



**November 7, 2017
1:00PM – 3:00PM
Alpine Township**



Friends of Indian Mill Creek & Regional Conservation Partnership Project

***Minutes
18 people in attendance***

- 1) Welcome and Introductions – Greg, Wendy
 - a) Background of Friends of Indian Mill Creek – Wendy
 - b) Objectives and goals of the Friends of Indian Mill Creek – Wendy
 - i) Clean-ups
 - ii) Monitoring
 - iii) Education

- 2) Clean-up Campaign - Rachel
 - a) Update on previous clean-ups
 - b) Plan for next Spring Clean-up
 - i) Please let LGROW know what locations should be prioritized for clean-up
 - ii) Next Indian Mill Creek Clean Up planned for May 2018
 - c) Discussion about better ways to coordinate cleaning up and removing larger items that may be found along the Creek
 - i) WMEAC: for the Mayor's Clean Up we don't normally have many large items that cannot be removed by volunteers. If we do, we report the item and location to DEQ, but WMEAC does not physically remove that item.
 - ii) City of Walker: If a resident approached us to remove large items, and if the exact location is known, the City will help with removal and disposal.
 - iii) Wendy: Indian Mill Creek near Turner and Ann St. is a known dumping area.
 - iv) Resident: If we find old barrels, will DEQ test them to see what is in them?
 - (1) DEQ: We don't normally sample old barrels unless it is full and intact because normally we do not find old barrels that still have chemicals in them.
 - (2) WMEAC: During cleanups, it is common to find barrels in the water, but the barrels are usually from old docks

- 3) Monitoring - Carlos
 - a) GVSU research
 - i) There have been 3 consecutive field seasons of research in the Creek
 - ii) Rajesh completed baseline research on macroinvertebrates, physical analysis of the Creek, channel erosion, episodic high flows
 - (1) He observed that the Creek should be able to support cold water fish, but not as many fish are present as expected

- (2) Rajesh had placed erosion pins in the banks, but due to so much precipitation in 2016, they washed away.
 - iii) Dan has been studying how stream habitat is affecting organisms
 - (1) He is using LIDAR to take images of the streambank, and creating computer simulations to model pollution
 - (2) There are 14 study sites
 - (a) Research performed includes fish studies, water quality monitoring
 - iv) Indian Mill Creek blog by GVSU students: <https://indianmillstudy.wordpress.com/>
 - v) Carlos would like to expand upon Rajesh's and Dan's research by adding study sites in the upper reaches of the Creek. Most research so far has been performed in the lower, more urban areas of the Creek.
 - b) Data Repository
 - i) LGROW had developed a data repository, which serves as an area to record sample results from citizen science collection
 - ii) <https://www.lgrow.org/data-repository/>
 - c) Volunteer Monitoring and MiCorps
 - i) Because FoIMC is a community group, wWe are able to apply for grant money with Michigan Clean Water Corps <https://micorps.net/>
 - ii) With grant money from MiCorps and RCPP, we can make improvements to certain areas in the watershed
 - iii) DEQ: The money through MiCorps is available for monitoring. The money is given for equipment and allows you to give training to the community and then you can enter data into LGROW's data repository, and the MiCorps database. MiCorps grants are reviewed at the district level, so DEQ can help review the application
 - iv) Informational fliers about Michigan invasive species were provided as an aid for citizen science
 - (1) There is an app for Michigan Invasive Species that you can use to submit a photos and report invasives <https://www.lgrow.org/invasive-species/>
 - (2) Kent Conservation District has a 'strike team' that will help homeowners remove invasive plants
 - v) Residents: If a property owner in the watershed, do you get materials to test the water? What does a homeowner need to know? (Regarding MiCorps/citizen science)
 - (1) Wendy: It could be as simple as installing a flowmeter that you record, or LGROW could train you to take other measurements that you are interested in. The purpose of the MiCorps awards are to get citizens to start monitoring their local water bodies
 - (2) Residents: we want to start looking at simple things that will tell us more about the water quality
 - (3) DEQ: For people living on lakes, MiCorps does work with citizens who want to collect data on lakes
 - vi) Rachel is going to the MiCorps conference in Tustin, MI, later this week and will learn more about getting citizen groups together
 - vii) Carlos will also continue the grad work that has begun in the watershed
- 4) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) – Wendy
- A year ago, LGROW applied for a grant through USDA for funding for the river restoration project, and an opportunity for funding through the NRCS/RCPP arose. We were recently awarded funding, but some of the money has to be spent on agricultural practices due to the USDA piece.
- GVMC received funding for sediment reduction and habitat improvements in Indian Mill Creek & Rogue River watersheds
 - The RCPP provides financial and technical assistance to landowners through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement best management practices to improve habitat and reduce sedimentation in the stream
- a) Goals

