

**Kurt L. Heise, Director Wayne County
Department of Environment**

**Public Act 517 of 2005 – Watershed Alliances
July 12, 2006**

Mr. Heise's presentation on July 12 will focus on the history, development, and future of Michigan's Watershed Alliance Act, which was drafted by the Rouge Watershed communities in order to foster greater regional collaboration, planning, and cost-savings in the pursuit of Stormwater Permit compliance. Public Act 517 was approved unanimously by the Michigan House and Senate, and is now being considered by other watersheds in Michigan.

The major elements of organizing as a Watershed Alliance include:

■ **Reduced Cost of Meeting Storm Water Permit Requirements**

- Shared development of information and education materials
 - Catalog of information brochures, videos, and posters available for adaptation by individual communities
 - Public workshops, and public involvement activities (e.g. Rouge Clean-Up, Frog and Toad Surveys, etc.)
 - Training sessions for community public information staff
 - Reduction in duplication of efforts among communities
- Cooperative Monitoring of River
 - Five year rotation sampling of seven subwatersheds to determine effectiveness of storm water management practices in addressing identified concerns
- Development of Templates for communities to use in preparing required annual reports and required Storm Water Pollution Prevention Initiatives (SWPPIs), Public Education Plans (PEPs), and Illicit Detection /Elimination Plans. Coordinating requirements with MDEQ.
- Providing facilitators for each of the seven subwatersheds in development of Subwatershed Management Plans and required updates

■ **Address Concerns of EPA and Clean Water Act**

- Successful response to Federal Court demand for a comprehensive approach to Rouge watershed pollution problems (e.g., Court has not held a hearing on this issue for over two years following the successful formation and implementation of the Alliance predecessor Assembly of Rouge Communities)

■ **Advocate on Behalf of Its Members**

- Negotiate on behalf of members with MDEQ on interpretation and implementation of permit requirements to assure effective and efficient use of limited local resources to improve the river (e.g., current negotiations underway to simplify preparation of SWPPIs to reduce local expense in preparation of documents)

- Seek grant funding for Alliance activities from state government, federal government, and other sources (e.g., submitted federal and preparing state application to support Alliance activities and successfully removed federal EPA funding freeze on grant funding already authorized for the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project)
- **Efficiently Address River Problems and Optimize the Use of Available Grant Funding**
 - Cooperatively develop actions to address river problems based upon locally driven priorities (e.g., make sure actions and related expenditures relate directly to specific local concerns)
 - Jointly develop and approve criteria for the expenditure of available grant dollars (e.g. annually review criteria for grants on a watershed basis under the Rouge River National Wet Weather Demonstration Project and establish priorities for funding projects at the subwatershed level)

BASIC PROVISIONS OF THE WATERSHED ALLIANCE LAW

- Requires adoption of bylaws by members (Modeled after the Assembly of Rouge Communities Memorandum of Agreement)
- Voluntary – Members may terminate participation at any time
- Assessments and operating procedures determined by members (annual approval of budget and member assessments – essentially same assessment 2002 through 2006)
- No new authority to tax or assess fees to residents or businesses
- No new regulatory authority
- Authorizes
 - Development of Watershed Plans
 - Receipt of Grant, Gifts and Contributions
 - Hiring or Contracting for Staff and Services to Implement Plans
 - Advocate and Apply for Permits on behalf of Members