



partnerships for healthy rivers



March 2022 • Monthly Update

A Fresh Perspective...



Thank you for taking a little time to see what one perspective, MWA and its partners, of watershed stewardship looks like. This MWA newsletter is for thinkers, from as many different viewpoints as possible, to look into what we are doing. The hope is that someone, somewhere, sometime may see an activity on these pages and ask: Why? How can I participate? Have you thought about this? Have you seen what we are doing?

For thousands of years our areas larger and smaller watershed have operated in balance. Principally because they had thousands of years to balance out. With the influx of European settlers a few hundred years ago this natural balance had a new input – civilization. As communities grew, resources were used in different way to fuel that growth. All seemed in harmony with the plentiful natural resources then available.

We've reached a point where collectively it's understood that a fresh perspective is needed in how we are using our natural resources. Some will say we reached that point quite a while ago. Either way, most agree that our watersheds are stressed and in need of a fresh perspective to ensure safe and plentiful water for ALL.

There are dozens if not hundreds of organizations, governmental and NGO's, with just about the same number of 'practices' or solutions being *practiced* to address the watershed/water quality concerns. Unfortunately time marches on quicker than we realize. What we believe to be relatively new approaches: reduce consumption, recycle, no-till, cover crops just to name a few; are going on 10,20 and 30 years of implementation with very little measurable positive results on the watersheds health.

That doesn't mean we're not trying. That doesn't mean stop trying. That doesn't mean abandon what we've been trying. It does mean we've been doing the same type of 'things' for a long time expecting different results that we're not seeing. Often the 'new thing' is simply an adaption of an old tradition.

For example from agriculture: Fifty – seventy five years ago a farmer likely had row crops and livestock.

Especially in this area it wouldn't have been uncommon to have the livestock operation close to a ravine, stream or river as an easy way to remove the manure. Of course there were also farmers who realized the value of manure and used it for nutrients on the crops. Fast forward to today farming operations are huge and specialized. The value on manure on crops is still there. However, entering into the equation today is the large volume of manure from large operations, transportation costs to 'move it'. Add to that the increases in the severity and frequency of storm events that 'move it' where we least want it – into streams and rivers.

What to do? This example could be simply stated as what to do with the waste stream of a produced product. All sorts of manufacturing industries are monetizing their waste. Particle board and chip board are repurposed waste from the lumber industry. Methane gas from an area landfill is, in part, powering a GM plant as is the same gas at the municipal sewage treatment plant powering some of its equipment. The solids from that sewage treatment plant are now monetized as soil amendment that at one time were given away and are now sold.

Back to the example of livestock manure. You've read on these pages that the MWA is partnering on a demonstration project over the next two years to process manure into a sellable commodity. We're not the only ones doing this and ours is not the only way. However, we are looking at that 'waste' with a new perspective. Not just pushing it back on the surrounding fields. Instead, make a marketable byproduct from an existing operation. Hopefully creating another revenue stream, not cost, for the producer. Let's all do our best to look at what is and has been with new perspectives. It's what works!

Dan Wire, Maumee Watershed Alliance

Pontoon Tours





Book Your Tour Now!

The Allen County SWCD and the Maumee Watershed Alliance have teamed up to give tours of Fort Wayne's three rivers – the St. Mary's, the St. Joseph's, and the Maumee. These tours are designed to educate both farmers and urbanites on the importance of water quality and the part everyone plays in maintaining and improving the water quality around Allen County. Riding the river also gives an understanding of the programs already in place to improve and maintain water quality and the opportunities to get involved.

To book a tour for your group email us at info@maumeewatershedalliance.org

YOU CAN HELP!

Your donations support current and future efforts in water quality, community engagement and education, and the projects of the MWA and partnering watershed organizations.

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