

MISSION

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

RRWC seeks volunteers and members to achieve our mission!

Please contact us to find out how you can help with or participate in the various activities outlined in these pages.

Our success in improving water quality in the River Raisin Watershed depends on you!

Contact us by phone:
(517)264-4754

Contact us by email:
rrwc@lenawee.mi.us

Summer Internship Reflection

By Isabelle Uganski



This past summer I was an intern for the River Raisin Watershed Council. I worked closely with the council's coordinators, directors, and committee members and was immediately welcomed into an environment cultivated for learning and growing. I was able to strengthen my understanding of the River Raisin and our watershed as a whole. I became familiar with the habitat, flora, fauna, and ecosystem that encompasses the southeastern watershed and its impact on Lake Erie and thus the prevalence of preserving our watershed.

Over the course of the summer, I was introduced to working in a variety of environments, events, and tasks to learn about, assist, and grow awareness surrounding the watershed. I attended a Native Plant Expo, Lenawee County Fair, Blissfield River Raisin Festival, and other community-wide events that allowed us to share the goals of the Watershed Council as well as discuss the watershed with residents and community members and the activities we have available. Additionally, I was able to be a part of several nature walks and classes that connected people with the nature of the watershed. I helped orchestrate and complete river clean ups, I underwent chainsaw training and was able to use a chainsaw for the first time, I attended meetings and Farmer Led Groups where best management practices are discussed to encourage sustainable farming practices that can contribute to a cleaner watershed.

Continued on Page 4...



Happy 50 Years Clean Water Act!

The Clean Water Act was passed in 1972, and has led to great protections for our waters, like the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978, signed by the U.S. and Canada!



Inside this Issue

Summer Internship Refl.	1,4
Happy 50 Years CWA!	1
Farmer-Led Update	2
Executive's Corner	2,3
Social Media	2
Partner Thank You	2
Eco-Friendly Autumn	3,4
Leaves Aren't Litter	3
Staff and Board	4

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@riverraisinwatershed

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TikTok:
@riverraisinwc

iNaturalist:
@RiverRaisinWatershedCouncil

YouTube:
@River Raisin Watershed Council



Partner Thank You

RRWC has recently completed a large move from our current office in Adrian to our new office in Tecumseh, and would like to recognize Wacker Chemical Company for their support of our organization!

Wacker has donated enough desks and chairs to completely furnish our new office, and we are incredibly grateful for their generosity to our organization and its mission as we expand into our new site.



Farmer-Led Conservation Group Updates

By Meija Knaff

It's been a busy year for FLG! As we approach 2025 and the state goal of a Phosphorus reduction of 40%, our farmers and the staff from the conservation districts who support them have been connecting in new ways... including through our Best Management Practices videos on YouTube (@ Farmer-Led Watershed Conservation - WLEB) and our updated website:
<https://www.waterqualityfarming.org/>



Check out the website to learn more about our recent activities!

Executive's Corner

By Steve May

Another Summer in Michigan has come and gone. On October 18, 2022 our nation celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act. The 1972 amendments established the basic structure for regulating pollutant discharges into the waters of the United States and gave EPA the authority to implement pollution control programs such as setting wastewater standards for industry. The Act maintained existing requirements to set water quality standards for all contaminants in surface waters and made it unlawful for any person to discharge any pollutant from a point source into navigable waters unless a permit was obtained under its provisions. Funding construction of sewage treatment plants under the construction grants program and recognized the need for planning to address the critical problems posed by nonpoint source pollution. RRWC celebrates the accomplishment of the last 50 years but also recognizes the important work ahead to partner, protect and preserve our watershed for future generations.

Looking back on 2022 the Council has been busy, full of energy and change. Beginning with our new base of operations, administration and preparation of a dam removal, working on an environmental report card, engaging in farmer-led conservation practices, strategic planning, development and outreach efforts, volunteer and donor tracking, watershed management planning, providing internship opportunities and water quality monitoring. If that was not enough, staff has dedicated countless hours of time to fairs, festivals, raffles, classes, tours, nature walks and participation on several boards within the watershed. Our new base of operations or satellite office in Tecumseh, MI – EGLE grant funded – is now open. Thanks to the City of Tecumseh, Wacker Chemical – donation of the furniture and Krieghoff-Lenawee for their assistance in moving.

Continued on Page 3...

RRWC executive committee held their first monthly meeting last week. What a wonderful location to be able to expand our influence and capacity within the watershed. Thanks again to the Erb Family Foundation for their financial support with general operations and the Farmer-Led Group. Work on the Brooklyn Dam removal is moving ahead, an informational meeting update is coming to the community late January 2023.

Looking forward to adding a new administrative assistant position to help with day-to-day responsibilities with our tracking of volunteers, projects, fundraising and donors. RRWC staff is creating an unforgettable experience for our community and watershed as they work to engage awareness of our vital resources!! Stay Connected in YOUR watershed.



Leaves Aren't Litter!

