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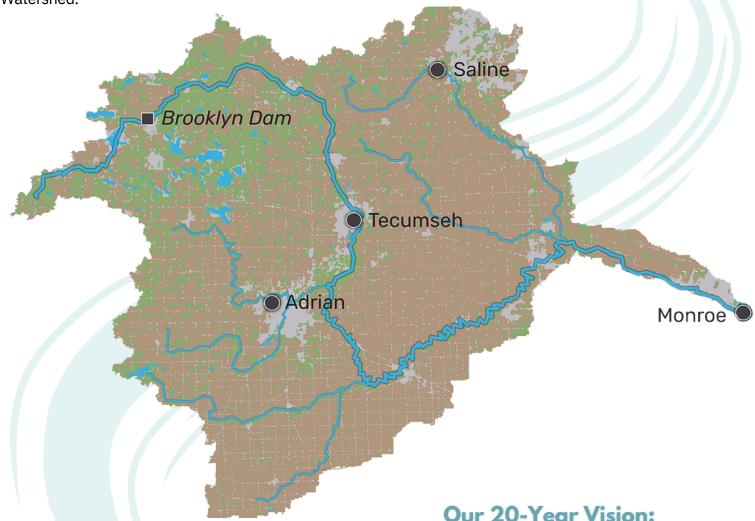
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MISSION

Our Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire behaviors that promote stewardship, improve water quality, and encourage public participation to protect, preserve and enhance the River Raisin Watershed.



A community connected to and caring for our land and water.

CURRENT CONTEXT & CONDITIONS

River Raisin Watershed Council is a local nonprofit organization with a dedicated volunteer board of directors and a staff of 2.5 employees. Our team serves a watershed area that covers most of Lenawee County and smaller portions of Monroe, Washtenaw, Jackson, and Hillsdale counties in Michigan along with a piece of Fulton County in northeastern Ohio: a total of about 1,059 square miles.

To date, most of our scientifically-based efforts have been grant-funded and project-driven: efforts like the Brooklyn dam removal, Adopt-A-Stream monitoring, nature education for youth and adults, watershed management planning, and our work with farmers focused on water quality. We are proud of the outcomes of these efforts, and of the way our staff has worn many hats and nimbly managed a variety of activities with limited resources.

We're also grateful for our partnerships including with local governments' Parks and Recreation departments, local land conservancies, other watershed councils, state agencies, funders, local businesses, outdoor enthusiast groups, and event venue hosts.

Our watershed community includes rich farmland, dynamic cities and towns, and precious natural and wildlife habitats. It's a place we're proud to call home. Yet the recently released Watershed Report Card shows our community is facing significant threats that impact human health, ecosystem health, water quality, and our local economy. We love our local farms and farmers, yet our waterways are strained from agricultural runoff and are fueling harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie.

Outdated wastewater infrastructure is also a threat. Wetland loss, habitat destruction, and climatedriven extreme weather events are aggravating soil erosion and contamination, threatening fish habitat, impacting shoreline stability, and creating flooding issues. Log jams and limited investment in public parks and water access sites limit our enjoyment of recreation experiences.

Environmental policies are changing at the federal level, creating uncertainty in clean water regulations and enforcement and conservation funding. Without access to information, many residents are unaware of how individual actions impact water quality—from lawn care practices to managing flooding from stormwater runoff. We care about these issues because we care about our community, our families, our local farms and businesses, and about the places in nature that make us proud to be Michiganders.

Over the next five years, we hope to continue to build trusting relationships within our local community, to stabilize our operations, and grow so we can have a deeper, stronger, and larger scale impact. We have bold ambitions for the future: To work with community members as "go-to" champions of the watershed, to protect land and water, and improve the "grade" of the river, for the good of all.

5-YEAR STRATEGIC GOALS

Protect and improve water quality and support healthy ecosystem.

Create and improve people's connections to nature and outdoor recreation.



