

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

### The Public Involvement Process

The goal of this component of the project was to establish an educated and involved public and to get feedback on what was possible. The project team first identified a comprehensive list of stakeholders for the watershed that included groups such as elected and appointed officials, environmental groups, public and private schools, business associations, homeowners associations and lawn care companies.

Several mechanisms were used to reach out to and involve these stakeholders. These included a Malletts Creek web page, four community-wide meetings, working with the Malletts Creek Association, focus groups and conducting telephone surveys.

### **Four Community-wide Meetings**

#### Meeting #1 – Goal: Educate and inform

The goal of this meeting was to inform and educate the public as well as engage them in the planning process. The first meeting introduced the project and identified the major problems of the creek (high phosphorus loading and flooding in certain areas). It was explained that the restoration process must look at the watershed as a whole and not focus on just the creek itself. Any restoration solution must have the commitment and willingness of the stakeholders in the watershed.

#### Meeting #2 – Goal: Introduce public to BMPs

At this meeting, the public involvement (PI) team emphasized the concept that the Malletts Creek watershed problems would need to be addressed with changes and actions that involved all the people who live in, work in, and visit the watershed. Categories of BMPs were described: management methods, i.e. ordinance review and planning; treatment methods, i.e. detention ponds and storm water wetlands; and source controls, i.e. alternative landscaping and installation of rain barrels. Helpful input from the public was gained and used in designing plan recommendations.

#### Meeting #3 – Goal: Present draft restoration alternatives

The goal of this meeting was three fold: 1) to educate participants about the results of the phosphorus and flow studies, 2) help participants gain an understanding of which types of BMPs (source control, treatment, or management) could be applied in certain areas and 3) gain input and ideas from the public.

#### Meeting #4 – Goal: Present final restoration plan

This final public meeting was held to: 1) review the project; 2) summarize findings and restoration goals; 3) show restoration activities, implementation time line and projected costs and; 4) gain input from public

### **Focus Groups**

The main goals of focus groups, interviews or surveys were as follows:

- Educate and create awareness among certain essential groups/stakeholders about the problems in the creek and watershed



*Example of an alternative lawn*

- Establish a baseline of knowledge with which to help make decisions about recommendations
- Foster a better understanding of preferences, needs, barriers, and motivations
- Assess the potential success of any future recommendations for the restoration plan

#### Focus Group /Interview Summaries:

- *Elected/Appointed Officials*  
These officials were identified in the stakeholder list and invited to all public meetings. The team had introductory meetings with Ann Arbor City Council, Pittsfield Township Board of Directors and the Ann Arbor Planning Commission to explain the project. Special meetings were held with the planning commissions on 6/23/99 and 1/20/00 to discuss potential ordinance revisions.
- *Schools*  
Both private and public schools were identified in the stakeholder list and invited to public meetings. In addition, conversations were held with staff from the Ann Arbor public schools science curriculum office and a subsequent meeting was held to introduce the project to the science coordinators.
- *Large Businesses*  
Large businesses in the watershed were identified as stakeholders and invited to all public meetings. After a corporate representative attended community meeting #1, a creek clean-up day was held by Dayton Hudson employees. It was found that many of the 100-year detention ponds are owned and managed by private property owners and management companies. A telephone survey was conducted to determine if they would be open to management/structural alternatives regarding their detention ponds. All were amenable to working with the Drain Commissioner in the future on improving the creek by modifying their ponds.
- *Homeowners*  
Riparian homeowners were identified as stakeholders and invited to the public meetings. In addition, a homeowner focus group was conducted during which discussion focused on three main topics: lawn care alternatives, roof runoff alternatives, and detention basin design. This sub-set of homeowners suggested aggressive public education and involvement strategies for lawn and garden maintenance.
- *Lawn Care Companies*  
Lawn Care providers were identified as stakeholders and invited to public meetings. In addition, a focus group was held with lawn care providers. A discussion was held concerning alternative lawn care options, "creek-friendly" lawn care and education for "do-it-yourselfers". It was interesting to learn that changing the programs and practices of lawn care providers in the watershed is not the key. Only about 15% of the watershed residents use a commercial lawn care service. Additionally, fertilizers that are distributed to retail chains have high phosphorus contents, so a low or no phosphorus alternative is not readily available to the public. Thus, it is the market that supplies lawn and garden fertilizers that should be targeted for change.