- i) Get appropriate agricultural land practices in place in order to improve water quality
- b) Benefits
 - i) \$8 Million total, \$3 Million of that is specifically for agricultural work in Indian Mill Creek and Rogue River Watersheds
- c) Projects and Funding
 - i) Farmers must have control of the land that practices will be implemented on
 - ii) DEQ: how much land is required for a project?
 - (1) Wendy: They have not given us a minimum lot size, and we are focusing on 'landowners' not 'farmers' per se. So far we have a very broad description of what kind of land is eligible
 - iii) GVMC has signed the grant contract
 - iv) Landowners/farmers will enter into a contract with NRCS after a plan for their land is developed
 - v) City of GR: Are there any restrictions on urban vs. rural land?
 - (1) Wendy: the only clarification we have received thusfar for urban lands is that the land must be non-industrial and capable of producing a forest.
 - vi) This grant is a 5 year program
 - (1) Year 1- Public outreach begins
 - (2) Years 2-4- Implementation of agricultural practices
 - (3) Year 5- Work on evaluation of practices/program
- d) Education & Outreach
 - i) Handout was provided with a list of eligible farming practices
 - ii) We will work closely with Kent Conservation District
 - iii) Action for FoIMC: talk to your neighbors and friends. Farmers are already working with funding through the Farm Bill, but this is unique because there is virtually no competition for funds since the money has to be spent in Indian Mill Creek and Rogue River watersheds. The only thing that the farmers have to provide is their time.
 - iv) Some discussion about invasive species Autumn Olive
 - (1) Kent Conservation District: removal of autumn olive would fall under 'brush management' in the acceptable practices for the RCPP grant
- e) Next Steps in developing partnerships:
 - i) Create ranking criteria
 - ii) Identify priority areas
 - iii) Provide outreach and educational materials
 - iv) Connect with landowners
 - v) Describe resource concerns on land
 - vi) Enroll in program
 - vii) Implement practices

5) Education - Eileen

- a) Messages in Public Education Plan of LGR Watershed Management Plan
 - i) Awareness
 - (1) It is important to raise awareness about IMC because there are many parts of the watershed that are in urban areas, and many people from those areas do not know that the Creek exists
 - (2) What does the public need to know about IMC? What is the Friends group interested in knowing?
 - (a) The history behind the name of the Creek
 - (b) Research on the fish population in the Creek
 - (c) Counting/observation of other wildlife in the watershed
 - (d) Land uses that are adjacent to the Creek

- (e) We should pay attention to industrial clean-up sites and redevelopments to make the connection between sampling there and water quality
 - ii) Education
 - (1) We need to connect our practices to water quality
 - (2) What do we need to educate people on?
 - (a) Fertilizer guidance (how close can we get to the water?)
 - (b) Herbicide guidance
 - (c) Buffer strips/no-mow zone
 - (d) Fall Clean-up guidance- city specific leaf clean up guidance
 - (e) Citizen science- how to correctly monitor and collect data
 - (3) What are some barriers keeping people from adopting BMPs in the watershed?
 - (a) Farmers don't want to lose profitable land, so education needs to be done on the benefits of for example, buffer strips, so the benefits can be understood
 - (b) Cost is a barrier
 - (c) People don't know where to start- need to let people know where they can obtain information about their watershed
 - (d) Knowing a source of contamination and then being able to specifically implement BMPs based on water quality parameters
 - iii) Action
 - (1) We need to motivate the audience to adopt and implement practices that will result in water quality improvements. Incorporate Watershed protection activities into land-use planning and land management decisions.
 - b) Current Educational Efforts
 - i) We have many active partners in the watershed
 - c) Please let LGROW know if you and your community would like to partner for educational events
- 6) Other Discussion
 - a) Have local governments or politicians been engaged in RCPP?
 - i) Wendy: FoIMC is the first group that has been engaged. Alpine Township has been helpful with getting farmers interested.
 - ii) It is hard to do outreach for the RCPP grant, because the money can only be used for the agricultural practices.
 - iii) We want to be clear that this is not a drain project; there has been some concerns from farmers thusfar
 - iv) City of Walker comment: we will have to keep momentum of the grant going, especially with newly elected officials
 - v) Landowners can begin the RCPP process now- the deadline to apply for a project is January 19, 2018. We are waiting on NRCS to follow the EQIP window for sign-ups, but landowners can work with GVMC and NRCS now to get the process started.
- 7) Adjourn

How did you hear about the FoIMC meeting?

Most people heard about it from the Facebook Group, or Wendy's reminder email. A few people present received the mailchimp email.

 - a) Next meeting will be February 6, 2018 at 4pm. Location yet to be determined.