

Upper Raisin Stewards' Meeting
March 2nd, 2010 7:30 pm

Topic: Iron Creek/Raisin Headwaters Restoration

The River Raisin Headwaters area has been documented as a high priority for conservation and restoration of its native habitats. Numerous parties, including the Michigan Natural Features Inventory, The Nature Conservancy, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and academic researchers at area universities, recognize its importance. Although recognized, the area's land and water resources have not always been given the care they deserve.

The scale and complexity of this resource can handicap our ability to address the many ecological problems associated with human habitation. This project proposes to engage the community in a process to promote landscape scale ecosystem revitalization. By combining existing data with new mapping obtained from high-resolution multispectral aerial imagery, the project would create a comprehensive inventory of the area's characteristic and unique natural features and weave them into a regional context to illustrate the case for conservation. From this foundation, an educational curriculum of laymen's lectures, seminars and workshops would be created for presentation to a cross section of people applying a variety of criteria to land management decisions.

High-resolution multi-spectral aerial photography will be used to identify priority conservation and restoration areas in the headwaters of the River Raisin watershed. Near the center of this area, higher resolution images will be employed to efficiently gather data from a 10 square mile area where restoration projects are currently underway. Ecologists will then monitor and document the progress of current restoration efforts, prioritize conservation goals and create detailed management plans. These plans will be used to accelerate restoration on the six Iron Creek Properties, which will be used to engage other landowners in the issues associated with natural areas management.

The creation of demonstration projects will in effect constitute a 'living landscape' of private properties being managed for ecosystem health. As laboratories for new ideas and classrooms for learning, living landscapes will be actively used as catalysts for education and dialogue with the intent of linking an appreciation for ecosystem health to the economic and cultural vibrancy of the region. This proposal is intended to be effective at multiple levels:

- Guiding and financing restoration on six demonstration properties
- Expanding restoration capacity
- Prioritizing additional properties for landowner outreach
- Creating a citizen steward overview curriculum and resource manual
- Creating an overlay map of high quality ecologically significant lands in the headwaters area

- Partnering with other interests to engage the public and cultivate an appreciation of emerging land ethics
- Designing and implementing a comprehensive public outreach and education program
- Creating a political forum for public policy dialogue and action, and
- As a pilot to shape similar endeavors elsewhere in the Great Lakes Region.