Collaborate with government and private landowners on nature-based solutions to support a strong local economy and quality of life.

Stabilize and diversify revenue sources and deepen relationships with members.



with a focus on developing our governance and management structures and processes and fundraising program.

Over the next five years, we will focus our resources, time, and energy on the following core initiatives and actions to achieve our strategic goals.

Education and Outreach

- Continue role in Farmer-led group in Monroe, Washtenaw, Lenawee Counties until grant ends to support practices that advance water quality protection while supporting a thriving farm economy.
- Explore how to maintain services to the Farmer-led group through a different funding and partnership model.
- Protect land by connecting private landowners in Washtenaw County with the Washtenaw Land Collective, Michigan State University Extension, Conservation Districts, and local land conservancies.
- Provide curated educational resources, including print materials and videos, for public officials regarding governmental policies and practices that improve watershed conditions, including ecosystem health and water quality.
 - O In 2025 and 2026, increase targeted communication with local government representatives across the watershed to increase awareness of watershed issues, needs, and solutions RRWC can offer or help to facilitate (e.g., quarterly email updates, questionnaires about needs and priorities). Continue to communicate with and listen to local government officials to understand their priority needs.
 - Beginning in 2027, host an annual meeting with delegates to train them as ambassadors for the key land and water issues facing the watershed.
 - O Share community stories and spotlights in our newsletter.
- Continue to offer nature education classes for youth across the watershed to foster lifelong care for ecosystem health and support public access to nature and recreation.
 - In 2025, adapt the Nature Explorer's program for youth, focusing on hosting one event per month at geographically diverse places across the watershed to support public access to nature and recreation.
- Continue to offer adult education classes, including Master Rain Gardener, beekeeping classes, and vernal pools.
 - O Scale up and increase participation in the Master Rain Gardener program.
 - O Scale up adult education classes. Begin offering Master Composter classes.
 - Expand our course offerings.
- Coordinate and host public hikes, paddling tours, and nature experiences to support access to nature and recreation and community and economic development.
- Promote best management practices (BMPs) and promote and distribute educational materials regarding practical and innovative conservation strategies to protect and restore the watershed.

Watershed Planning and Public Infrastructure & Ecosystem Improvements

- Identify potential public park and water access improvement sites in coordination with local governments.
 - O Work on public park, natural area, and water access site improvements in collaboration with governmental partners.
 - Where feasible, assist with log jam removal efforts to support ecosystem health and recreation.
- Continue supporting sub-watershed planning.
 - Secure funding to two more watershed plans in 2025/2026.
 - Within five years, develop four sub-regional watershed plans that would cover the entire River Raisin watershed area.
- Advance dam removal projects where there is public support and interest to support economic prosperity, ecosystem health, and recreation.
 - O In 2025, continue our fiduciary role and complete Brooklyn dam removal.
 - O Explore acting as fiduciary for potential dam removal projects in Monroe and Saline.
- Continue Adopt-A-Stream and benthic monitoring activities in coordination with Adrian College and The Lenawee Intermediate School District to monitor and support ecosystem health and water quality protection.
- Complete tree planting efforts supported by the Forests to Faucets grant.



Community Engagement, Communications & Messaging

- Continue to communicate with and listen to local government officials to understand their priority needs. Attend meetings routinely and encourage delegates to share updates and resources provided by RRWC.
- Improve visibility of RRWC's programs and services in local public offices (e.g., posters and flyers).
- Position RRWC as the "clearinghouse" for the Watershed Report Card, and as the entity telling the story of the community's relationship with its land and water.
- Improve our communication and storytelling.
 - O Clarify and prioritize the primary audiences RRWC is working to connect with to make an impact on conservation outcomes.
 - O Identify local residents who can share personal stories to help inspire a culture of personal and shared responsibility and enjoyment of the River Raisin's waterways.
 - Identify influencers in the farm and local business community whose frontline stories and testimonials inspire and empower other local farmers and businesses to take part in sustainable land and water management practices.
 - Share the stories of influencers to help inspire people's connection to the River Raisin and share opportunities for action people can take to ensure its protection and restoration and to increase their access to recreation opportunities such as paddling, fishing, or picnicking by the waterway.

