



Integrated Management Plan for the Fox River Watershed in Illinois

An Overview

The following Plan for the long-term health of the Fox River Watershed in Illinois was developed as a collaborative effort of members of the **Fox River Ecosystem Partnership (FREP)**. The Plan was developed by people living and working in the watershed who are directly or indirectly related to the river and its tributaries. The FREP Planning Committee and Action Teams shared equal responsibility for developing the Plan. The process included tours of the watershed, information gathering, presentations, discussions, and ultimately the development of a vision, critical factors, and Action Team strategies. The public was invited to participate and serve on Action Teams.

Vision and Criteria for Recommendations

“Our vision for the Fox River watershed is to balance all the uses and demands on our natural resources while preserving and enhancing a healthy environment.”

The 37 recommendations in this plan were evaluated in terms of the following criteria:

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| 1. Lasting and enduring. | 4. Generate support and collaboration. |
| 2. Feasible to accomplish, given the current political climate and/or resources available. | 5. Cost-effective. |
| 3. Fair. | 6. Time-effective. |
| | 7. Advances the vision. |

Sixteen Critical Factors for Achieving the Vision

The following are not in a priority order

1. Establish universal standards for land planning and development for adoption by units of local government throughout the watershed, including innovative guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMPs) for future development (e.g. cluster developments) and educate government about these.
2. Identify funding and sources of support.
3. Define, expand and integrate data collection and research on Fox River water quality and quantity by municipalities, community organizations and state agencies.
4. Strong and continued media coverage.
5. All streams achieve B or better rating (Index of Biotic Integrity).
6. Where appropriate, remove or modify dams to improve fish migration and non-motorized boating safety.
7. Protect and enhance biodiversity (aquatic and terrestrial), emphasizing native species.
8. Conservation of agricultural land.
9. Facilitate watershed-friendly revitalization of urban areas.
10. Educate public about real problems negatively affecting the river; create a public understanding of watersheds.
11. Identify, protect and manage surface and groundwater; educate public about their importance and what impacts groundwater.
12. Erosion control: streambanks and surface runoff.
13. Recognize businesses, groups, community leaders, elected officials and other individuals that help the environment.
14. Expand public access to the river and tributaries for land and water recreation.
15. Improve the management of stormwater quality and quantity, to protect water quality and reduce flooding.
16. Preserve and enhance drinking water supplies from surface and groundwater sources.

The Plan is divided into six Action Areas: Recreation, Habitat, Land Use, Water Quality, Stormwater, and Education. Following are the strategies and key recommendations for each area. Communities, governing bodies, agencies and organizations within the Fox River Watershed are asked to read, adopt/endorse and embrace this plan. As you read this information, please use the check boxes to track those strategies and recommendations that pertain to your region of the Watershed, those that you have already taken action on, and those you will consider responding to in the near future. A larger document of the entire plan, with additional specific strategies for each recommendation, is available for you to use as a more comprehensive Plan tool.

Recreation

- Strategy:** To enhance year-round, land- and water-based recreation, the Recreation Action Team will work with communities along the Fox River to inventory and evaluate public access to the Watershed and dam modification or removal.
- 1. Identify areas along the shoreline of the Fox River and its tributaries for additional access for recreation.
 - 2. Prevent/reconcile multi-use conflicts (such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horse riding, motorized and non-motorized watercraft).
 - 3. Identify areas along the Fox River and its tributaries where greenways should be extended to provide additional passive recreation areas and preserve the character of the river and its tributaries.
 - 4. Establish a well-marked water trail along the Fox River with permanent, easily accessible, safe canoe portages.
 - 5. Extend multi-use trails along the Fox River and its tributaries, especially through, extending from, and connecting to, public lands.

Habitat

- Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive program to identify, protect, and restore natural habitats to promote diversity of fish and wildlife, and restore ecosystem functions of the Fox River Watershed.
- 1. Protect and restore instream habitat for selected reaches.
 - 2. Improve riparian areas on selected stream reaches.
 - 3. Identify and restore areas with the highest restorability.
 - 4. Assess the feasibility of — and develop a plan for — removal or modification of all dams on the mainstem of the Fox River and its tributaries for safety and environmental reasons.
 - 5. Maintain and enhance the Chain O' Lakes Ecosystem.

