Salt Creek Watershed Network

Like every drop of rain - Our every action counts.

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Current Topics of Interest

This page will be updated periodically with articles from outside sources and updates on Salt Creek issues. (All links are colored orange.)

You will need to copy and paste some of the links into your address bar.

Posted August 21, 2009

A bit overdue, but still important - photos from the spring Salt Creek clean up:

In June we had clean ups in Elk Grove Village, Cricket Creek FP, and LaGrange Park, and Addison Creek. We have some pictures from Elk Grove Village and LaGrange Park.

Elk Grove Village clean up, photographer Nick Nikola.

An excellent father-son outing:

Dedicated Elk Grove volunteer:

Related links:

How to report pollution

Cook County call 1-800-332-DUMP

Illinois EPA or call (847)294-4000

Illinois EPA

Bureau of Water
TMDL
NPDES

US EPA

Office of Water
Non Point Source Pollution

USGS

Water Resources of US
Office of Surface Water
Data Collection Sites

USGS stream monitors:

Rolling Meadows
Elk Grove Village

From LaGrange Park, Stan Zarnowiecki photographer.

Cindy Skrukrud demonstrating water quality monitoring techniques:

Trash (and volunteers) from LaGrange Park Woods:

Brookfield
Western Springs
Wood Dale
Elmhurst
Oak Brook
Riverside

Lower Des Plaines Ecosystem Partnership:

LDPEP

DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup:

DRSCW

Posted May 1, 2009

It's the time of year we all think about GARDENS. If you're planning a new garden or want to update an existing garden, **think about a rain garden**. The many benefits of rain gardens include conserving water, low maintenance, and reducing storm water runoff. Beside that, they look pretty. You might want to check out some rain garden websites and brochures on our What YOU can do page.

Posted April 5, 2009

The Salt Creek Watershed Network is an active participant in many local water quality stakeholders groups. In 2004 when the first TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) was written for the Salt Creek, Jeff Swano and Christine Oszak were involved in the organization of the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, DRSCW. This workgroup was formed to address water quality issues on the DuPage Rivers and Salt Creek. The workgroup consists of representatives of all the wastewater treatment plants that discharge into the three streams as well as representatives of most communities along the streams, environmental groups, consultants, and forest preserves. All these groups are working to improve the water quality of the streams. When Jeff left SCWN to start his own business, Dig Right In Landscaping, Chris Oszak became the SCWN liaison to the workgroup participating on the Salt Creek committee and the monitoring committee.

The DRSCW monitors for stream Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and chlorides, two impairments listed in the TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) report. These continuous monitors record data at multiple locations along the East Branch and West Branch of the DuPage River and Salt Creek. The 'Stream Dissolved Oxygen Improvement Feasibility Study for Salt Creek' will be available this summer.

In 2006 and 2007 the DRSCW contracted for a complete Bioassessment and chemical analysis of the Salt Creek and East and West branches of the DuPage River. The complete report can be download here: Bioassessment Final report

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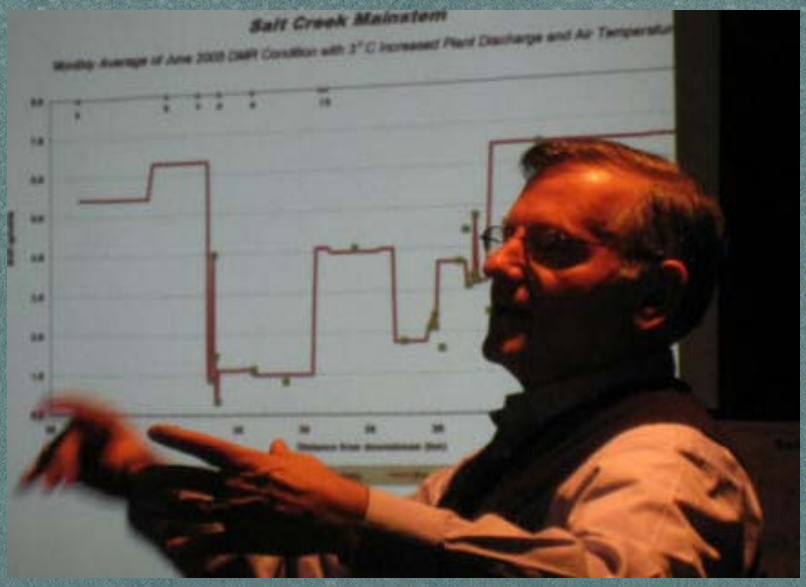
Posted Feb. 9, 2009

Our Feb. 2, meeting was a huge success. The meeting was held at Addison Trail High School, and was co-hosted by the Interact Club. More than 40 students, teachers, and general public attended the presentation by Jim Huff and Dr. Cindy Skrukrud.

