

The Flint River Focus

Newsletter

March 2002

DEAR FRIEND OF THE FLINT RIVER!

Thank you for your interest in the Flint River Watershed Coalition.

On behalf of the board of directors and members, I urge you to become involved in one or more of the Coalition's volunteer opportunities. Each year, hundreds of people participate in our river clean-ups and dozens help out in our water quality monitoring activities. Concerned citizens are also encouraged to join our effort on a more active level by participating in one of our issue areas or planning committees. On the most basic level, we hope you will also consider becoming a member of the coalition. Membership dues help support our water quality monitoring, river clean-ups and watershed planning projects.

You will find more information on these opportunities to show your concern and support for your watershed in this newsletter and at our web site www.flintriver.org.

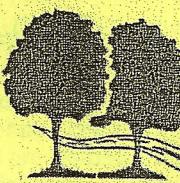
The Flint River Watershed Coalition is made up of people like you, concerned about our community and its most vital and vulnerable natural resource. If you are a current member or volunteer, then thank you! If you have yet to join our team, we look forward to hearing from you!

Yours for a healthy watershed!

Jeff Mansour
Board Member

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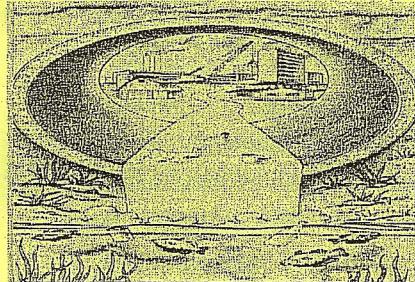
**Flint River
Watershed Coalition**

WHAT IS STORMWATER AND HOW DOES IT EFFECT ME?

City of Flint Water Pollution Control Facility Staff

Storm water flows occur whenever there is rain or snow. The rainwater or snowmelt travels along the curb, to storm drains on city streets. There are catch basins in these drains to capture sand, gravel and leaves that travel down the curb, allowing only the water to drain into the connecting storm sewer line. These pipelines empty directly into the Flint River and its tributaries. The Flint River flows into the Saginaw River and then into Lake Huron. Many cities including Flint get their drinking water from Lake Huron. Therefore, some of the water you drink comes from the Flint River.

Any substance poured or spilled into stormdrains will end up in the Flint River. So if you or someone you know pours used oil or extra lawn chemicals into the street or a stormdrain, you are polluting the Flint River. One quart of oil can pollute up to two(2) land acres of water! Lawn chemicals, auto cleaners, and even laundry soap have an adverse effect on aquatic plants and animals. (Laundry wastewater should not be piped to a floor drain or a sump pump crock – it needs to be routed to the sanitary sewer.)



How can contaminants be stopped from entering the river? Police yourself and your neighbors: let people know that all stormdrains empty directly into the Flint River. If you see someone pouring a substance into a drain, tell them

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Project GREEN

Jennifer Bigelow, GM Environmental Engineer

Recently the Flint River Watershed Coalition partnered with General Motors to involve young people in watershed education through the Global Rivers Environmental Education Network (GREEN).

GREEN was founded on the belief that the study and improvement of water is a learning opportunity for youth and their educators and is critical to the health of human beings and the environment. GREEN is a network of schools and communities working together to meet critical water resource challenges through an innovative combination of environmental education and civic action.



Using proven scientific methods, GREEN teaches young people to assess the quality of their local water, using water monitoring equipment and conducting classroom research to understand the health of their watershed. Young people in the local schools will undertake projects to improve the environmental quality of the watershed based on their findings. Through GREEN students and educators receive a network of local support from the Flint River Watershed Coalition and General Motors. The two partnered to contribute to the educational process, promoting good science and incorporating real world experiences into the curriculum. It is an opportunity to educate students so they understand the future environmental needs of society. Locally the Flint area has 14 schools participating in GREEN this spring with the sampling occurring in April and May. For more information please contact Jennifer Bigelow at (810) 236-6590.

Canoeing the Flint River

Darren Bagley, MSU Extension Natural Resource Agent



The Flint River guide is designed to help people enjoy canoeing on the scenic Flint River in Genesee County. It includes a brief historical overview of the Flint River area and an introduction to canoeing on the river. The guide divides the river into eight trips that you can easily complete in a day or less. Many of these trips can be modified based on your needs (i.e. you can canoe upstream or in a loop in many places). The starting and finishing points of each of the eight trips are identified by canoe access sites. The Flint River Canoe Guide can be accessed at (<http://www.msue.msu.edu/genesee/natres/guide.htm>)

Canoeing can be a safe and rewarding activity if you follow some basic guidelines: 1) canoe in pairs or groups; 2) use flotation devices; 3) canoe during daylight; 4) avoid alcohol; 5) dress appropriately for the weather; 6) use caution near rocks, rapids and submerged objects; 7) bring only non-glass containers (glass can break and cut wildlife and people); 8) leave no trace (i.e. take all your trash with you); 9) take water, food, sunglasses and sunscreen (or a hat).

The Flint river can be divided into three basic segments in Genesee County: the Eastern segment from Holloway reservoir to Stepping Stone falls, the urban corridor from Mott dam to Interstate 75 (on the West side of Flint) and the suburban-rural route that turns Northwest from I-75 through Flushing to the Saginaw County line.

The river is narrow in eastern Genesee County (except in Holloway reservoir and Mott lake), slow and deep enough for unobstructed canoeing throughout the year. (You can canoe either way in this section, since the flow is generally very slow). Most of the shoreline is publicly owned by Genesee County or the City of Flint parks departments. You will be surrounded by beautiful forests and wetlands housing an array of wildlife.



