

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

WATERSHED OVERVIEW AND LOCATION

The Aux Sable Creek Watershed (referenced hereafter as the Watershed) is a sub-watershed of the Upper Illinois River Watershed in northeastern Illinois, comprised of approximately 297 miles of streams and channels. The Watershed (Figure 1) drains 119,911 acres (187 square miles) of gently rolling land in Kendall, Grundy, and Will Counties (Figure 2) before eventually outletting into the Illinois River at the south end of the Watershed, northeast of Morris. The Watershed has been divided into 7 sub-watersheds based upon natural drainage divides. This helps to separate the Watershed into more manageable units and to better identify specific impairments.



Figure 1 - Location of Aux Sable Creek Watershed

These sub-watersheds are: East Aux Sable, Middle Aux Sable, Lisbon Creek, Minooka Branch, Saratoga Creek, Walley Run, and the Lower Aux Sable (Figures 3 and 4).

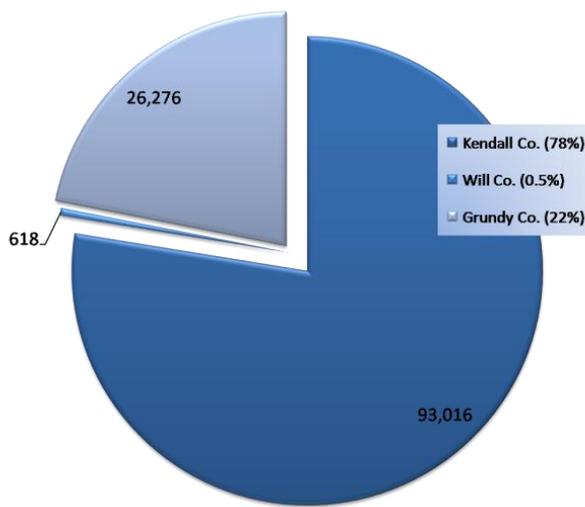


Figure 2 - Watershed Coverage by County (ac)

The Watershed Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) is 07120005101. The HUC is a code produced by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to subdivide the United States into various levels of units based upon the local drainage basins. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) water body identification numbers for the Watershed include both ILDW01 and ILDWD01. The Watershed is comprised of nine stream segments:

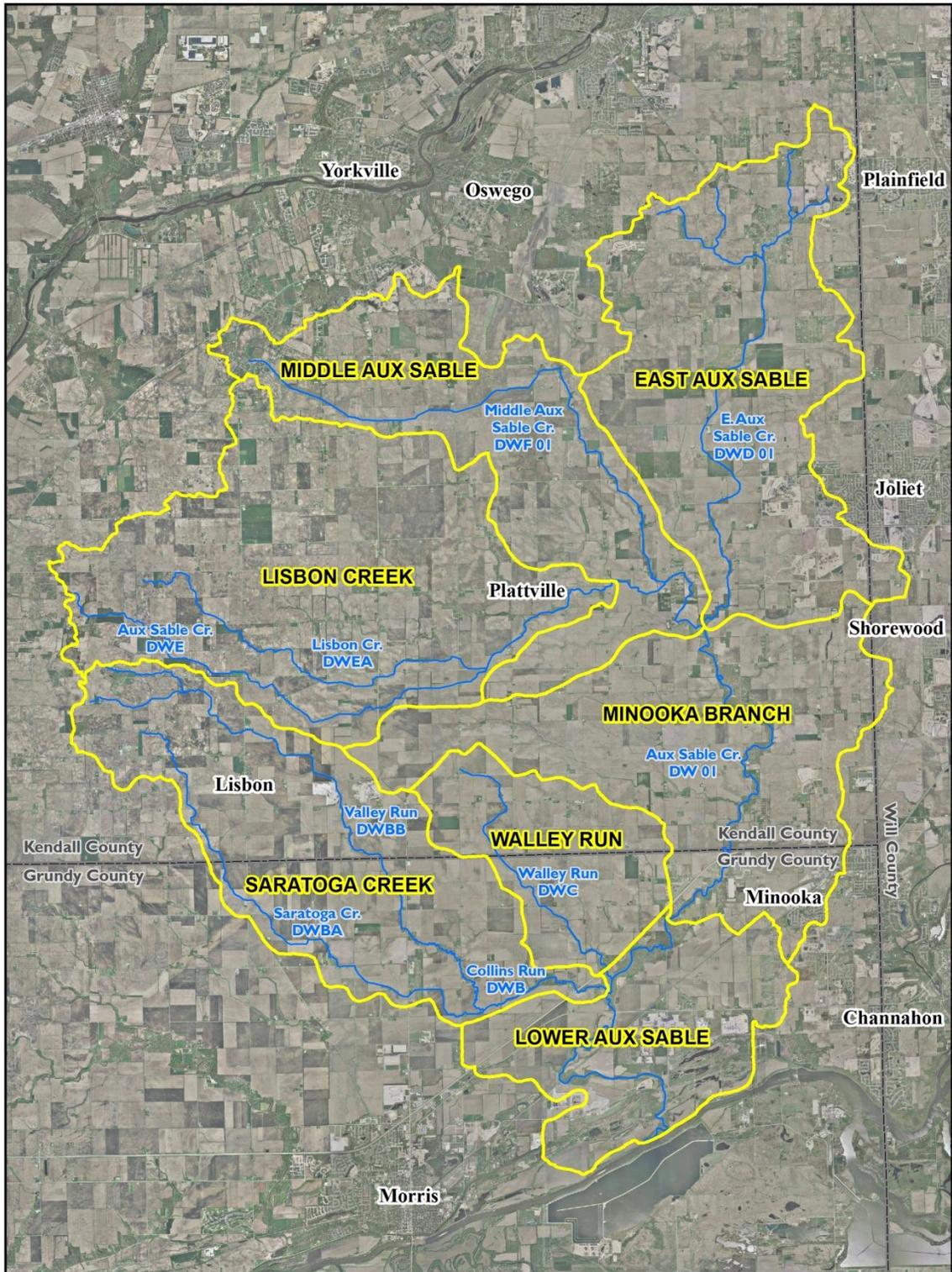


Figure 3 - Sub-Watershed Locations

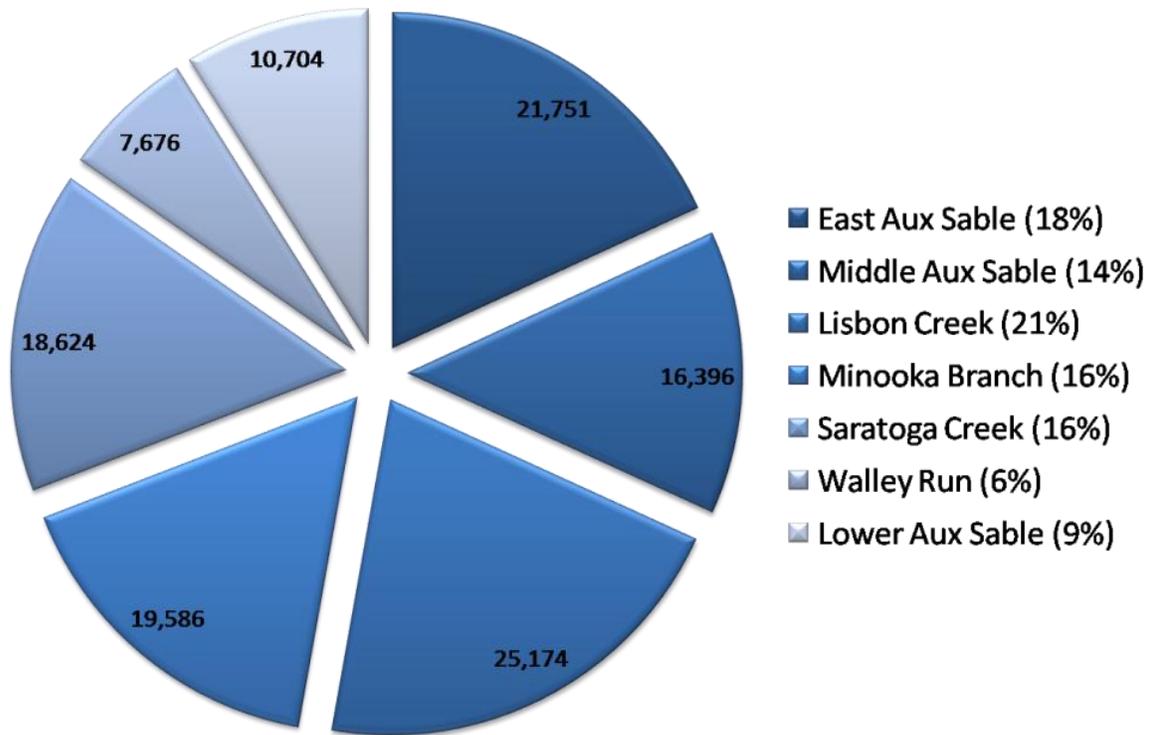


Figure 4 - Sub-Watershed Size (ac)

DW 01 (Aux Sable Creek), TD 64, DWB (Collins Run), DWBA (Saratoga Creek), DWBB (Valley Run), DWC (Walley Run), DWEA (Lisbon Creek), DWF 01 (Middle Aux Sable Creek), and DWD 01 (East Aux Sable Creek) (IEPA 2004). The land adjacent to a large majority of the creek is primarily in private ownership. The primary land use is agriculture (approximately 94%). About eighty percent of the agricultural land is a corn-soybean rotation with the remainder small grain and forage crops. In addition, a small amount of vegetables are being grown in the extreme eastern and northern sections of the Watershed. Numerous residential subdivisions have been developed or are proposed along the edges of many of the municipalities within the Watershed. Public land in the Watershed includes Baker Woods Forest Preserve, Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, and the Aux Sable Railroad Prairie. The Aux Sable Creek Watershed has only one stream that has been noted as being impaired (Aux Sable Creek DW 01 – due to fecal coliform bacteria, IEPA 2004) and based upon numerous studies has generally good water quality (IDNR 1998, Huff and Huff 2006).

IMPORTANCE TO READER

One of the most crucial components of this watershed plan update is the voluntary participation of the stakeholders of the watershed who have an interest in the sustainable use of natural resources. Members of the general public, particularly the residents of the Aux Sable Creek Watershed, are concerned about and entitled to clean and safe water, a healthy natural environment that is an integral part of their community, access to high quality recreational resources, and protection of landowner rights. Such quality of life outcomes, however, can neither be assumed nor taken for granted. By improving voluntary cooperation among stakeholders within the Aux Sable Creek Watershed and by providing educational opportunities to local communities about their role in watershed protection, it is hoped that this initiative will encourage people to do their part to improve or protect the valuable natural resources in the Aux Sable Creek Watershed.

