



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the official regional planning organization for the northeastern Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will, and is the delegated authority for the region's areawide water quality management plan.



The Conservation Foundation (TCF) is a not-for-profit land and watershed protection organization, active in northeastern Illinois since 1972. The Foundation's mission is to preserve open space and natural lands, protect rivers and watersheds, and promote stewardship of the environment.



Fox River Ecosystem Partnership (FREP) is a not-for-profit organization comprised of Fox River Watershed stakeholders. FREP's vision is to help balance the uses and demands on natural resources while preserving and enhancing a healthy environment.

Fox River Study Group

The Fox River Study Group's hydrologic and water quality simulation models being developed by the Illinois State

Water Survey will be used to estimate watershed-pollutant loads. The mission of the Fox River Study Group is to bring together a diverse coalition of stakeholders to work together to preserve and/or enhance water quality in the Fox River watershed.



This watershed planning project is made possible by Section 604(b) of the Clean Water Act by way of a grant from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) Bureau of Water to the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).



The Conservation Foundation
10S404 Knoch Knolls Road Naperville, IL 60565
(630)-428-4500
www.theconservationfoundation.org



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

FERSON-OTTER CREEK WATERSHED PLANNING

We save land.

We save rivers.



The Conservation Foundation, in conjunction with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), is facilitating a watershed planning effort for the Ferson-Otter Creek Watershed.

This publication offers information on the watershed, the planning process, and your role in it.

To learn more, please visit the informational website, found at http://www.foxriverecosystem.org/ferson_otter.htm. This site is updated regularly with information and meeting announcements.

Contact Tara Neff to be included on the mailing list at (630)-428-4500, Ext. 23 or tneff@theconservationfoundation.org.



CLEAN RIVERS ARE VITAL ELEMENTS OF HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS...

They flow through our communities, connecting natural areas and urban environments.

The Ferson-Otter Creek Watershed includes both Ferson Creek and Otter Creek Watersheds. These two creeks converge just south of South Elgin, forming a drainage area of 54 square miles that flows into the Fox River. Twenty nine percent of the Ferson-Otter Creek Watershed's land area is developed. According to the 2010 Census, the watershed's population is approximately 48,000 and it is located in Kane County, one of the fastest growing counties in Illinois. The watershed planning process described below works toward protecting this valuable resource, casting a vision for a healthy watershed amidst sustainable development with support from informed and engaged citizens.

The Watershed Planning Process is a collaborative exercise driven by local stakeholders who share information, better target limited financial resources, and address common water-related challenges.

These challenges include:

- improving stream and lake water quality
- conserving and protecting groundwater resources
- managing stormwater and reducing risk of flood damage
- conserving open space and habitat
- providing safe lake and stream recreational opportunities
- supporting opportunities for economic development
- conserving prime farmland.

We invite the people that live, work, and play in this watershed to help determine the actions needed for protecting and improving the area's water quality.

BECOME PART OF THE PROCESS.

Stakeholder meetings are open to the public, and we welcome your voice. For information on how to be involved, please contact Tara Neff at (630)-428-4500 x 41 or tneff@theconservationfoundation.org.



Stakeholders gather to walk the stream and share their concerns. Photo by Erin Tuttle, November 2010

