

# Confluence

People getting together to enhance Salt Creek



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## Salt Creek TMDL Update

By Chris Oszak

What is a TMDL? TMDL is short for Total Maximum Daily Load. It is an analysis of the maximum amount of pollution a water body can receive and still meet water quality standards. This analysis, known as 'the TMDL', sets pollution reduction goals to improve impaired waters.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, IEPA, is responsible for setting standards and monitoring water quality in Illinois. The TMDL process for the Salt Creek began in

**"[A] TMDL workgroup began meeting in the spring of 2004 to work out a plan to improve the water quality of [Salt Creek]."**

2000. A consultant was contracted by the IEPA to study the impairments to the Salt Creek and to come up with an implementation plan to meet water quality standards. Their draft TMDL for the Salt Creek was published in 2003 and made available to interested parties.

Public hearings were held to discuss the plan and provide a means for public participation in the TMDL process. During the hearings many questions and concerns were raised by the sanitary district operators and by various environmental groups. At the same time the draft TMDL for the East Branch of the DuPage River was made available and public hearings were held. The East Branch and the Salt Creek had similar impairments, and the same questions and concerns were raised about both TMDL's. Since many of the same stakeholders were involved in both watersheds, a TMDL workgroup was formed. Stakeholders from the West Branch of the DuPage River also joined the

workgroup, as their TMDL process began in 2002.

The TMDL workgroup began meeting in the spring of 2004 to work out a plan to improve the water quality of these streams. Even though most people think of the sanitary district sewage treatment plants (POTW, or publicly owned treatment works) as the main polluters of our streams, careful analysis of the data showed that the POTW's in most cases exceeded their water quality standards and that the streams had the highest level of pollutants following a storm event – heavy rain or snowfall. Pollution in the streams is caused by storm water runoff, a non point source (NPS) of pollution. Since the pollution is coming from many sources throughout the watershed, it will take the work of many people and all communities in the watershed to improve the water quality of the Salt Creek and DuPage River.

On Nov. 17, 2004, the TMDL workgroup invited decision makers from all communities in the three watersheds to a meeting where these findings were presented along with some preliminary plans. All communities were asked to make a commitment to improve the water quality in these streams by working with the TMDL workgroup. The steering committee of the TMDL workgroup is writing a summary of the meeting that will be sent to all the stakeholders that were invited to the 11/17 meeting. If you could not attend that meeting, be sure to look for this summary as it does affect your community.

Updates will be published in future issues of the 'Confluence' and on our website:

[www.saltcreekwatershed.org](http://www.saltcreekwatershed.org).

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## Salt Creek Headwater Recovery Project

By Jeff Wickenkamp

The Salt Creek Headwater Recovery Project was completed at the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve earlier this year. The headwater tributary to Salt Creek in western Cook County known as the Middle Fork, originates to the west of the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve. The purpose of the project was to remediate the degradation of the Middle Fork, Harrier Marsh and buffer uplands resulting from soil erosion, channelization, sedimentation and other sources of impairments. These impairments were addressed by stabilizing eroding streambanks, restoring native vegetation, and filtering and purifying water prior to discharge to Salt Creek. The project site now includes a more open wetland with undesirable brush and trees removed, a cleared stream corridor which is allowing sunlight through, revegetation of native plants in the stream corridor, removal of brush piles along the stream corridor, and improved water quality and habitat. The project also featured

an educational component including signage, tours and educational programs, a brochure and a project website at:

[www.savetheprairiesociety.org/WRPheadwater/index.html](http://www.savetheprairiesociety.org/WRPheadwater/index.html).

*Jeff Wickenkamp is a Principal Water Resources Engineer with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.*



## Meet The Creek 2005

If you missed last year's 'Meet the Creek' educational fairs, don't despair – 'Meet the Creek' fairs will be held in the spring and summer of 2005.

The Salt Creek Watershed Network is able to present these fairs with assistance from the Illinois EPA through a 319 grant, and with the generous help and support of the communities and organizations involved.

These fairs are designed to provide information about the Salt Creek, educate the public about NPS (non point source) pollution, and provide some recreational opportunities for those attending the fair.

Details of exact location, time, and activities for each 'Meet the Creek' are still in development. Look for details in the spring 'Confluence' and on our website at:

[www.saltcreekwatershed.org](http://www.saltcreekwatershed.org).

If you would like to display your organizations watershed related work or projects at the fairs, please contact Chris Oszak at 630-832-4189.

