

## **Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan Update**

~ Summary of Project Activities, Outcomes, & Benefits ~

### **Project Description**

The Conservation Foundation, in collaboration with the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition, is working to remediate and prevent degradation of the Aux Sable Creek watershed. The pace of development is so rapid that we need to continue efforts to improve development practices, avoiding approaches that have been proven to be detrimental to creek quality. Studies show that as impervious area increases in a watershed, a creek's quality degrades – they are directly connected. This project seeks to reverse those findings and work to protect the creek and the quality of life for the communities growing into the watershed. The proposed project includes two components: 1) updating and strengthening the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan and 2) education and outreach to protect the Creek.

We must continue work to position the community to initiate and continue projects to remediate and protect the Aux Sable Creek and its watershed.

### **Components**

#### 1. Update and Strengthen the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan

- The IEPA requires that watershed plan address nine criteria in order to qualify for future funding through the 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Source Program. The Aux Sable Plan will be updated to meet those criteria, which include:
  - An identification of the causes and sources of NPS pollution
  - An estimate of the pollutant load reductions expected following implementation
  - A description of measures to implement to achieve pollutant load reductions estimated
  - An estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed, associated costs, and/or the sources that can implement the plan
  - A public information/education component that is designed to change social behavior
  - A implementation schedule
  - A description of measurable milestones
  - A set of criteria to determine whether pollutant loading reductions are being achieved
  - A monitoring component
- A master open space/green infrastructure plan will be an appendix item (completing an open space plan for the watershed – similar to PKN process & using GIS)

#### 2. Education & Outreach

This is integral to protecting the quality of the Aux Sable Creek. A plan, once completed, cannot sit on a shelf. We need to work to promote and implement it. Several strategies have been identified:

- Contacting landowners pursuant to the watershed's master open space plan (similar to PKN)
- Conducting educational presentations to promote the updated Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan and educate on conservation design principles to a variety of local entities. Activities to include:
  - Giving informational presentations on how water quality is protected through open space/green infrastructure planning and encouraging sustainable development within the watershed.
  - Sharing information on best management practices
- Facilitating model conservation design developments in the Aux Sable Creek
  - Target developers in the area with a training module providing more information to developers to encourage conservation and sustainable development principles through a better understanding of the benefits, availability of resources, and market interest.
  - Emphasizing the cost savings of green principles (open space, best management practices, and green building) through use of the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Green Infrastructure Calculator and other appropriate tools to make conservation design development the norm in the Aux Sable Creek watershed.
- Educating local governments and the general public on protection and stewardship of natural areas.

### **Outcomes**

- Updated watershed plan, meeting IEPA criteria.
- Watershed-wide open space plan (in GIS).
- All landowners in watershed with areas identified as open space have been contacted – to gauge interest in land preservation, continue education about conservation options, and work with interested landowners.
- Recommendations for ordinance updates to encourage less hard infrastructure (use green infrastructure) and development methods that respect the natural environment – through use of more BMPs.
- More conservation design and sustainably developed new developments – due to developer's & local government's higher level of understanding on the benefits and implementation.

### **Benefits**

In addition to the measurable outcomes we identified, there are long term benefits and less tangible benefits to the project as well. Those include:

- Further implementation of goals in area comprehensive plans regarding protecting quality of life, building a relationship between human activities and the environment, preserving natural resources, and providing public open space.
- A base from which local governments can collaborate and achieve funding efficiencies. Local governments can use the master open space plan to demonstrate how desired land fits into their preservation plans when seeking public and private funding for acquisition.

- Positioned to qualify for future EPA funding to protect creek, with projects meeting the updated plan. (This would be available to groups such as the watershed coalition, local governments, local land trust organizations, other community organizations.)
  - For example, if the watershed plan update finds stream bank erosion to be an issue, then a future project to stabilize the shoreline could qualify for IEPA 319 funds because it fits with a plan.
- Long-term benefits and systematic solutions of
  - reduced storm water runoff and flooding
  - improved water quality
  - improved air quality
  - continued wildlife viability
- Increased property values
- Lower crime rates (studies from the University of Illinois Landscape and Human Health Laboratory show evidence of landscaping reducing crime rates)
- Fewer public expenditures on engineered solutions to:
  - storm water management and flood control
  - water quality protection
  - erosion control
- Compliments other local activities:
  - Local watershed organizations: Aux Sable, Nettle, Mazon
  - Kendall County Forest Preserve District
  - Morris Community Foundation’s Community Works program in Morris area & throughout Grundy County
  - Forest Preserve District of Will County
  - Grundy County forest preserve district discussions
  - Prairie Parklands Ecosystem Partnership
  - Illinois Headwaters RC&D formation

**Funding**

Total project cost (2 years): \$231,126.00.

<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Funder</u>	<u>Status</u>
56 %	\$129,600	Illinois EPA	Confirmed
26 %	\$60,281	Grand Victoria Foundation	Confirmed
6 %	\$15,000	Morris Community Foundation	Requested 3/15/07
1%	\$2,500	Kodak American Greenways	Applying in May
11 %	\$26,500	local governmental units	Requesting
1 %	\$3,000	Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition	Raising funds