Mr. Huff talked about some of the results of water quality monitoring being conducted on the Salt Creek by the DRSCW (DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup). Dr. Skrukrud talked about the Sierra Club Water Sentinels and demonstrated the equipment used by the volunteer monitors.

Some photos from the Feb. 2nd meeting:



Posted January 30, 2009

The IEPA public meeting to review and comment on the draft Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Salt Creek and DuPage Rivers was held on the evening of Jan. 28. Information announcing the meeting was posted on this website. The meeting was attended by over 30 concerned citizens.

The TMDL covers impairments to 15 river segments and one lake segment of the DuPage River/Salt Creek watershed. The potential causes of impairment for these segments are total phosphorus, fecal coliform, pH, dissolved oxygen, silver, manganese and chloride.

This TMDL report includes data analysis and selection of model to determine the pollutant loading capacity and reductions necessary to meet designated uses and water quality standards.

The IEPA implements the TMDL program in accordance with Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act. A TMDL is the sum of the allowable amounts of a single pollutant (phosphorus, metals, etc.) that a water body can receive from all contributing sources and still meet water quality standards or designated uses.

Stakeholders and participants were asked for input and ideas to be applied to the TMDL report. An additional public meeting will be held in the future to discuss the next stage of the TMDL.

Download to view the DuPage River / Salt Creek Watershed TMDL Stage 1 Report (PDF, 79 pages) This report explains the TMDL process. The Executive Summary gives a quick overview of the TMDL. Chapter 1 goes into more detail and defines TMDL. Chapter 2 gives a very good description of the physical characteristics of the watersheds and should be read by everyone. The rest of the report goes into detail and should definitely be read by biology and chemistry students and anyone that wants to know about the science behind the TMDL.

A hard copy of the draft report will also be available by request from the Illinois EPA, or can be viewed at the Elmhurst City Hall during business hours. In addition, copies can be viewed at the DuPage County SWCD and Will County SWCD offices during business hours. Questions about the TMDL should be directed to Dean Studer (see contact information below).

Closure of the Meeting Record

The meeting record will close as of midnight, February 27, 2009. Written comments need not be notarized but must be postmarked before midnight and mailed to:

Dean Studer, Supervisor
Watershed Management Planning Unit, Bureau of Water
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 North Grand Avenue East
P. O. Box 19276
Springfield, IL 62794-9276
Phone 217-782-3362

TDD (Hearing impaired) 217-782-9143
E-mail: Dean.Studer@illinois.gov
Fax: 217-785-1225

Posted January 19, 2009

IEPA 2006 303d list

The Illinois EPA recently released the 2008 303d list. This is the list of impaired waters in the state to fulfill Section 303d of the Clean Water Act. On the TMDL web page you will also find a list of documents from the USEPA concerning their partial approval of the IEPA 2008 303d list. The USEPA partial approval/disapproval is the result of changes in USEPA requirements (generally a softening of water quality standards) that were finalized during the last few months of 2008 after the IEPA completed their 303d list

You can use the TMDL link in the 'Related Links' column on the right. On the IEPA webpage that comes up, click on '303d list'. If you memorized the ten digit HUC for our Salt Creek and tributaries, it changed. There are many Salt Creeks in Illinois, so be sure to check the HUC code. Last year the HUC code was 0712000406, now it's 0712000404. OR use the links below:

The Illinois Integrated Water Quality Report and Section 303(d) List - 2008 (PDF, 4.3MB) is the 200 page report. Scroll down for a brief narrative of the Surface Water Standards. Then go to the table of contents to find other topics that interest you.

The actual 303d list is Appendix A-1. 2008 303(d) List (PDF, 240KB). Look for 10-Digit HUC 0712000404 for Salt Creek, Addison Creek, and Spring Brook.

Then look at B-2. Specific Assessment Information for Streams (PDF, 610KB) and look for 10-Digit HUC 0712000404 for Salt Creek info.