Fundraising

- Invest in technology to support the development of a stable and sustainable fundraising program.
- Reduce grant dependency by increasing private charitable giving. Build relationships with individual and foundation donors.
- Continue to partner with member municipalities on public and private grants for public infrastructure projects and community-based services that support water quality, ecosystem, and recreation goals.
- Invest in fund development capacity by developing communication materials, coaching and training staff, researching private grants and donors, managing a routine annual giving process, and building relationships with individual donors, family foundations, and businesses.
- Explore opportunities to create a long-term fund/endowment to support the annual operating budget.

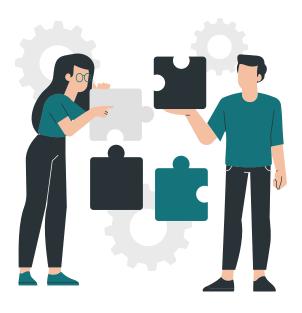
Organizational Excellence

Board Development

- O Develop and follow a monitoring process to measure and report on progress toward achieving strategic goals and the organization's vision, including the Watershed Report Card grade level.
- O Streamline and redesign meetings to improve internal communication and decision-making, as well as engage and empower governmental members.
- O Continue to grow and diversify the board of directors to include representation that reflects the demographics of the watershed community.
- Invest in board development, including working with the board to support their ambassadorship and fundraising role.
- O Continue to develop the Executive Committee with a focus on composition that reflects the skills, networks, and roles required to implement the strategic goals.

Staff Development

- O Create job descriptions for each staff position and core/lead volunteer position.
- OClarify roles and lines of authority to improve internal coordination, collaboration, and accountability.
- Adopt uniform procedures for the use of technology like Gmail and shared calendars to improve internal communication, coordination, and project management.
- Move toward a model for staff compensation that reflects each position being paid a wage that supports the cost of living in the community to reduce turnover and improve tenure in staff positions.



KEY INDICATORS & MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Water Quality and Ecosystem Health

- ▶ Lower total nitrogen levels by sub watershed.
- Lower total phosphorous levels by sub watershed.
- Lower levels of E. coli in the water at hot spots.
- Wetlands are protected.
- ▶ Benthic communities are protected.
- Fish population is healthy.
- Tree cover increases.

Outdoor Recreation

- ▶ Public access to shoreline and waterways is improved or expanded.
- Local parks and public natural areas are improved and beautified.
- ▶ Increased public use of waterways for outdoor recreation.

Strong Local Economy Supported by Nature-Based Solutions

- Minimize flooding impacts.
- Increase in waterfront property values.
- Restored natural river corridors.
- ▶ Strong local economy connected to waterways' use and enjoyment.
- Sustained farm economy and farmland protection.
- ▶ More landowners are implementing best practices for water quality protection.

Support & Membership

- ▶ Supporters, delegates and government officials feel informed about the conditions and opportunities in the watershed.
- ▶ Annual ambassadorship conversations with delegates and planning sessions with member municipalities lead to stable membership and empowered engagement to influence and impact watershed issues.
- ▶ Diverse community members of all ages and life stages are welcome in the RRWC mission and are involved with the organization as event and program participants, volunteers, financial supporters, sponsors, and partners.

KEY INDICATORS & MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS

Fundraising

▶ Organization's revenue model shifts away from grant dependency and toward an increase in the amount and percentage of charitable contributions from individuals and businesses. Specific targets to be set annually.

Organizational Excellence

- ▶ Financial management policies, procedures, and practices are followed and monitored.
- ▶ Annual board development goals are met.
- Annual staff development goals are met.
- ▶ Operational and administrative goals are met.