There are also trips that take you through urban areas. Although near city noises, factories, and houses, the riverbanks are tree-lined and wildlife is found along the river (even close to downtown Flint). Numerous dams and concrete walls have contained the river in downtown Flint, making it unsuitable for canoeing but enjoyable as a park. Beyond Mott Park Golf Course, the river quickly becomes more natural and quiet. Most of the riverbank in this stretch is private property.

Downstream from I-75 the river widens, becomes shallower and contains numerous islands, steep banks, small rapids and large boulders, especially between Flushing and Vienna road. Past Montrose the river gradually narrows and deepens as it enters the scenic farmlands of Saginaw County.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

'WHO WATCHES OUR WATER?'

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2002

MSU EXTENSION OFFICE, G-4215 W. PASADENA, FLINT
A presentation from various organizations involved in preserving water quality in the Genesee County area of the Flint River Watershed

BENTHIC ORGANISM MONITORING

SATURDAY APRIL 27TH OR WEDNESDAY MAY 1, 2002

Volunteer teams assess water quality by completing several tests and collecting organisms from tributaries of the Flint River. Call Monitoring Coordinator Dennis Zicha for details (810) 953-4954.

FLINT RIVER VOLUNTEER CLEANUP

SATURDAY, MAY 18TH, 2000

10 AM TO 2 PM

3 LOCATIONS:

- Vietnam Veterans Park, James P Cole Blvd., north of Fifth Avenue in the City of Flint. Walk the banks or launch your boat at the site.
- Holloway Dam Canoe Launch, take Stanley Rd. east to Oak Rd. north, to Carr Rd. This section of the river needs lots of attention! Walk the banks, wade, or bring your canoe.
- Millville Canoe Launch, Lapeer County. Millville Rd. and Plum Creek Rd. Volunteers may walk the banks or travel by canoe.

WEAR OLD CLOTHES, SUNSCREEN, WORK SHOES; BRING GLOVES AND A RAKE.

For details, please call Dorothy Gonzales at (810) 257-3190.

FRIENDS OF THE FLINT RIVER TRAIL

May through October – every Sunday a bicycle ride begins at the Farmer's Market 2 pm.

COALITION BOARD & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

THIRD FRIDAY OF EACH MONTH.

8:30 AM, Mott Community College Prahl Center, Genesee room. Everyone welcome. Talk with us about our goals and objectives for 2002.

Get to Know Your River

Stefany Diana, Chair FRWC & Friend of the Flint River Trail

Join the Friends of the Flint River Trail on their Sunday Rides. The "Friends" sponsor a leisurely bike ride along the River Trail every Sunday, May through October. The ride leaves the Farmer's Market parking lot at 2:00.

The Flint River Trail runs on both sides of the river from the downtown Flint at the U of M – Flint campus up to Johnson School. The round trip is about eight miles. Since the rides are for persons of all ability and endurance levels, shorter loops are available. Bring the kids; kids bring your grandparents. Geriatric bikes are welcome. Helmets are strongly recommended for all riders.

Everyone rides in groups led by someone from the "Friends" organization. This is a great way to learn about this wonderful resource in the heart of the city and a great way to meet other recreational riders.

The Friends of the Flint River Trail is a volunteer organization working (1) to promote greater use of the trail through improved safety, maintenance and publicity, (2) to improve facilities along the trail, and (3) to extend the trail's length and move toward a city/county trail system.



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how they are harming the environment. Report all illegal dumping to the local city or county Water Pollution Control Facility.

Personnel from Water Pollution Control Facilities test water entering the river from stormdrains, checking for illegal connections and pollutants. They are trained to investigate pollution and find the source. There are regulations in place with stiff penalties for people responsible for contaminating surface water. An illegal connection can put hundreds of gallons of sewage per day into the Flint River!

Remember another fact: "The earth has the same amount of water it did 5 billion years ago." What goes around comes around. Therefore, we must carefully protect all of our rivers, lakes and streams to preserve the high quality drinking water we currently enjoy.

River Water Quality Sampling

Genesee County Health Department Staff

The Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) has been sampling The Flint River and it's tributaries since 2000. Samples are tested for pathogenic bacteria, pH, temperature, chemical oxygen demand, nitrous oxide, phosphorus, turbidity, total solids, and oxidation/reduction. These specific tests were chosen as they are good indicators of the health of the river.

The sampling points were determined by the Flint River Watershed Coalition as they began volunteer monitoring for organisms in the Spring of 1999.

The GCHD monitors each sub-watershed within Genesee, and work with Lapeer County to have the sub-watersheds in their Countt monitored also. The intent of the program is to conduct the monitoring on a monthly basis, year around, to build an initial background database. The data is available to anyone interested.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Flint River Assessment completed

The DNR has completed a special report on the Flint River. It includes the latest data on water quality, land use, fish communities, and recreation. You will also find historical information, geology of the area, and hydrology. It is available online for your viewing at:

www.dnr.state.mi.us/www/ifr/ifrlibra/Special/spec27files.htm or call Joe Leonardi, Shiawassee District DNR (517) 625-4600 for a copy.

--JOIN OUR LISTSERV --

email Majordomo@msue.msu.edu and type 'subscribe frwc' in the body of the message. Keep up with the latest information and happenings in the watershed.

To email the entire group, send a message to frwc@listserv.msue.msu.edu.