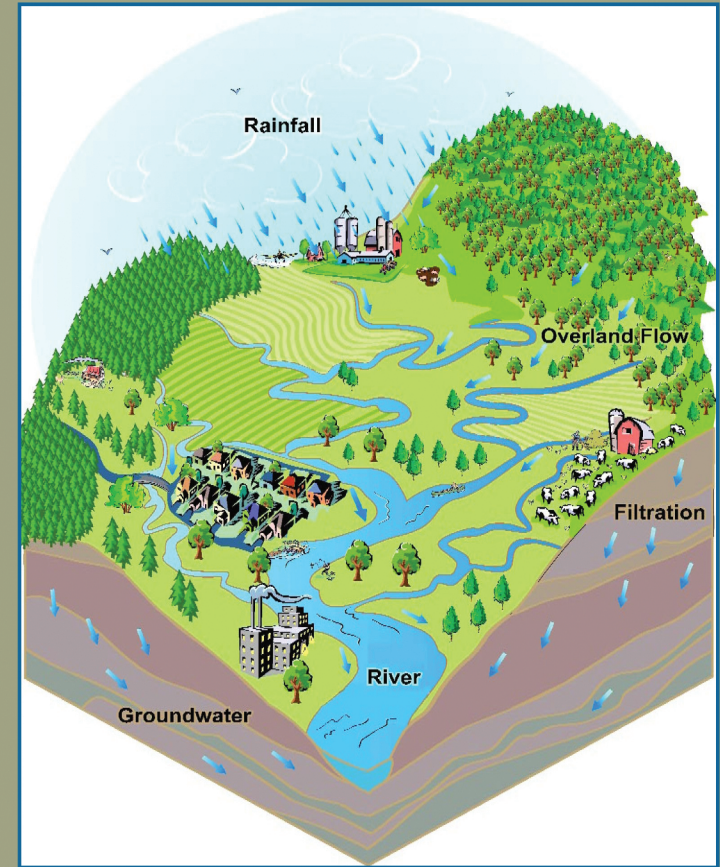
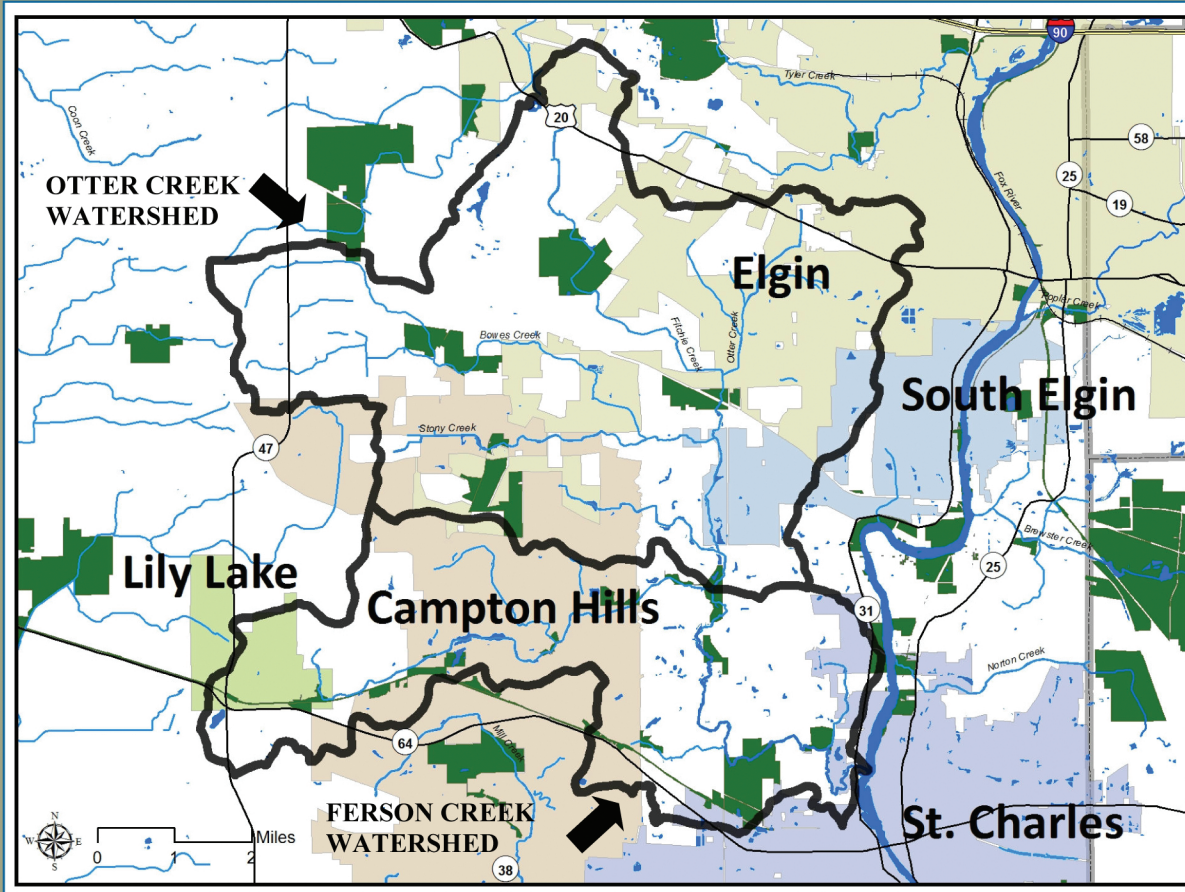
THIS PLANNING PROCESS...will follow the *Guidance for Developing Watershed Action Plans* in Illinois, created by CMAP and IEPA. Additionally, this plan will work to address newer regional planning criteria including groundwater protection strategies.

