

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PORTAGE LAKE WATERSHED COUNCIL TO UPDATE PORTAGE LAKE WATERSHED FOREVER PLAN

ONEKAMA, MICHIGAN – The Portage Lake Watershed Council, formed in 2008 to implement the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan, is updating the Plan that meets State and Federal standards and has been recognized as a best practice throughout Michigan. The U.S. Environmental Protection guidelines call for updating watershed plans every ten years or sooner.

“Thanks to the financial and volunteer support of hundreds of people, we have accomplished a great deal to protect and put the watershed plan into practice,” said council chair Mary Reed. “With the support of watershed specialists from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, we will soon start a process to evaluate watershed needs and priorities, identify new or evolving issues and trends and make whatever adjustments are needed to keep us on track to preserve and protect our high quality watershed.”

Reed gave thanks to other Council members and to community members and agencies that have supported Plan implementation.

“While there is always more to do, we must also take time to reflect on what has been accomplished; I think everyone can feel proud of what has been done,” Reed said.

Actions taken or supported by the Watershed Council since 2008 have included:

- Raised money to acquire and preserve in perpetuity wetlands on the southeastern shore of Portage Lake to provide fish and wildlife habitat and filter pollutants.
- Educated riparian and other property owners in the watershed about how to be good stewards of the watershed, including use of no-phosphate fertilizers and creation of vegetative buffer zones around the Lake.
- Created Michigan’s only Township-wide special assessment district for managing invasive plant species and monitoring the presence and results of control measures.
- Hosted a series of well-attended educational forums for people to learn about watershed protection.
- Developed the watershed’s first demonstration rain garden, located in the Village of Onekama.
- Arranged for lake monitoring, sampling and analysis to assess water quality trends and pollutant sources.
- Created funds at the Manistee County Community Foundation to accept charitable donations to support plan implementation.

“One of the many reasons that the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan is recognized in Michigan as a best practice is because of its extensive community engagement,” said DEQ watershed specialist Greg Goudy. “We are pleased that the Council will lead an open, community-wide process to update the plan as a call to action for sustaining the terrific record of watershed achievements.”

Reed said that information will be made widely available soon on the scope of the Plan update process and how all interests may become involved.