By Meija Knaff

This autumn has undoubtedly been one of the most beautiful seasons I have ever experienced, with brilliant leaf-fall and clear days full of bright sunlight to enjoy those leaves by. A combination of late summer rains and an early cold snap is what brought these lovely sights to us... but once they've fallen from the tree, what are you doing with your leaves at home? Are you enjoying huge raked leaf piles, just the right size to take a running leap into? Have you been scooping them into those crispy brown paper bags, and hauling them out to the street for somebody to take away?

Not so fast! Leaves aren't litter, and I'd like to make the case for their many benefits.

The leaves fall and blanket the ground, but that cozy autumnal cover doesn't only keep the soil protected... It's the insulation needed by many overwintering creatures. Chattering and chirping rodents like our common fox squirrel (*Sciurus niger*) like to collect bundles of these leaves and build pillowy nests like blanket forts up in the crooks of trees. North America's only marsupial, the Virginia Opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), relies on these leaves to help keep their ears and paws warm in the deeply cold and silent winter night. Once, RRWC staff even saw an adult opossum using their prehensile tail to carry a bundle of leaves back to its home! Email us if you'd like to see the video.

Perhaps most importantly, these leaves are the home of many overwintering caterpillars, destined to become next year's moths and butterflies. Moths and butterflies play a vital role in the larger ecosystem, including pollinating flowering plants and acting as the base of the food web for other animals like bats and birds. In fact, while birdseed at your feeder is fine for an adult bird, most of North America's birds rely on caterpillars to feed their young. A lot of caterpillars, too! One well known study by a scientist named Richard Brewer showed that over 16 days, one pair of chickadees fed their nestlings between 6000 and 9000 caterpillars!

Your wild neighbors will be happy, and so will your yard. Although the leaves cover your grass in the autumn, they break down quickly under the snow during the crisp winter months. That's free fertilizer working to keep your yard fed and healthy! And if you can't leave your leaves, you can still rake them up - right into that back corner of the yard where you can leave them to compost. Or right into your compost pile, for that matter! If you haven't created a compost pile of your very own, this autumn is the perfect time to start.

It just goes to show, leaving your leaves is good for you, your yard, and your wildlife neighbors. So leave your leaves!

Eco-Friendly Autumn: Pumpkin Carving!

By Lydia Lopez

Seeds for Next Year: Save your jack-o-lanterns seeds and plant them for next year.

Roasted Pumpkin Seeds: After cleaning off your pumpkin seeds (soaking them can help), rinse them in a colander until any remaining pumpkin is gone and pat them dry. Proceed to coat them in oil and your favorite seasonings.

Then roast your pumpkin seeds on a baking sheet in a single layer in the oven at 325 degrees, until they reach your desired crispness.

The Guts: Separate the seeds from the guts and place the guts into a food processor/blender until they are smooth. This blended pumpkin can be used in place of puree in your favorite pumpkin recipes..

Eco Friendly Autumn: Trick or Trash!

By Lydia Lopez

The River Raisin Watershed Council (RRWC) has teamed up with Rubicon's Trick or Trash program. RRWC will be collecting candy wrappers starting the week of October 24th. We will proceed to collect wrappers during our open office hours until our box is full. In addition to contributing to a closed loop waste process, every individual who collects and turns in 50 wrappers is entered to win a prize!

...*"Summer Internship Reflection" continued from Page 1*

Another large component of the summer was doing water sampling and measuring the flow rate in key components of our watershed. I learned and assisted in conducting monthly water sampling where we recorded pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature and looked at the phosphate and nitrate levels. We also measured the flow rate of inlets and outlets of Loch Erin, a lake within the watershed, working to grow our understanding of the water quality and flow of the River Raisin. I was even able to witness and participate in an electrofishing event at the lake too in order to conduct a fish survey.

Overall, my summer internship was well-versed with many different realms of working in the environment, with the environment, and with the people who reside or are working to improve the watershed. Throughout my time, I learned not only about the watershed, but also grew and strengthened several skills. It was a great summer of experience and exposure that I plan to use in all my future endeavors and environmental career.

Eco Friendly Autumn: Seasonal Drinks

By Lydia Lopez

From pumpkin spiced lattes to apple cider, enjoying seasonal lattes do not have to be wasteful. Opting to take your own cup to the coffee shop can help reduce your contribution to waste and in some shops even get you a discount!

Partner

Membership and donations fund activities and projects throughout the watershed.

Contact us for more information or donate online!

Protect

We promote stewardship! Ask us about group projects, community service, and scout opportunities to help us protect and preserve our natural resources across the watershed.

Preserve

Planting gardens, especially those with native plantings, are a great way to do this at home!

Executive Committee and Staff

Executive Committee Chair:

Harry Sheehan
Chief Deputy Water Resources Commissioner
Representative, Washtenaw Co

Vice Chair:

John Calhoun
Columbia Township Representative
Jackson Co.

Secretary:

Sybil Kolon
Manchester Township Representative
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Director:

David Hoffman
County Commissioner
Representative, Monroe Co.

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