Posted September 18, 2008

RECORD RAINFALL brings flooding.

If you live in this watershed you are aware of the record rainfall we had this past weekend. Our sympathies go out to those with flooding in their homes.

These photos show some of the places that collected water to minimize flooding of residential areas. Details about some of these sites will added to the website in the near future. Photos where taken by Christine Oszak unless noted otherwise.

We start in my driveway. The brick driveway sits atop 2 feet of rock and gravel allowing water to filter down into the ground. Both the sidewalk and driveway slope to the garden that was planted in about 8-10 inches of soil on landscaping fabric covering 7 feet of rock and gravel fill around my new sewer pipe. You don't need to have a deep gravel hole to have a rain garden, this one just worked out that way. This driveway rain garden is five years old and this is the first time it had standing water. The plants are native, but not wetland plants since this area is usually dry. The water did filter down by Monday afternoon. You can learn more about rain gardens on our 'What YOU can do' page.

I headed for the Salt Creek Greenway Trail underpass at St. Charles Rd in Villa Park. I met Jamie Lidgus and Justin Uczen who kindly contributed their pictures of the trail underpass and told me the Elmhurst quarry was taking in water.

The Elmhurst Stone Quarry was purchased by DuPage County for storm water control several years ago. It doesn't get opened very often. The following photo was taken on Sunday, Sept 14, in the early afternoon. The water is entering through pipes that connect to the Salt Creek behind the quarry tower in the

background of the photo. Route 83 is between the tower and the fence.

The water flows east under West Ave. that divides the quarry. The east gravel pit is much deeper and is about 2/3 full in the photo below. I'm taking the pictures from West Ave. When the water is pumped out, I'll have to get a picture of the dry pit.

On Thursday, Sept 18, our Elmhurst hometown rep Keith Olsen let me know the quarry was full. This next photo is almost the same view as the quarry inlet 2 photos up. The police have some barricades up now so I couldn't get right up to the fence.

This is the east side gravel pit on Sept. 18.

When I left the quarry on Sunday I headed for Fullersburg Woods Forest Preserve and dam. The ripple in the water below shows the location of the Fullersburg dam which is normally a 3 or 4 foot drop. These next 3 pictures were taken from York Rd.

The wetland on the north side of Salt Creek is a natural holding area for flood water. The native plants of marshes and prairies have deep roots that draw the water down into the soil and hold water there for extended periods while the stream recedes. Those deep roots also help stabilize the soil. Wetlands also act as water purifiers. The plants filter out and absorb some of the pollutants from the storm water runoff. Heavy loads of pollutants are washed into our streams and rivers after every storm event as the rain water washes pollutants from our roads

and yards.

The forest preserve parking lot on the south side of the creek works almost as well for water retention except that the water will run off the impervious asphalt surface as quickly as the water levels recede, sending more water downstream.

The fencing runs along a walkway alongside the creek going under York Rd. The walkway itself is usually a couple of feet above water level.

Some of the SCWN directors live along the creek. Ron Hursh sent the next photo from LaGrange Park. Part of Ron's backyard is in the Salt Creek flood plain. The creek bed is much further back in the woods.

Nick Nikola sent this picture of the pedestrian bridge over Salt Creek in Elk Grove Village. This is the normal water level.

Nick took this picture on Saturday, Sept. 13 in the afternoon. You can see how heavy the rainfall was at that time. By the time the rain stopped, the water level was half way up his yard.

Posted August 10, 2008

We will now be listing natural areas restoration workdays on the Events web page. Restoring natural areas in the watershed helps to reduce flooding and restore ground water levels. Stream bank and wetland enhancements provide habitat for waterfowl and other wetland dependent wildlife. A few hours of your time working on natural areas restoration can have a big impact on long term water quality.

Word (about the Salt Creek Greenway Trail) from the Sierra Club River Prairie Group is that: *The "muddy quarter mile" from the I294 underpass west to Canterbury Lane in Oakbrook (DuPage side) has been paved and completes the Cook section added from Wolf Road so the trail is now paved from Brookfield Zoo to York Road and Roosevelt.*

Posted July 9, 2008

Two canoe trip pictures are added to the July 4 posting with a link to all 87 photos.

The caption for the Rotary Park Salt Creek Greenway Trail was corrected.

