

Chapter 4. Milwaukee River Basin Partnerships

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Recently the WDNR reorganized into twenty-three Geographic Management Units (GMUs) with a major focus on managing resources on a geographic basis, rather than by programs. The Milwaukee River Basin Land and Water Partners Team (Partners Team) was formed in 1998, and represents a wide range of federal, state, county and local agencies, nonprofit organizations and private sector interests (Table 16). The Partner Team was formed to give citizens, environmental and conservation groups, businesses and local governments the ability to directly participate in setting priorities for work conducted throughout the Milwaukee River Basin. The use of such partner teams is an effective way to bring interested parties together within a defined geographic area to share resources while working toward common goals. It is not uncommon for public and private organizations to compete for limited funding to finance their projects. Working on projects together, rather than competing with each other to meet common goals is a major strength of a valuable partnership.

Table 16. Milwaukee River Basin Land and Water Partners Representation

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| ◆ Citizens for a Better Environment | ◆ Ozaukee Washington Land Trust |
| ◆ City of Milwaukee | ◆ River Revitalization Foundation Inc. |
| ◆ Conrad Technologies | ◆ Schlitz Audubon Nature Center |
| ◆ Conservation Congress | ◆ 16 th Street Community Health Center |
| ◆ Federation of Environmental Technologists | ◆ Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission |
| ◆ Friends of Milwaukee's Rivers | ◆ U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service |
| ◆ Greater Milwaukee Convention & Visitor Bureau | ◆ University of Wisconsin-Extension |
| ◆ Metropolitan Association of Realtors | ◆ UW-Sea Grant Institute |
| ◆ Metropolitan Builders Association | ◆ Village of Menomonee Falls |
| ◆ Milwaukee County Conservation Alliance | ◆ Washington County Land Conservation Committee |
| ◆ Milwaukee County Parks, Recreation & Culture Department | ◆ West Bend Chamber of Commerce |
| ◆ Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District | ◆ Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources |
| ◆ National Park Service | ◆ Wisconsin Wastewater Operators Association |
| ◆ Natural Resources Conservation Service | ◆ Wisconsin Well Water Association |
| ◆ Ozaukee County Farm Bureau | ◆ Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association |
| ◆ Ozaukee County Land Conservation Dept. | |

From 1998 until summer 2000 the Milwaukee River Basin Land and Water Partners Team met as a full group at least every other month. To guide the work and operations of the Partner Team, they defined the group's purpose and developed a vision statement and a guideline for action plans (listed below).

Purpose: The Milwaukee River Basin Partnership is a voluntary coalition of businesses, nonprofit groups, public agencies, educational institutions, organizations and individuals committed to restoring and sustaining the ecosystem of the Milwaukee River Basin while ensuring economic viability. Toward that end, the Partnership promotes comprehensive resource management, information exchange, intergovernmental coordination and citizen involvement.

Vision: “A Milwaukee River basin with a sustained and restored ecosystem that offers a healthy environment, strong economy and high quality of life for current and future generations.”

Action: The Milwaukee River Basin Partnership will foster collaborations which lead to the protection, restoration and enhancement of Wisconsin’s most populated river basin. Envisioned activities include on-the-ground projects, environmental education, research and public policy recommendations. We, the undersigned, mutually agree to provide assistance, as available, to support the efforts of the Partnership for the Milwaukee River Basin. Assistance may take many forms including technical expertise, financial support, volunteers, staff time, publicity or implementing projects supported by the Partnership.

The Partner Team worked diligently to define the priorities of issues and needs facing the Milwaukee River Basin. These resource protections as well as educational priorities are listed in Table 17. This list of priorities has guided the Partner Team as they develop various action plans. The Partner Team has considered sponsoring or supporting specific resource enhancement projects, natural resource education programs, and reviews of land use controls and policies.

Past projects that the Partner Team has been involved in include:

- Developing a summer internship position through the University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning.
- Presentations and invitations to municipalities to sign the partnership agreement stating that they will commit to considering resource functions and values in their decisions.

Table 17. Priorities Identified by the Milwaukee River Basin Land and Water Partners.

- 1. Protect Natural Lands.**
 - Encourage the protection of environmental corridors and isolated natural areas.
 - Help to implement the Kettle Moraine Task Force goals related to protecting the Mid-Kettle Moraine through public education and fund raising activities.
 - Encourage WDNR and other agencies to purchase more of the environmental corridor areas.
 - Establish a natural area in the North Branch Watershed.
 - Encourage municipalities in the basin to adopt the Partnership Agreement and Goals.
 - Encourage municipalities in the basin to adopt *Regional Natural Areas and Critical Species Habitat Protection and Management Plan for Southeastern Wisconsin* (SEWRPC, 1997).

- 2. Promote “smart growth” initiatives in the basin.**
 - Develop strategies to change existing zoning laws and policies to promote sound local and county land use development.
 - Encourage sound local and county land use planning.
 - Adopt land use management practices that guarantee clean water and healthy ecosystems in the future.
 - Encourage adoption of comprehensive stormwater management plans by all cities, villages, towns and counties in the basin.

- 3. Educate citizens about the importance of the basin as a resource and support efforts to improve, maintain and enhance its quality.**
 - Develop an educational strategy focusing on a range of publics to increase awareness of the resource and how to protect it.
 - Improve people’s perception of the river as an asset.

- 4. Improve water quality by controlling both point and nonpoint sources of pollution.**
 - Address problems associated with milk house waste.
 - Encourage training and enforcement of more uniform erosion control ordinances.
 - Develop a “user-friendly” method for addressing failing septic systems.
 - Implement the Milwaukee Estuary Remedial Action Plan.
 - Implement a clean-up of contaminated sediments on Cedar Creek.
 - Implement the remainder of the Cedar Creek PCB contaminated sediment clean-up by Mercury Marine and Amcast Corporation.
 - Complete feasibility study for the remediation of contaminated sediment in the Estabrook Impoundment.
 - Support efforts to have safe, fishable and swimmable waters.

- 5. Protect riparian areas.**
 - Restore degraded riparian areas.
 - Adopt county agricultural shoreland management ordinances.
 - Support purchase of conservation easements for riparian areas.

During the summer of 2000, the Partner Team members selected the following high-priority educational projects for 2001.

1. **Conduct a Milwaukee River Basin Workshop.** Help organize and co-sponsor a workshop focusing on the Milwaukee River Basin. The purpose of the workshop will be to share information about ongoing projects and opportunities in the basin. Small groups will meet and discuss specific areas of interest/concern and will make suggestions for future Partners Team work. This conference has been scheduled for November 9, 2001.
2. **Create a Virtual Map of the Milwaukee River Basin..** Expand the Partner Team web site (<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/milwaukee>) to include geographic information system based maps of the basin, exhibiting the results of overlaying various resource and data maps. These maps, directed to an audience which includes the general public, upper level students and decision makers would function to reveal the fascinating and critical resource and land use management issues facing the basin.

The Partners Team also identified a second tier of projects for the year ahead.

- Resubmit a grant proposal to develop a web site providing information on land use development ordinances which directly or indirectly affect water quality.
- Represent the Partners Team for the Mid-Kettle Moraine Project.

The Partner Team recently decided to meet as a full group annually, and formed an Executive Committee to guide the full Partner Team. The Executive Committee (Table 18) meets quarterly and furthers priorities and projects identified by the full Partner Team. The Executive Committee members have committed to serving for two years.