

## **Marion County Soil & Water Conservation District – News Release**

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*News for Immediate Release*

### **Marion County SWCD to Lead Planning Project for Large and Diverse Fall Creek Watershed**

The Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was awarded a Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Management grant to study water quality in the Lower Fall Creek Watershed. Planning for this project began in the fall of 2006 and will wrap up with the development of a watershed management plan in May of 2009. The SWCD retained the professional services of Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Ltd. (CBBEL) to facilitate the planning process and prepare the watershed management plan.

The Lower Fall Creek Watershed is a large and diverse watershed that drains more than 65,000 acres of land in portions of Madison, Hamilton, Hancock, and Marion Counties. While 53% of the watershed has been developed for urban uses, 38% of the watershed remains in agricultural use. Water quality studies conducted by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management indicate that Fall Creek is impaired for *E.coli* from just downstream of Geist Reservoir to the confluence of the White River. In addition, water quality data collected in Hamilton County indicates that portions of Mud Creek, a tributary to Fall Creek, are also being impacted by the presence of *E.coli*. As with land uses, the sources of pollution associated with these water quality problems include both urban and agricultural sources, such as land application of manure, inadequately functioning septic systems, stormwater runoff, and combined sewer overflows.

The socioeconomic status of the Lower Fall Creek Watershed is equally diverse. Median household income in the southern portion of the watershed is less than \$35,000, while median household income in the Hamilton County portion of the watershed exceeds \$50,000.

In recognition of the unique challenges that such diversity presents, a Steering Committee has been established to guide the planning process. The Steering Committee is made of representatives from all four counties and includes representatives from municipalities, counties, economic development organizations, neighborhood associations, universities, and environmental groups. The Steering Committee conducted its Kick-Off Meeting on May 31, 2007 and will meet on a quarterly basis for the duration of the project.

A public meeting to announce the project is currently being planned and will likely be held in July. The meeting will introduce the project to the public and will solicit

participation in one of three working groups that will focus on water quality, land use, and public education in the watershed.

Once completed, the Lower Fall Creek Watershed Management Plan will identify and prioritize water quality problems and will establish an action plan to improve water quality and public awareness in the Lower Fall Creek Watershed.

For additional information, please contact Ron Lauster from the Marion County SWCD at 317-780-1765 or [ron-lauster@iaswcd.org](mailto:ron-lauster@iaswcd.org) or Sheila McKinley from CBBEL at 317-266-8000 or [smckinley@cbbel-in.com](mailto:smckinley@cbbel-in.com).

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