Posted July 4, 2008

I hope everyone is enjoying a Happy July 4th as we celebrate our 232nd birthday. Of course the Salt Creek has been around much longer than that, and it seems almost that long since I last updated this page. From time to time I've had the inclination to make this 'current topics' page more of a blog than a newsletter. And a few months ago within days of each other, 2 active members suggested the same thing. So now you will be seeing a friendlier current topics listing with more pictures.

This past April we held our first Salt Creek canoe outing. Stan organized the trip, renting the canoes, taking reservations, and the week before the trip he cleared branches and tree blockages from the creek. He put a lot of work into the outing. There was a lot of rain in the days before the trip that resulted in a few more obstacles to add a challenge to the trip. There was a good current and the water was slightly higher than normal, so it was an exciting trip for all. The scenery from

the creek was a view of late winter, early spring. The trees were just beginning to leaf out and the birds were calling as they settled into the woods for spring, or as they passed through on their trip north. We even spotted a few dear in the woods.

These pictures were taken by Andrew Rajas, our fishing expert. **view all 87 pictures**

Stan is planning another trip for later this summer. The weather will be warmer and the current should be a little gentler. Check the 'Events' page often for details when they are available. Or send Stan an email asking to be notified when he plans the event.

This spring we also held clean ups in the same locations as last year with more dedicated river folks. Be sure to check the 'Events' page for the last clean up of the season on 'It's Our River Day' in September.

Elk Grove Village opened a Nature Center on Earth Day. SCWN President Nick Nikola was there for the festivities. On earth day Chris Oszak, that's me, set up a SCWN display at the Fullersburg Woods Earth Day event. It's always nice to talk to people about rain gardens and the creek. It sounds like a lot of people are putting in rain gardens and doing some native landscaping to help reduce polluted runoff from their yards. Yeah team!!

Yahoo! Big news. I set up a Yahoo! listserv for SCWN. We, the SCWN board, decided to use it as an event reminder for interested persons. I collected a few email addresses from interested folks on Earth Day. I haven't activated the list yet, so you can still get in on the ground floor. If you'd like to be reminded of upcoming events and monthly meetings send me, Chris Oszak, an email asking to be put on the email list. You'll probably only get emails from us once or twice a month.

More BIG news - the Salt Creek Greenway trail has the section completed between the Prairie Path in Villa Park and Thomas Ave. (just south of the commuter train tracks) in Elmhurst.

Greenway Trail pictures by Chris Oszak

The first 2 pictures were taken on April 8, 2008 shortly after construction started on the north side of St. Charles Rd. in Elmhurst.

This next picture was taken the same day, only on the south side of St. Charles Rd. looking south where a bridge will cross the Salt Creek and the path will continue through Rotary Park.

The black landscaping fabric follows the trail along the east side of Rotary Park and ends at Wildwood Ave. From there it's only a short jog (or ride) west along Wildwood to Monterey Ave. and then a short jog or ride south to the Prairie Path.

Here's the almost completed underpass looking south toward St. Charles Rd. The next few pictures were taken on Memorial Day, May 30, 2008. Now the trail is paved with asphalt.

The completed bridge to Villa Park's Rotary Park.

At the north end of this section the trail crosses Salt Creek again near Thomas Ave. in Elmhurst.

There are a few nice views along the way.

And now we have access to more clean up work sites.

Come and check out this new section of trail and view of the Salt Creek soon.

Posted April 13, 2008

At our April meeting, Cecily Smith from Prairie Rivers Network gave a presentation on pharmaceuticals in our waterways. Pharmaceuticals enter our waterways through the wastewater system. Check out this USGS website for more information: Are Pharmaceuticals in Your Watershed?

Posted Oct. 8, 2007

Amy Bodwell was one of the founding directors of the Salt Creek Watershed Network. She is retiring from the board of directors and moving out of the area. Amy will truly be missed by SCWN. I asked her to write a farewell for our members, and her dedication and love of the Salt Creek shines through her words. She forgot to mention her years as editor of '*The Confluence*, our now occasional newsletter.