- **Invite local landowners and stakeholders to participate in the planning process.** The people who live, work, and recreate in the watershed offer their ideas, concerns, data, and expertise.
- **Develop prioritized goals which reflect desired outcomes for the watershed.** The Ferson-Otter Creek Stakeholder Committee identified various initial goals including the reduction of fecal coliform, sediment, and nutrient loadings, raising awareness of proper watershed stewardship, promoting land use practices that minimize the volume of stormwater runoff and reduce the risk of flood damage, protecting the quality and quantity of our water supplies, improving the physical condition of our waterways, and developing a lasting Watershed Stakeholder Coalition to foster continuing stewardship efforts in the watershed. Besides addressing the concerns of the stakeholders, these goals should recognize and incorporate Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) designated uses, which are the determined benefits of the waterway (aquatic life, wildlife, agricultural, primary contact [e.g. swimming], secondary contact [e.g. boating], industrial, and drinking water and food producing water supply.)
- **Take inventory of watershed resources.** A comprehensive Watershed Resource Inventory gathers information on the natural and human attributes of the watershed. It acts as a working reference document as the committee analyzes existing and proposed future activities in the watershed and what effect they may have.
- **Assess the watershed.** The process identifies the potential causes and sources of impairment that need to be controlled to achieve the goals of the watershed plan.
- **Recommend watershed objectives and management practices.** The watershed committee identifies the specific measures necessary to address the potential causes and sources of impairments, as well as non point-source pollution (pollution carried by rainwater and snowmelt) and point-source pollution (pollution from a single, identifiable source).
- **Develop an action plan.** At this point in the process, it is necessary to identify responsible parties to take a lead role on the recommended actions, develop a possible schedule for implementation, and ascertain existing and potential funding sources for the plan's implementation.
- **Monitor the success of the watershed plan.** A well-planned evaluation process will provide measures of the effectiveness of the watershed action plan, gain more support from the community, and increase the likelihood of project sustainability.

The planning process and watershed plans are to be completed by December 31, 2011.

A WATERSHED...

...is the area of land that catches rain and snow that drains into a stream, river, lake, or groundwater. How land is used in a watershed affects water quality. The watershed has become the planning and management unit of choice for many water resources issues.



Watershed diagram courtesy of Arkansas Watershed Advisory Groups

WHY THIS WATERSHED?

A major drainage area to the Fox River, the Ferson-Otter Creek Watershed has an abundance of recreational opportunities and high quality natural resources associated with the river and its tributaries. However, those same high quality resources are in danger of being lost or significantly impaired by the growth as Chicago Metropolitan area creeps further west. In 2010, Ferson Creek was assessed for primary recreation contact and was found to be impaired due to the presence of a bacteria called fecal coliform, which can cause sickness in people and animals. In this rapidly urbanizing region, it is important to address this impairment and plan for future land use to avoid further degradation of this resource.

THERE ARE MANY UNIQUE FEATURES IN THE FERSON-OTTER CREEK WATERSHED. BELOW ARE A FEW POINTS OF INTEREST...

- **Campton Township Open Space Program:** Open space preservation in Campton Township is a goal for many residents and elected officials. This program has served to protect many of the forests, wetlands, and prairies, which give such great character to the region. These sites include Corron Farm, Brown Road Meadows, Harley Woods, and Gray Willows Farm.
- **Ferson Creek Fen (St. Charles Park District):** This 46-acre property is a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve located on Rt. 31 just north of downtown St. Charles. Visit this preserve to learn about the unique fen habitat, and to see skunk cabbage, bog lobelia, and St. John's wort.
- **Great Western Trail (Forest Preserve District of Kane County):** This trail utilizes 14 miles of abandoned railway from St. Charles to the DeKalb County Line, creating a corridor of wildlife refuge. It crosses through wetlands on the Ferson Creek where duck, coot, and the Great Blue Heron nest and raise their young.