Land Use

- Strategy:** Protect the Watershed through urban revitalization, innovative development standards, preservation of open space, acquisition of public lands, and voluntary preservation of agricultural lands.
- 1. Develop a map of existing and potential conservation lands within the Fox River Watershed.
 - 2. Promote sensible growth and development by ensuring that the map of potential conservation lands has sustained attention in the future throughout the Watershed, through an organization created for this purpose.

Land Use, continued

- 3. Support land development and management practices that protect and conserve the biologic diversity and water resources within the Fox River Watershed.
- 4. Protect, manage, or acquire quality natural resource areas including upland habitat, lakes and wetlands throughout the Watershed.

Water Quality

- Strategy:** Develop strategies to preserve and enhance ground and surface water quality and quantity, in order to provide for adequate drinking water supplies and natural habitat within the Fox River Watershed.
- 1. Formulate a watershed-wide database for water quality and fish data using Geographic Information Systems with station coding system of data generated following EPA-accepted protocol for nonpoint source and point source discharges.
- 2. In order to measure the health of the river and watershed consistently over the years, develop a standard list of indicators that can be used to characterize the water quality of the Fox River Watershed.
- 3. Encourage proactive efforts to protect ground water, surface water, and sensitive recharge area, particularly preserving the drinking water supplies in the Watershed.
- 4. Develop a Water Budget for the surface and ground water sources in the Fox River Watershed and determine longterm water use goals (i.e. maximum recreational load, publicly-owned treatment plant discharge capabilities, and drinking water facility water withdrawals).
- 5. Promote the development of public/private partnerships to best match sources of funding for enhancement of water quality monitoring, education, and awareness within the Watershed.

Stormwater

- Strategy:** Improve management of stormwater in the Watershed in order to reduce soil erosion, flooding and to improve stormwater quality:
 - collect and review existing efforts;
 - restore natural hydrologic function;
 - disseminate stormwater management strategies.
- 1. Reduce existing discharge rates of stormwater runoff from urban, developing and agricultural land uses.
- 2. Develop new and innovative stormwater management practices to control runoff rates, quantity and quality at its origins.
- 3. Develop incentive packages for the reduction of existing discharge rates and the development of new and innovative storm water management practices.
- 4. Promote and implement non-structural (natural) storm water management techniques to reduce streambed and streambank erosion and flooding.
- 5. Maintain, stabilize, enhance and restore the natural integrity to streams, creeks, and drainage ways in urban, developing and agricultural areas.
- 6. Identify and preserve significant stormwater storage areas within the Watershed.
- 7. Form a Fox River Watershed Stormwater Management Committee with at least one representative from each county located in the Watershed to address stormwater management concerns within the Watershed as a whole.

Education

- Strategy:** Develop an effective education and awareness program by focusing on multiple methods of communication to reach residents of the watershed.

- 1. Expand the network of groups/individuals interested in protecting the Fox River Watershed so they can share information and other resources, and seek grants in partnership.
- 2. Develop a high quality information packet for the media with a map of the entire Fox River Watershed and use it, with consistent press releases, to establish and maintain rapport with a contact at each media outlet.
- 3. Establish a connection between urban, suburban, and rural populations in the Fox River Watershed by getting involved in existing outreach programs.
- 4. Collaborate with existing groups to sponsor a variety of Watershed awareness events (i.e. clean ups, canoe trips, Earth Day, etc.) with an education component. Involve the media.
- 5. Establish a speakers bureau with a list of speakers who are qualified and appropriate experts (incorporate existing lists and provide incentives to speakers).
- 6. Encourage development of subwatershed advocacy groups, where they do not exist, to promote watershed education, volunteer, and stewardship opportunities.
- 7. Develop and disseminate to educators a list of watershed education resources (including map of entire Fox River Watershed) for use in K-16 classrooms.
- 8. Determine how to recognize watershed efforts by such groups as:
 - a) industry, b) business, c) schools, d) private citizens, e) elected officials, and f) environmental groupsUsing categories such as:
 - 1) monetary donations given to watershed efforts
 - 2) insight, intelligence and ideas
 - 3) education — instilling others to help
 - 4) extraordinary effort and time
 - 5) outstanding stormwater management practices in a variety of land use categories (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, etc.), and
 - 6) a directory of outstanding watershed management projects.
- 9. Develop an education and information program that identifies the benefits of stormwater management to the public (stakeholders) in the watershed.



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