

NEWS RELEASE

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Local Plans Eligible for State Incentives

The 22 jurisdictions in the Swan Creek watershed have a strong incentive to work together. If most of the jurisdictions in the watershed agree on a locally developed priority conservation and development plan, they will be eligible for incentives from the state to implement the plan.

The Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG) is facilitating the process, working with a technical committee representing the watershed, and providing research and other support for the Swan Creek Pilot Project.

The Swan Creek watershed is one of three areas in Ohio chosen by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission for this pilot incentive plan. The concept is that people who live and work in an environmentally connected area will make a plan for their own region, identifying areas they would like to conserve and areas where new development could go. Once a plan is developed, and three quarters of the jurisdictions endorse it, they become eligible for special access to financial or technical assistance from state agencies to implement the plan. Examples of this assistance include tax benefits for job creation in a priority development area and extra points on grant applications for park and recreation projects.

Beginning in 2006, representatives from the Swan Creek area developed criteria to fit land into one of three categories: Priority Agricultural, Priority Development, or Priority Conservation. Now TMACOG and the technical committee that developed the draft plan

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Swan Creek – add one

are presenting it to every jurisdiction in the watershed to make sure that all watershed interests are represented.

Priority Development Areas on the draft plan are those areas that are near roads, water supply, and sewerage. Priority Agricultural Areas are important farmlands with drainage capacity that the people in the region want to keep as farms or open space. Priority Conservation Areas were identified based on presence of wetlands and rare plants or animals. Conservation areas are also land along streams, larger forested parcels, and land within a floodplain. Much of the areas identified as Priority Conservation Areas are part of the Oak Openings region. The Oak Openings region is a unique environmental area, recognized internationally as a valuable and rare ecosystem that is home to many endangered plants and animals.

Presentations throughout the area will take place in early 2008 at village and township meetings. For information on time and location, see the Environment pages at www.tmacog.org or call Kurt Erichsen at 419.241.9155 ext. 126. Before the end of 2008, the committee will incorporate concerns, finalize the priorities, and ask each jurisdiction for formal endorsement of the Swan Creek Pilot Project.

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