

River des Peres Watershed Coalition Planning Forum

April 29, 2008; 6:30-8:30 pm

University City Community Center at Heman Park

Meeting Summary:

Danelle Haake, interim chair of the River des Peres Watershed Coalition, welcomed the 30 or so attendees to the third in our series of planning forums. Ms. Haake began with a series of announcements.

We have been building momentum and getting recognition in the St. Louis area:

- Half-page article in several of the St. Louis Journal newspapers - February
- Cover story in the Webster-Kirkwood Times and the South County Times - April
- Earth Day, April 22, interview on the morning news show 'Total Information' on KMOX 1120.
- The articles have been added to the archives at the Missouri Historical Society and may be found on our website (www.riverdesperes.org).

The week of April 7, we had a poster on display at the EPA Wetlands and Watersheds Conference in Kansas City. Several individual from government and other watershed groups were interested in our work.

We have been contacted by students from several universities who are doing reports on the River des Peres

We recently submitted applications for two different grants, one for \$9,000 and the other for \$60,000. We should hear back by the middle of May. Several of our new members contributed to the larger of the two application packages and we are very grateful to them for their help!

We will hold a second spring clean-up event, this time along Shady Grove Creek in Webster Groves. It will be held from 10 am to 2 pm on Sunday, May 4th. Details and a map are on the back of the agenda as well as on the website.

Ms. Haake then reviewed the critical issues and potential solutions as discussed at the March meeting. Our facilitator, Mark Van Patten, was then invited to continue to guide the discussion. Mr. Van Patten suggested that at this point we need to take a look at our list and consider what we are missing. Several members of the group offered new suggestions. The complete list is below:

1. Education (includes public awareness, perception, and advocacy)
 - a. Website
 - Get a social networking/blog/forum on the website (allow users to put their information on-line immediately)
 - Provide information on BMPs (e.g., rain gardens) that are locally applicable
 - Add web content developed by Washington University students (including GIS data from stream teams and USGS; soil permeability)
 - Allow Stream Teams to upload data to our site
 - Information on local regulations and contacts
 - Success stories for porous pavement, rain barrels, rain gardens, LEED, etc.
 - Downloadable GoogleEarth tour of the River des Peres and tributaries
 - Establish a database and relationship with groups that share similar missions, goals, or interests
 - b. Media, Presentations, and Publications
 - Connect with everyone in all parts of the City and County via a wide variety of media outlets, large and small (e.g., county Journals, Times, *Localite*, *St. Louis Countian*, radio)
 - Re-develop 'Our Story' and tell it to whoever we can via documentaries, Living St. Louis TV show, YouTube, Current TV, etc. (Get in touch with Roger Taylor regarding his book/CD)
 - Have a documentary contest for schools.
 - Become '*the organization*' that people (media, government, and citizens) go to when they hear something about the River and want a comment from an expert or when they have questions
 - Have brochures at the sporting-type outlets (e.g., REI, Bass Pro, Dick's, Alpine Shop)
 - Make presentations in the community (e.g., churches, city councils, chambers of commerce)
 - Develop an exhibit to rotate around the community (display at MO Historical Society, Libraries, etc.)
 - Develop PR tools
 - c. Other
 - Have a River des Peres festival or a River des Peres Week where we have events throughout the watershed to get the public involved (clean-up and/or party)
 - Get people in the river
 - Signage
 - Do something so that people know where the river flows underground (paint the road blue)
 - Establish education goals
 - Invite Washington University students to present to the Coalition to educate the members
 - Educate about hydrology and ways to reduce impervious surfaces

2. Hydrology (includes flooding, lack of sustained flow, stormwater, and impervious surfaces)
 - Start a watershed initiative to get rain gardens or rain barrels the watershed
 - Stream bank restoration
 - Work with MSD to establish stormwater credits for those who retain their stormwater
3. Water Quality (includes point and nonpoint sources, odor, litter, and stream classification)
 - Become a Stream Team Association
 - Map the watershed – where are Stream Teams? where are critical areas? where should there be more teams?
 - Do stream inventories
 - Hold litter pick-up events
 - Identify pollution problems and sources, then address the contributors and take action
4. Policy (includes regulations and accountability)
 - Develop an on-line ‘library’ of the regulations and policies that apply to the River des Peres. Include information from MSD, Corps of Engineers, municipalities, etc.
 - Be advocates for the river when groups are doing things that are against the policies and regulations and the government is not doing their part to stop it or for things that are not in the best interests of the river, but are not specifically in violation of policy (e.g., bulldozing trees along the river to build a driving range, removing wetlands to build a retirement community, sending parking lot drainage into a gully causing erosion, etc.)
5. Aesthetics (includes negative perception, lack of awareness, and lack of interest)
 - Note that several of the items under Education also address Aesthetics
6. Habitat Quality (includes bank erosion, impervious channel, and invasive species)
 - Remove invasive species and plant native species in their place
7. Floodplain Development
 - Communicate with developers

After completing this list, those in attendance voted for the ideas that are most important to them. The following list was developed:

- Signage (education)
- Be an advocate (policy)
- Involve schools (education)
- Remove invasive species and plant native species in their place (habitat quality)
- Establish a database and relationship with groups that share similar missions, goals, or interests (education)
- Develop PR tools (education)
- Identify pollution problems and sources, then address the contributors and take action (water quality)
- Litter pick-ups (water quality)
- Start a watershed initiative to get rain gardens or rain barrels the watershed (hydrology)
- Do stream inventories (water quality)
- Sponsor documentary contest (education)
- Educate about hydrology and ways to reduce impervious surfaces (education)
- Develop the website (education)
- Become a Stream Team Association (water quality)

The following announcements were made by Ms. Haake:

- The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 27, 2008 beginning at 6:30 pm.
- Several of us will be meeting over the next couple of weeks to go through the Coalition's by-laws and organizational structure to make sure that the organization is set up to meet the goals we have set. Anyone who would like to join us in this is welcome. Contact Danelle Haake by e-mail (riverdesperes@gmail.com) if you are interested.
- At the next meeting, we will be voting on the changes to the by-laws and electing new board members and officers. Before the next meeting, please consider if you are interested in being a board member and helping to lead us in this exciting time as we develop our programs and make these amazing things happen. If you know you would like to be considered as a board member, feel free to contact Danelle Haake (riverdesperes@gmail.com) with questions about the positions or to add your name to the ballot.

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