Hickory Knolls Natural Area
Photo Credit: St. Charles Park District

- **Hickory Knolls Natural Area (St. Charles Park District):** These 131 acres of restored wetlands, woodlands, savanna, and prairie feature hiking trails, a picnic pavilion, and the new, LEED Certified Hickory Knolls Discovery Center. The natural area is located at Campton Hills and Peck Roads.

- **LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve (Forest Preserve District of Kane County):** Located in St. Charles, this site hosts a variety of habitats, including a remnant prairie, flood-plain forests, seeps, and oak woodlands. The only native colony of speckled alder grows in this forest preserve, along the Ferson Creek. As a large and high-quality tributaries, Ferson and Otter Creeks are important to Fox River fish communities. Kane County has worked to modify the dam in the LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve to enable fish passage and bolster upstream fish communities.



Dam Modification Project
at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve
Photo by Erin Tuttle, November 2010



Otter Creek at Otter Creek Bend
Wetland Park
Photo by Erin Tuttle

- **Otter Creek Bend Wetland Park (St. Charles Park District):** This project pooled developers' open space credits to remove the drainage tile in a former farm field and restore a 69 acre wetland. The park is located on Crane Road in St. Charles, and has walking trails and interpretive signage.

ON RAINY DAYS we have all watched water collect along the curbside and run to the nearest storm drain. What we don't always see is all this water making its way through the storm sewer system and draining directly into the nearest waterway. Unlike pollution from point-sources (pollution that runs from a single, identifiable source), nonpoint-source pollution is caused by rainfall or snowmelt moving over and through the ground.

As it flows over our properties and roadways, water can pick up pollutants. Any substance entering the storm sewer system gets released untreated into the bodies of water we use for swimming, fishing, and drinking.

Urban nonpoint-source pollution might be caused by fertilizers and pesticides used in landscaping practices, pet waste, motor oil, road salt, and toxic household chemicals. Nonpoint-source pollution from agricultural areas might include sediment from exposed soil or overgrazed fields, nutrients, pesticides, and pathogens from livestock.

(Opposite:) *Water collects pollutants as it flows over our landscapes. The best way to protect water quality is to catch and hold water where it falls.*

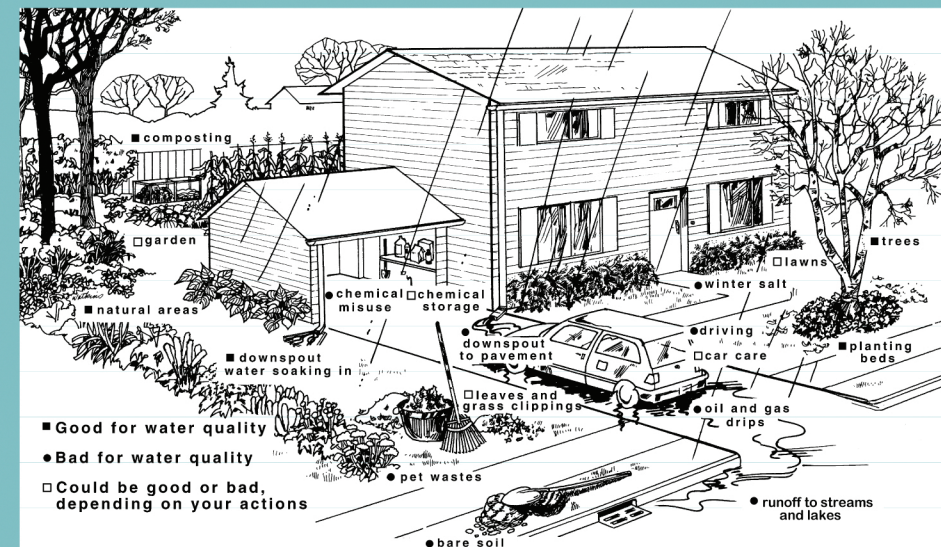


Diagram courtesy of the University of Wisconsin Extension