REASON FOR THE WATERSHED PLAN UPDATE

In the winter of 1997, a group of concerned citizens formed the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Planning Committee. The formation of the group was prompted by the flooding in 1996. This committee was comprised of local citizens and community leaders. The group began to identify resource concerns and soon realized that there were more issues to address than just flooding. Additional concerns included at that time were:

- 1) soil erosion,
- 2) loss of wetlands,
- 3) development,
- 4) degraded water quality,
- 5) loss of wildlife habitat.

When the natural resource inventory reports were presented to the committee, they discovered how rich the resources were within the Aux Sable Creek Watershed. For that reason, the committee felt that they should work together along with others in the Watershed to try to preserve the quality of the Watershed. The Planning Committee prepared a watershed plan and presented it in March 2001.

Since that time, the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition, a grass roots committee of concerned watershed residents, has used the plan as a founding document for their work to promote the enhancement and protection of the identified resources of the Watershed. In 2007, The Conservation Foundation and the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition obtained a Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source

Pollution Grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to update the plan. They collaborated to form the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is made up of a collection of stakeholders within the Watershed, charged with updating the existing plans to address the nine criteria which are required of all watershed plans by the IEPA. The original watershed plan did not address these criteria because, at the time, they were not required to be addressed. The IEPA requires that watershed plan address nine criteria in order to qualify for future funding through the 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Program. The Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan (published March 2001) prepared by the Planning Committee is being updated to meet those criteria, which include:

1. An identification of the causes and sources of Nonpoint Source pollution
2. An estimate of the pollutant load reductions expected following implementation
3. A description of measures to implement to achieve pollutant load reductions estimated
4. An estimate of the amounts of technical and financial assistance needed, associated costs, and/or the sources that can implement the plan
5. A public information/education component that is designed to change social behavior
6. An implementation schedule
7. A description of measurable milestones
8. A set of criteria to determine whether pollutant loading reductions are being achieved
9. A monitoring component

The members of the Advisory Committee are working to accomplish the purpose of IEPA's Section 319 Program: to work cooperatively with units of local government and other organizations toward the mutual goal of protecting water quality in Illinois through the control of nonpoint source pollution. To assist in updating the Watershed Plan, The Conservation Foundation secured a 319 Grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). Wills Burke Kelsey Associates, Ltd (WBK) was contracted to provide technical assistance during the authoring process of the updated plan.

To assist in the identification of important resources in the Watershed, a watershed-wide open space/green infrastructure plan was created as an appendix item to the Watershed Plan update document. It will use the open space areas already identified in Kendall County (through the *Protect Kendall Now!* initiative in 2005-2007) and add the Watershed's Grundy County portion. The Kendall portion will not

be changed or revisited; work will focus on the Grundy County portion of the watershed with this project. The process will follow that used when the Kendall portion was mapped. Once completed, all of the open space information will be compiled into a watershed-wide open space/green infrastructure plan.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision statement was prepared by a sub-committee of the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee decided in March 2008 that it approximately summarizes the purpose of the plan as viewed by the stakeholders of the Watershed:

We intend to maintain the Class A rating of the Aux Sable Creek and enhance the natural and economic health of the Watershed using sound management practices, education, and voluntary cooperation while respecting property owner rights.

COMMITTEE GOALS

The Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) discussed the goals from the previous plan and re-evaluated which ones were relevant. The process consisted of the Advisory Committee breaking into small, randomly divided groups. They discussed the existing goals and then identified additional goals and concerns which needed to be addressed in this plan. Below are the goals which were deemed the most critical by vote of the committee members (Table 1).

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

This project is a collaborative effort to update the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan. An Advisory Committee has been formed of stakeholders within various areas of the Watershed, including landowners, municipal and county planning or engineering departments, the Kendall and Grundy County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and other public interest groups. Over 50 representatives were invited by The Conservation Foundation to participate on the committee, of which one-third are landowners in the Watershed. Many of these representatives have been active in watershed activities in the past while others are just getting involved. Other agencies represented include the Kendall & Grundy County Farm Bureaus, which represents the large farming community in the watershed. Together, the committee is working to accomplish the purpose of IEPA's Section 319 Program: to work

cooperatively with units of local government and other organizations toward the mutual goal of protecting water quality in Illinois through the control of nonpoint source pollution. The advisory committee met monthly to assist in drafting an updated watershed plan that focused on control of nonpoint source pollution. The committee has discussed various topics and concerns regarding what should or should not be a part of the plan which Wills Burke Kelsey Associates, Ltd. authored. Once the draft was completed, a public informational meeting was held, to ensure the work of the advisory committee was appropriate to the challenges and opportunities of the Watershed.

LANDOWNER BILL OF RIGHTS

To reflect the commitment of the Aux Sable Creek Watershed Plan Advisory Committee to create a plan consistent with the vision statement, a Landowner Bill of Rights (Appendix 1) was drafted to outline basic rights. The Landowner Bill of Rights declares that Watershed landowner’s basic rights to maintain their land would not be infringed upon during the implementation of this watershed plan, such that the plan did not contain or promote the regulation of land uses. The signatures at the end of the text indicate agreement to the terms of the document by individual landowners or the organizations as they are represented in the Advisory Committee. Committee members were free to sign or not sign the document, which does not impart legal authority to the plan or the committee members.