## SCWN Successfully Completes Grant

By Tom Richardson

SCWN recently completed a two-year Environmental Special Emphasis grant from the DuPage Community Foundation. Grant goals included: increasing awareness of watershed issues, a cleaner shoreline, and more educated and involved riparian landowners. SCWN partnered with the Conservation Foundation, York High School, the City of Elmhurst, the Elmhurst Park District, the Village of Oak Brook, and the Forest Preserve of DuPage County to achieve the goals.

Through grant activities, over 275 York High School students and teachers heard presentations on Salt Creek issues, participated in four creek cleanups, participated in macroinvertebrate collection, and helped stencil over 100 storm drains.

Forty-five riparian landowners received materials educating them on Salt Creek issues. Fifteen of the landowners indicated interest in installing buffers by the Creek to reduce pollutants entering

the Creek. All fifteen want to work toward stabilization of the shore.

Grant administrator Tom Richardson described the grant, "The Community Foundation Grant gave us a jump start on improving Salt Creek while developing excellent cooperative relationships with wide range of government and non profit groups. It was particularly exciting working with the

enthusiastic York High School students. SCWN will continue cooperating with all of the groups to ensure a cleaner and healthier Salt Creek."



# Watershed Cleanups Makes a Difference

By Ron Hursh

Hopefully you have noticed and enjoyed a cleaner creek and shoreline while walking through the woods or just driving by wooded areas near Salt Creek. Willing, hard workers of all ages have united to collect trash along the creek and in forest preserve areas. Individuals, corporations, municipalities, and community organizations are responding to the call.

This shows that people do care about the environment and are willing to get their hands dirty to enjoy, enhance, and preserve this natural area asset. Their participation helps SCWN meet outreach objectives such as enhancing creek awareness, garnishing community involvement, and promoting education. Clean ups receive funding assistance from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency under its Stream-bank Cleanup and Lakeshore Enhancement Program.

SCWN will be sponsoring another Salt Creek cleanup on April 30, 2005. Plan on joining one of these efforts in your area. If you have a group that would like to clean a particular area of the Salt Creek on that day, give Chris Oszak a call at 630-832-4189. Check out [www.saltcreekwatershed.org](http://www.saltcreekwatershed.org) for locations and times.



Hard working kids take a well-earned break while cleaning up around Fullersburg Woods (photo by Chris Linnell, DuPage County Forest Preserve District).

## LaGrange Area

Individuals and organizations such as Indian Guides, Boy Scouts, Lyons Township HS Environmental Science and Community Projects programs, First United Methodist Church Environmental Justice work area, School District 103 Science Department, District 102 Science Center and Park Junior High School teamed up in September to clean a long stretch of the creek in LaGrange. Cook County Forest Preserve staff helped out by hauling away the many bags of trash.



## Fullersburg Woods Forest Preserve

September 25, 2004 was a beautiful day and more than 50 volunteers showed up at the Fullersburg Woods Education Center for the Salt Creek cleanup. In all, the volunteers removed trash from approximately a mile of Salt Creek shoreline in the forest preserve. Most of the volunteers worked from shore picking up plastic and other debris that blew in or was washed ashore during high water. One of the volunteers, a regular Fullersburg volunteer, was joyous that we made it all the way to Spring Rd, the northern most point of the Salt Creek in Fullersburg. The water keepers, another forest preserve volunteer group, worked to clear a log jam along a bridge.



Don't mess with the Fullersburg Woods cleanup committee (photo by Chris Linnell, DuPage County Forest Preserve District).

Want to get a cleanup going in your town? Call Chris Oszak at 630-832-4189 to find out how.

# Elk Grove Village Completes Streambank Stabilization

By Nick Nikola and Mary Jo Pye

The Village of Elk Grove initiated it's streambank stabilization project in an effort to reduce nonpoint source pollution from streambank erosion



along Salt Creek. The Salt Creek Streambank Stabilization Project incorporated materials and methods that minimized initial and long-term costs, utilizing bioengineering solutions when possible.

These techniques are attractive because, when combined with a suitable vegetative buffer along a stream corridor, they provide effective streambank erosion control in addition to being ecologically sensitive and aesthetically pleasing.

Phase 1 went from Arlington Heights Road about 1,600 feet downstream of J.F. Kennedy Boulevard while Phase 2 ran another 1,600 feet downstream of J.F. Kennedy Boulevard to the Village limits, nearly 600 feet north of Devon Avenue. Phase 1 cost \$1,000,285 and Phase 2 cost around \$300,000. The project was completed during the summer of 2004 and is already having a positive impact on water quality. Partial funding (60%) for the project was provided by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency through a 319 grant.

