



Cass River Greenway

c/o 240 West Genesee Street
Frankenmuth, Michigan 48734

www.cassriver.org

Cass River Greenway Year End Report

January 11, 2010

By CRG Chairman, Robert Zeilinger

Community Membership:

Since organizing in early 2008, the Cass River Greenway Committee Membership consisted of volunteer residents and municipal leaders from Bridgeport Township, Frankenmuth Township, City of Frankenmuth, Tuscola Township and City of Vassar. In 2009 membership grew to include Caro and Cass City. Expanding the regional base for the work of the Cass River Greenway project is critical to achieving many of the goals of the project and to pursuing grant funding.

Agency Support:

The Cass River Greenway Committee is strongly supported by county, state and federal agencies whose representatives are members of the committee. They include; MDEQ Water Bureau, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service/Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, U.S.D.A./Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Parks Service/Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance, U.M. Flint /Community Outreach, Saginaw Bay Land Conservancy, Saginaw Area Storm Water Authority, Saginaw County Conservation District.

Financial Support:

During 2008 and 2009 the Cass River Greenway Committee received donations totaling \$20,790 from local clubs, individuals, companies and foundations. These funds were used to develop communication tools such as brochures and our web site, provide matching funds for grant requests such as the water trail project, and project work such as concept designs for the water trail. The committee has \$1721 cash available for continuing project work in 2010.

Project Grants Received:

In 2008 we received a \$58,000 grant from the Department of Agriculture to conduct a Rapid Watershed Assessment of the Cass River Watershed. This assessment was a high level study of current conditions and issues present in the watershed. It is the first step required in developing a watershed management plan, which identifies specific problems and solutions for water quality improvements.

In 2009 we received a grant of \$2752 from the MDEQ and Saginaw Storm Water Authority to help finance a volunteer river cleanup project that was held in July. More than 60 volunteers participated in the fun and effective day. We also received two major grants to finance the construction of three new canoe/kayak launches; \$29,000 from the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network, and \$83,400 from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund.

GOAL - Develop Recreation Opportunities on the Cass River and along the corridor:

The design and construction of a water trail on the Cass River was our top priority in this area. During summer of 2008 an assessment was completed on a section of the river from Vassar to Bridgeport, looking at river conditions, paddle times and existing and potential launch sites. It was determined to prioritize the section from Vassar to Frankenmuth and build three new launch sites; in Vassar, Tuscola and Frankenmuth. Preliminary designs were developed, community support was received and final funding was accomplished with the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant. Construction is planned for late summer, 2010. The committee will now begin working with neighboring communities upstream and downstream to explore expansion of the water trail.

A second recreation initiative involved the recruitment of area bicyclists to document "preferred" bike routes in the area from Vassar to Bridgeport. These routes have been mapped, containing both city routes and rural routes.

A Water Trail/Bike Route brochure has been designed and printing is planned for early 2010. The maps will also be available on the web site.

GOAL - Preserve and Enhance Wildlife Habitat:

The preservation of scenic vistas and wildlife habitat is important to a vibrant and healthy watershed. The Cass River Greenway is in the process of sponsoring a Natural Lands Inventory and Assessment study in partnership with U.M. Flint. This study involves an assessment of existing habitat lands (forests, grasslands, wetlands, etc.) and ranks them as to their value/importance to sustaining wildlife populations. It also can be used to identify critical "corridors" or "linkages" that are important to preserve or develop. The results of the study are intended to aid municipalities and townships in their planning activities and provide a basis for land preservation programs.

The Cass River Greenway Committee is currently beginning the process of community communications/support building and fund raising. We hope to complete the assessment in 2010.

GOAL - Improve Water Quality:

This goal is a long term goal, but one that is critical to the residents of the Cass River Watershed. All the efforts that go into recreation development and fish/wildlife enhancement become muted if water quality is not improved. A major first step was completed in 2008 with the completion of the Rapid Watershed Assessment. The complete report is available on our web site.

In addition, during the summer of 2008 a riverbank soil erosion study was completed for the section of river from Vassar to Bridgeport. Areas of high erosion were documented and bank stabilization projects are being planned, pending available financial support.

In 2009, with the support of the MDEQ and U.S.D.A./Natural Resources Conservation Service, a Watershed Management Plan Proposal and a funding request were submitted for the Cass River Watershed. If approved, this will initiate a two year planning process that results in an action plan of remediation projects to improve water quality in the Cass River. Funding decisions will be made in spring 2010 regarding this project.

GOAL - Promote Good Environmental Stewardship Practices:

As each of the three goals mentioned above are implemented, stewardship practices are documented and promoted. For example, the brochure of the water trail lists good stewardship practices for those using the river. The Natural Lands Inventory and Assessment will identify areas where improvements can be made that assist not only wildlife, but the environment as well.

GOAL - Develop Eco-Tourism Opportunities:

As recreation opportunities are developed, this goal will be pursued not only by the Cass River Greenway Committee but hopefully by the communities and their organizations that border the Cass River. We intend to develop promotional materials, educational materials, and communication forums for the region to utilize.

Organization and Communication Activities:

The Cass River Greenway has become a member of the Frankenmuth Chamber of Commerce.

The Cass River Greenway has partnered with the Frankenmuth Community Foundation in establishing a “Friends of the Cass River” account, thus qualifying as a 501(3) organization.

A web site has been designed and can be accessed at www.cassriver.org

For more information about the Cass River Greenway Project, contact

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