In 1999 I wasn't really looking to get involved with watersheds but then I got talking to Jeff Swano, a neighbor and friend in our village of Brookfield. He introduced me to Nick Nikola and before I knew it, I was attending SCWN meetings. There was a lot of excitement for SCWN as it was just getting started and we were beginning the process of getting a grant to put together a watershed plan. We were able to secure funding, a $15,000 grant, from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. We began by having watershed wide meetings, often held in the community house in Elmhurst. I remember meetings with 20 people in the room brainstorming what the key issues were and what we wanted to focus on. There was a lot of energy and enthusiasm. We had great support from the communities and many watershed professionals. After many months, long meetings, a lot of writing

and editing, we finally published Restoring Balance. About the same time, Elk Grove announced it would begin doing streambank stabilization along the creek. This was in great part due to Nick's ongoing efforts to highlight the watershed in Elk Grove. We also began the long and tedious process of securing our not for profit status, creating a logo, writing more grants and getting a website up and running. I felt like with everything going on, I had two jobs- one at the zoo and one at SCWN.

One of my most memorable experiences was getting to spend time on the creek. One of our former board members, Cliff Counsell, got a trip together and we went from Bemis Woods down to the Des Plaines River. It's really quite a remarkable stretch of river and despite portages around dams and fallen trees, I loved it. You get an entirely different perspective from the water- the good, forested areas with riffles in the creek and the ugly, stormdrain run off from the roads. Another time, during a visit to Nick's, we explored some of the northern end of the creek below Busse Dam. I was also doing the ECOWATCH Riverwatch program and had a site I monitored for a number of years. These experiences really helped me connect to the creek differently then had I only observed it.

Being a part of SCWN was a special experience for me. I learned a huge amount about water, watersheds, stormdrains, TMDLs, working in and with communities and about the creek. I know that no matter where my path leads me that I will have a deeper respect for watersheds and their relevance in the environment. In fact, I am now working for Biodiversity Project, an organization in Madison WI, on a project in the Gulf of Maine, a body of water that touches three states (Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts and two provinces (Nova Scotia and New Brunswick). The Gulf of Maine's watershed is 69,000 sq mi., a bit larger than Salt Creeks 150 sq miles but watersheds function much the same no matter where they are. I am working on an environmental communications plan that will reach coastal residents as well as targeted watershed residents. My experiences with SCWN will enable me to better understand the issues and solutions ahead.

Amy Bodwell, Gulf of Maine Program Coordinator Biodiversity Project

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Posted Oct 8, 2007

Check out this sustainable landscape website.

The Web page describes the principles of innovative and responsible treatment of rain water in and around the home garden. The treatments described and featured include a small green roof, rain barrels, porous pavement, rain gardens, gravel grass, a cistern, and a bioswale.

The Web page takes the reader on a virtual tour around the house, explains the rationales of the applied sustainable practices and explores the opportunities that present themselves to combine the beautiful and the useful. Other information featured is on the clay soils of the site and their infiltration capacity, how much the runoff quantity was reduced, and an observation on the wildlife that uses the garden.

There's a permanent link to this web page on our 'What YOU can do' web page.

Our fishing expert and Salt Creek friend Andrew Ragas updated his webpage.

Check it out at Fishing Headquarters There's a permanent link to this web page on our 'Recreation' web page.

Posted Oct. 8, 2007

Many small streams and wetlands don't show up on topographical maps, but that doesn't mean they aren't ecologically important.

To remind decision makers of the benefits these small streams and wetlands provide to larger river systems, American Rivers and the Sierra Club recently re-released Where Rivers Are Born: The Scientific Imperative for Defending Small Streams and Wetlands to highlight the values of headwater streams for various human and ecological functions, including water quality and water supply.

http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AMR_whereriversareborn

http://www.americanrivers.org/site/PageServer?pagename=AMR_RippleEffect2#j2

Posted Jan. 5, 2007

About 10 years ago Keith Olson heard that an organization was forming to bring people together for the benefit of the Salt Creek. He was managing the prairie restoration along the Prairie Path in Elmhurst just east of the Salt Creek. Working on behalf of the Salt Creek was a natural extension of his work on the prairie and he became one of the founding Directors of the Salt Creek Watershed Network.

This past fall he was awarded the 'Excellence in Conservation Award 2006' from Chicago Wilderness.

Read more in the current issue of the *'Confluence'* on our Newsletter and Publications page.

Posted Oct. 14, 2006

Rolling Waters of Riffles

The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County publishes 'The DuPage Conservationist' The summer issue has a nice article called 'Rolling Waters of Riffles' by Christopher Gutmann, Naturalist at Fullersburg Woods Nature Education Center. Click on 'page 4' to download the pdf version of the article.