*Mary Jo Pye works in the Elk Grove Village Engineering Department.*



A variety of solutions were used to create the stabilization. They included:

- Use of vegetated geogrids at locations requiring stabilization of steeper slopes.
- Stabilization seed mix and shrub cuttings to bind the soils.
- Use of concrete A-jacks to form a continuous flexible protection at the toe of the slope where it meets the normal water elevation.
- Use of lunkers to form continuous protection and provide aquatic habitat at the toe of the slope where it meets the normal water elevation.
- Use of biodegradable coir fiber roll to provide protection and a growing medium for plantings at the toe of the streambank.
- Minor regrading of streambanks to reduce the slope gradient.
- Use of temporary and permanent erosion control fabrics to protect slopes until seeding and plantings have become established.

# Get a Big Bang for your Holiday Bucks—Donate to SCWN

xxxxxto be more effective—and to be able to pursue more grant opportunities—SCWN needs additional donations to cover a variety of non-project expenses. Please contribute to a cause that is implementing the vision laid out six years ago that Salt Creek is a valuable natural resource worthy of protection and enhancement. Thank you.

Note: the mailing label on the other side may suffice for your mailing address.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Your Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

Please indicate your donation amount and make check payable to the Salt Creek Watershed Network:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Organization's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail (optional)

- ☐ \$15 individual support  
☐ \$30 family support  
☐ \$50 gift donation  
☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ other donation

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

Return to:  
SCWN  
8738 Washington Ave.  
Brookfield, IL 60513

**Thank you for your support!!!**

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip

*Please cut on the dotted line and return to SCWN.*

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## SCWN Board Profile: Nick Nikola



Nick Nikola has been a friend of Salt Creek since he bought a home along it many years ago. In 1990, a friend gave them an old homemade canoe so he and his family started canoeing up and down the creek in the village. At that time garbage in and along the creek was a common site.

While they picked up trash whenever they could, it soon became apparent more help was needed. Nick started researching watershed groups like The Conservation Foundation and Friends of the Chicago River to learn about organizing clean ups. He also joined Cook County Clean

Streams committee.

Nick had been an Eagle Scout so found a ready partner for a clean up in Life Scout Jerry James. The first clean up was a huge success and it spawned two other clean ups in 1995. There have been 22 clean ups over the last 10 years and the tradition continues with two annually. In addition to founding SCWN with former director Jeff Swano, he also founded Friends of Critters and Salt Creek and is very active in clean ups at Busse Woods.

As Nick's involvement and interest in watersheds grew and through many years of networking with schools, boards and political entities, Nick started to educate local officials and residents as to the benefits of streambank stabilization. It was his hard work, dedication and persistence that created the spark that led to the resulting complete streambank restoration in Elk Grove.

After a couple of years of planting the seeds in peoples minds the stream bank owners were invited to a Village Board meeting and Nick made a formal plea to the Village Board to pursue stream bank stabilization and asked the neighbors to stand up. They represented around 40 residents.

### *Swano's Swansong*

After serving as Executive Director for SCWN since 1997, Jeff Swano, a co-founding director of the organization, is swapping the watershed approach for one that attempts to help the environment one yard at a time.

He has teamed up with Mike Lofton—a former Hoffman Dam River Rat—to expand their new company Dig Right In, Landscaping Inc. This past season was so successful, it took all of Jeff's time and as a result, leaving no free time to continue in his role as Executive Director.

Over the years Jeff has been a key player in the network and served an important role as an organizer and technical expert.

We wish Jeff well in his new efforts!



# Confluence

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Happy Holidays



## Confluence

### Website Update

If you don't have our website bookmarked or saved to your favorites website folder – do it now. And then be sure to check back in January.

We are in the process of updating our website to contain even more water resources information.

Look for a kid's page with links to fun and educational websites for kids of all ages. There will be more information for folks just beginning to learn about watersheds, and links for those ready to move onto more advanced water resource topics. And one whole section will be devoted to Non Point Source (NPS) pollution.

So, logon, tune in, and turn on to:

[www.saltcreekwatershed.org](http://www.saltcreekwatershed.org)

The website update is partially funded by a grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Visit our web site at:

[saltcreekwatershed.org](http://saltcreekwatershed.org)

### The SCWN Board of Directors:

Amy Bodwell	Brookfield
Ron Hursh	La Grange Park
Nick Nikola	Elk Grove Village
Keith Olson	Elmhurst
Christine Oszak	Villa Park
Tom Richardson	Oak Brook



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