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Portage Creek Watershed Management

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HRWC facilitated the development of a watershed management plan for this high-quality watershed in 2010. With funding under the Clean Water Act (lasting from 2012 to 2014), HRWC partnered with the townships in the watershed to implement ordinance changes to protect the creek. We also launched a campaign to educate creekshed residents about the importance of maintaining natural vegetation along creek banks and lake shores.

IMPLEMENTING THE PORTAGE CREEK MANAGEMENT PLAN

HRWC worked with the townships in the watershed to implement two key elements of the Management Plan:

1. improving local ordinances to protect Portage Creek, its tributaries, and lakes and
2. educating residents in the creekshed about the importance of protecting it and what actions they can take to keep the creek and its tributaries and lakes healthy.

ABOUT THE PORTAGE CREEK

The best way to safeguard water quality is to prevent its decline in the first place. The natural character of the Portage Creek watershed helps protect the quality of its fresh water. Native trees, shrubs and plants in the areas around streams and lakes play a vital role. Also known as “[shoreline or riparian buffers](#)“, they capture rainwater runoff, filter out pollutants and sediment, reduce and regulate the water volume and flow, and moderate water temperatures. The natural areas along the banks of Portage Creek and the waterways that feed it ensure that the water stays clean.



By working together, we can keep the Portage Creek system healthy for future generations.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Thanks to funding from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) under the Clean Water Act, from 2011-2014 HRWC worked with communities within the Portage Creek watershed to begin implementing the Portage Creek Watershed Management Plan adopted in 2010. [Brochure about the Portage Creek Project](#) (PDF)

The Plan is the only one in the Huron River watershed that MDEQ designated as one focusing on *protection* – preventing future impacts from degrading a high quality, mostly natural creekshed – as opposed to *mitigation* – cleaning up waters already degraded from agricultural and development practices. The Portage Creek Implementation Project focused on the following two priority activities.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING

HRWC partnered with Lyndon, Dexter and Unadilla townships, holding public workshops to discuss green infrastructure – the forests, wetlands, lakes, streams and other open areas that clean the air, filter polluted runoff, replenish drinking water supplies, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, and maintain quality of life.

The workshops resulted in a plan and map describing the extent and value of each community’s green infrastructure with options for development planning that is in concert with it. Additional efforts included working to improve local ordinances that help protect the watershed’s freshwater as future development occurs.

As a result, Lyndon Township added riparian protections to their Lake Conservation District, requiring homes to be set back at least 100 feet from the waterfront and a vegetated buffer of 25 feet be maintained. Dexter Township staff created language protective of water quality in their site plan review and open space ordinance, and are working on language requiring setbacks from waterbodies in their various residential districts. Finally, Unadilla Township is considering an overlay zone for Portage Creek.

[Lyndon Township Green Infrastructure Planning Document](#) (PDF)

[Dexter Township Green Infrastructure Planning Document](#) (PDF)

[Unadilla Township Green Infrastructure Planning Document](#) (PDF)

For local planning information contact: Kris Olsson, kolsson@hrwc.org, (734) 769-5123 x 607.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The pre-project survey of Portage Creek watershed riparian residents showed that 91% feel a personal responsibility to care for water quality. [Report on Pre-Project Residents Survey](#) (PDF)

Targeting this sentiment, HRWC updated and mailed “[Waterfront Wisdom](#)” (originally produced by the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner) to all shoreline homeowners in the project area and ran a series of advertisements promoting best practices. Topics included shoreline buffers that use native plants to help infiltrate runoff, the use of natural shoreline techniques and septic



system care.

Deeper information was added to HRWC's Waterfront Wisdom pages, [Take Action Tip Pages: Be Waterfront Wise](#).

ADDITIONAL HRWC RESOURCES ON PORTAGE CREEK

Jump to HRWC's [Portage Creek Page](#), where you will find interesting facts about the watershed's history, geology and ecology as well as links to a [Portage Creekshed Report](#) sharing results of HRWC's monitoring efforts and watershed maps.