Table 1: Committee Goals Which Were Considered Significant by Committee Member Vote

Categories and Goals (categories listed in alphabetical order)	High Priority 3 points	Med Priority 2 points	Low Priority 1 point	Total Points
Stream Maintenance/ Quality				
Promote Best Management Practices (stormwater related)	7	2		25
Promote water quality	1	4		11
Create stream maintenance programs			2	2
Debris in creek		1	1	3
Flooding				
Flood control		2	1	5
Identify flooding areas and reason (use public input)	1			3
Natural Areas				
Encourage protection of natural areas	1			3
Educate about natural vegetation along detention ponds (and continued maintenance including costs to homeowners)		1		2

Categories and Goals (categories listed in alphabetical order)	High Priority 3 points	Med Priority 2 points	Low Priority 1 point	Total Points
Wildlife Biodiversity				
Protect current wildlife habitat	1			3
Protect and restore biodiversity		1		2
Development				
Inform development process of need to maintain drainage functions in agricultural areas	1		1	4
Education				
What is a watershed? (Target children especially)			3	3
Educate elected officials – BMPs in development			1	1
Property Rights				
Provide education on private property rights (re: recreation rights)	1			3
Recreation				
Promote recreational opportunities (but respect private property)		1	1	3
Water Supply				
Promote sustainable groundwater (water supply)			2	2
Farmland Protection				
Promote voluntary farmland protection (Including education opportunities to educate landowners about the variety of options available. Seek and advocate funding for individuals interested in such opportunities)			1	1

WATERSHED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To enact this watershed plan, the roles and responsibilities for the different parts of the recommendations must be identified (Table 2).

Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition (Coalition)

The Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition is a grass roots committee of concerned watershed residents which help educate and advocate. The Coalition, along with The Conservation Foundation, is the catalyst behind the update of the Watershed Plan. The Coalition will be the primary agent for providing the educational component of the Watershed Plan.

Table 2: Aux Sable Creek Watershed Stakeholders

Stake Holder	Abbreviation
Aux Sable Creek Watershed Coalition	Coalition
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	CMAP
Corporate Landowners	Corp
County Dept. of Transportation/ Highway Department	CDOT
County Forest Preserve Districts	FPD
County Soil Water Conservation Districts	SWCD
Federal Emergency Management Agency	FEMA
Illinois Department of Agriculture	IDA
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	IDNR
Illinois Department of Transportation	IDOT
Illinois Emergency Management Agency	IEMA
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	IEPA
Kendall, Grundy, and Will County	County
Local Farm Bureaus	FB
Municipalities	Municipality
Park Districts	Parks
Prairie Parklands Ecosystem Partnership	PPP
Residents/Landowners	Residents
The Conservation Foundation	TCF
Townships	TWP
US Army Corps of Engineers	USACE
US Environmental Protection Agency	EPA
US Fish and Wildlife Service	USFWS
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service	NRCS

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP)

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, formerly the Northern Illinois Planning Commission, has a series of model ordinances on stormwater management, soil erosion and sediment control, streams and wetlands, and floodplains for local governments to use in developing regulatory programs. CMAP can provide technical assistance and training opportunities related to watershed planning and management to local governments. CMAP also can assist local governments in applying for state and federal funding for watershed based projects.

Corporate Landowners (Corp)

Corporate Landowners, consisting of commercial and industrial landowners, have a small influence on the management of the Watershed. The industrial district in the southern portion of the Watershed has little affect on the water quality upstream, yet

their permits require that they be heavily involved in the management and protection of the Aux Sable Creek. Current commercial and industrial landowners can retrofit their existing stormwater facilities to reduce stormwater runoff and pollutants. As the potential for future development increases, so does the opportunity for commercial businesses. Future businesses can use portions of their land to apply BMPs and help preserve some of the natural features of the Watershed.

County Department of Transportation/ Highway Departments (CDOT)

The county departments of transportation and highway departments are responsible for all county roads, bridges, culverts, and drainage in the Right of Way. CDOT is responsible for all long range planning, maintenance, and coordination for maintenance transportation related projects.

County Forest Preserve Districts (FPD)

The local forest preserve districts, the Kendall County Forest Preserve District until a Grundy County Forest Preserve District is created, are responsible for acquiring and maintaining forests within their districts, along with providing educational programs. Future management within the Watershed can include assisting in providing educational opportunities that include volunteer activities.

