In addition to developing this PPP on behalf of the Middle Huron River Watershed permittees, the HRWC is developing a PEP for use by the permittees. HRWC is also leading the watershed management plan review process and will work to integrate the PPP and PEP efforts on behalf of the permittees.

## **VI. Coming to Agreement**

The primary partners in the Middle Huron River Watershed have decided to come to agreement and make decisions through consensus-based decision-making when possible. It is not expected that there will be many contentious decisions during the process. However, if consensus-based decision-making does not work in a situation, the SAG has agreed to a majority vote mechanism. Each SAG member will get one vote. Differing positions/opinions regarding contentious (not consensus-based) issues will be documented in a summary of each regular meeting of the partners. At the request of the group or individual group member, positions of a party on a contentious issue will be documented in the Watershed Management Plan or Plan appendices.

## **VII. Adaptive Management**

The Middle Huron River Watershed SAG realizes that this process is an iterative one—we start down a road and expect to make changes and adjust work plans accordingly. Some activities will work better and we will expand on those and learn from the mistakes we make by changing the plan accordingly.

In order to evaluate our efforts in public participation, we will track public participation at the public meetings and we will ask attendees how they heard of the meeting. We will also have an evaluation form at each public meeting. We will expand on the communication mechanisms that worked to get the public involved (those identified by attendees) for future meeting announcements. If there are certain mechanisms that didn't work, we will reevaluate them and try to expand on the successful mechanisms.