ADDITIONAL HRWC RESOURCES ON STREAM OR RIPARIAN BUFFERS

Jump to HRWC's [Shoreline Protection Page](#), where you will learn how the trees, shrubs and plants, and grasses along a stream or lake provide a natural and gradual transition from terrestrial to aquatic environments and protect lakes and rivers from physical and chemical pollutants. The page has links to our [Buffer Brochure for Residents](#) and several examples of buffers in Green Oak, Scio and Putnam townships.

PORTAGE CREEK WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

Portage Creek and the land that drains to it is the focus of our most recent watershed planning effort. Why "watershed management"? By managing activities on the land that drains to Portage Creek, we protect and improve our local water resources. Almost every activity on the land has the potential to affect the quality and quantity of water in our waterways. Watershed planning brings together the people within the watershed to address those activities. Individuals working together can design a coordinated watershed management plan that builds upon the strengths of existing programs and resources, and addresses water quality and quantity concerns in an integrated, cost-effective manner.

Development of a watershed management plan is a requirement of the State of Michigan and the U.S. EPA for communities to be eligible for grant funds through the Clean Water Act.

This project was funded through section 319 of the Clean Water Act and administered by U.S. EPA and MDEQ.

PARTNERS

HRWC staff facilitated the development of the Portage Creek Watershed Management Plan by engaging the key land use decision makers and stakeholders in the Portage Creek area. The project partners include:

- [Village of Stockbridge](#)
- [Dexter Township](#)
- [Lyndon Township](#)
- [Putnam Township](#)
- Stockbridge Township
- Unadilla Township
- [Waterloo Township](#)
- [Ingham County](#)
- [Jackson County](#)
- [Livingston County](#)
- [Washtenaw County](#)
- [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality](#)
- [Michigan Department of Natural Resources](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture NRCS](#)
- [Livingston Land Conservancy](#)
- [The Nature Conservancy](#)
- [Legacy Land Conservancy](#)

THE PLAN

The Portage Creek Watershed Management Plan was approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment. The Plan allows local governments, nonprofit organizations, school systems, colleges and universities to apply for state and federal grant funding to implement priority activities. Current and anticipated impacts from threats to watershed health, notably altered hydrology, excess nutrients, and sediment, are targeted for mitigation by the recommended management activities developed by the Plan.

Sections of the Plan can be downloaded here:

[Cover Page/Acknowledgements/Table of Contents](#) (5 MB)

[Section I. Executive Summary](#)

[Section II. Introduction](#)

[Section III. Watershed Description; Maps of Portage Creek Watershed](#) (13 MB)

[Section IV. Watershed Conditions](#) (8 MB)

[Section V. Methods: Watershed Characterization and Assessment](#)

[Section VI. Portage Creek Management Strategy](#) (16 MB)

[Section VII. Management Strategy Implementation](#)

Appendices are available separately on CD upon request to [Elizabeth Riggs](#), Watershed Planner.

IN THIS SECTION

Watershed Management Planning

[Middle Huron River Watershed Management Plan, Section 2](#)

[Upper Huron/Kent Lake Subwatershed Advisory Group](#)

[Livingston Watershed Advisory Group](#)

[Middle Huron Partners](#)

[Alliance of Downriver Watersheds](#)

[Portage Creek Watershed Management](#)

Portage Creek Watershed Management

[Downloads for Watershed Advisory Group](#)



LEARN

What is a watershed? How big is it? Get informed.



VOLUNTEER

Get outside, collect data, have fun!



DONATE

There are lots of ways to support our work. Dig in here.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Join us in giving the river the love and care it needs.

“Protecting and restoring the Huron River System – so all in our connected communities can enjoy and benefit from this essential

natural resource for generations to come.”



STAY CONNECTED AND UPDATED

A lot happens with HRWC and the watershed. Get notified of new events, initiatives and outcomes by subscribing to our e-mail newsletter.



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