



The Watershed Partnership Project

2003-0025

September 1, 2003 -- August 31, 2004

The Rice Creek & Battle Creek River Watershed Partnership Project began as a pilot effort to prioritize and streamline conservation program assistance in the Rice Creek and Battle Creek River watersheds. The overall goal of this project was to build a diverse, coordinated and *sustainable* partnership of conservation agencies, organizations and other stakeholders that would minimize duplication and maximize results. With 67% of the watersheds in agricultural use, the centerpiece to this effort was the prioritization of USDA Farm Bill funding to the two watersheds. The Calhoun Conservation District was awarded transitional funding for one year through MDEQ to establish this partnership while finalizing the watershed plan for the Rice Creek watershed. Over 20 agencies, organizations and municipalities have signed on to the cooperative agreement, proving that the partners all see the benefit of working together. In August 2004, the watersheds were awarded 319 implementation funds that last through 2007, but most actual BMP implementation will be coordinated through other partner programs. The partners are optimistic about the opportunities to improve, enhance and maintain designated uses *and* water quality in the two watersheds. Program funding such as that of the USDA Farm Bill, USFWS's Partners for Wildlife Program, and MDNR's Landowner Incentive Program will compliment the grassroots efforts of groups like Pheasants Forever and Trout Unlimited to get conservation on the ground with public and private stakeholders.

Key Partners:

- USDA– NRCS
- Potawatomi RC&D
- MDNR
- Drain Commissions
- Trout Unlimited
- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Conservation Districts
- Cities, Townships and Villages
- Pheasants Forever

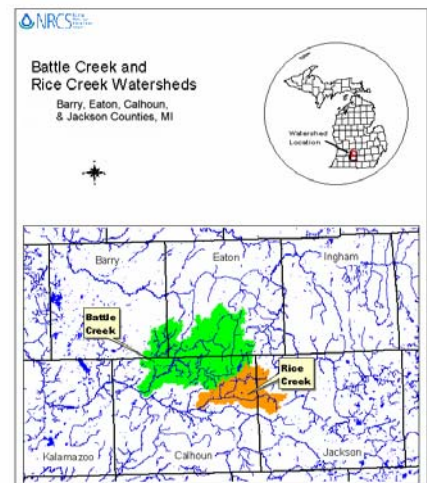
I&E Activities:

- Conservation Expo
- Brochures
- Press Releases / permanent news column
- Presentations
- Stream monitoring with schools

Grant Amount: \$54,997

Match Funds: \$39,909

Total Amount: \$94,906



Trout Habitat Project, Rice Creek

Moving Forward

A Steering Team and several technical advisory groups are being formed and overseen by stakeholders of the two watersheds who will ensure that the momentum of this project will be carried forward after 319 funding is exhausted. Long-term indicators such as phosphorus loads, temperature, and hydrology will all be routinely tracked to help guide better decision making down the road. The key to a sustainable partnership has been and will be involved citizens and good communication between partners.

Other Partner Projects / Reports

Partnership Projects:

- Grassland Restorations
- Wetland restorations
- Trout habitat project
- Fish ladder
- Stream restoration
- Geomorphic assessments

USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service(NRCS)

Conservation Planner training was held in Calhoun in May of 2004, all four Farm Bill applications were accepted, and NRCS also reported on the finalized Dowding property demonstration bank restoration in the Battle Creek River Watershed (Clean Michigan Initiative grant).

Pheasants Forever:

Calhoun County habitat plantings included over 140 acres. There are also 17 acres planned for seeding this year. Approximately 165 acres of controlled burns to either establish native warm season grasses or to enhance these practices were completed. Also, Eaton County Pheasants Forever provided seed for the 538 acres of prairie grass plantings in the Battle Creek River Watershed.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program recently planted 28 acres of native warm season grasses on 2 different parcels in the Battle Creek watershed. Half of this acreage further enhances one of the parcels on which the Partners program restored 4 different wetland basins in 2003. The wetlands have filled to capacity due to copious amounts of precipitation this spring, and wildlife species have responded accordingly.

Trout Unlimited

Earlier in the year the local chapter of TU set August 14 as a work date for the Rice Creek half log project, which came to fruition. Recently the calendar of summer events, including the August work date, was sent out as postcards to over 500 members and friends.

Michigan Dept of Natural Resources - Wildlife Division

The Michigan DNR Landowner Incentive Program visited 3 landowners in the Battle Creek watershed, offering technical assistance on 200 acres. They will be cost-sharing on one prairie burn and a prairie restoration and exploring a burn with multiple landowners of a prairie fen.

Ducks Unlimited

DU and the USFWS signed the grant agreement for the Grand River watershed project. DU will receive and administer this grant on behalf of a coalition of conservation partners that collectively are responsible for the success of the proposal. While no work has been completed under the grant, the project area covers parts of the Rice Creek and Battle Creek River watersheds. Lots of work on private lands will occur via the grant in these sub-watersheds. Work will be completed under this grant over the next two years (2004-2006).

Drain Commissioners

Several drain clearings occurred in Eaton County. Some sites were noted as having other resource concerns and will be followed up with landowner contacts. The Eaton Drain Commission was also involved in the Narrow Lake - Lake Level Project. Along with the lake level project a "fish ladder" was built with assistance from USFWS, MDNR, the Battle Creek River Watershed Project and others.