County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)

The local SWCD offices provide resources, technical assistance, and education opportunities in relation to promoting the protection and conservation of soil, water, and other natural resources. The Kendall County SWCD assists the IEPA (through an Inter-Governmental Agreement) with Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Inspections. The SWCD can also help in providing funding assistance to various projects that meet certain criteria.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the federal agency in charge of reducing loss of life and protection from natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other such devastating events. They are also in charge of administering the flood mapping and flood insurance program. FEMA's primary role in the watershed deals with mapping of the floodplains and floodways.

Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDA)

The Illinois Department of Agriculture is an advocate for Illinois' agricultural industry and provides the necessary regulatory functions to benefit consumers, agricultural industry, and natural resources. The agency strives to promote agri-business in Illinois and throughout the world.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is the state agency that is responsible for the protection, maintenance, and sustainability of all state owned natural and cultural resources. The IDNR offers a multitude of grants and technical assistance for projects that may take place in the Watershed. IDNR is also responsible for permitting any floodplain or floodway impacts due to development.

Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)

The Illinois Department of Transportation focuses primarily on the state's policies, goals, and objectives for Illinois' transportation system and provides an overview of the department's direction for the future.

Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA)

IEMA is a state level agency which has a similar role to FEMA. Their primary objective is to protect the state of Illinois.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA)

The IEPA is an agency whose mission is to safeguard environmental quality, consistent with the social and economic needs of the State, so as to protect health, welfare, property, and the quality of life.

Kendall, Grundy, and Will County (County)

The Counties' involvement in the Watershed is typically concerned with overseeing the activities on land within the county that is not incorporated. They regulate the land in accordance with their ordinances. The Counties may have some cost share programs available or may be able to provide some technical assistance with projects initiated in the watershed.

Local Farm Bureaus (FB)

The local Farm Bureaus represent the large population of farmers in the watershed. The FB is an organization that provides public advocacy to its members within many levels of government while providing information regarding recent advancements in farming technologies.

Municipalities

The municipalities within and surrounding the Watershed are responsible for regulating and maintaining the land within its current boundaries, as well as, land which is annexed during various stages of development. The role of the municipality in terms of this Watershed report is primarily to advocate the Plan and its goals to its residents.

Park Districts (Parks)

The local park districts are typically responsible for maintaining public land and open space within its boundaries. They may be a source of maintenance in future projects or may be an outlet or source in future educational programs.

Prairie Parklands Ecosystem Partnership (PPP)

The Prairie Parklands is one of 41 Ecosystem Partnerships in Illinois that work in conjunction with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. It is a coalition of public, private, and not-for-profit groups seeking to enhance and promote natural and cultural resource stewardship with compatible economic and recreational development in the Prairie Parklands region which includes the Watershed.

Residents/ Landowners (Residents)

The residents and landowners of the Watershed are the primary stakeholders due to the impact (both positive and negative) they have had and can have on the quality of the resources within the Watershed. Landowners or their tenants are primarily responsible for maintaining their property and the resources on their property. There are many projects or recommendations within this Plan which are structured for their participation.

The Conservation Foundation (TCF)

TCF is a not for profit organization which aims to preserve open space and natural lands, protect rivers and watersheds, and promote stewardship of our environment. Their role in the Plan is to administer the IEPA Section 319 grant and advocate the updated Watershed Plan.

Townships (TWP)

The local townships have the same purpose and role as the municipalities and the counties in that they maintain land within their boundaries.

United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)

United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is a federal group of civilian and military engineers and scientists that provide services to the nation including planning, designing, building, and operating water resources and other Civil Works projects. These also include navigation, flood control, environmental protection, and disaster response. The local district, Rock Island, is the main permitting agency for any proposed projects which may impact any federally regulated wetlands or aquatic resources.

United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The EPA leads the nation's environmental science, research, education, and assessment efforts. The mission of the EPA is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The USFWS works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. USFWS continues to be a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for its scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service.

United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

The NRCS is a federal agency that works in partnership with the American people to conserve and sustain natural resources, soil, and water. Within the Watershed, the local NRCS office may be able to provide technical and monetary assistance with projects initiated to improve the quality of the Aux Sable Creek and its tributaries.