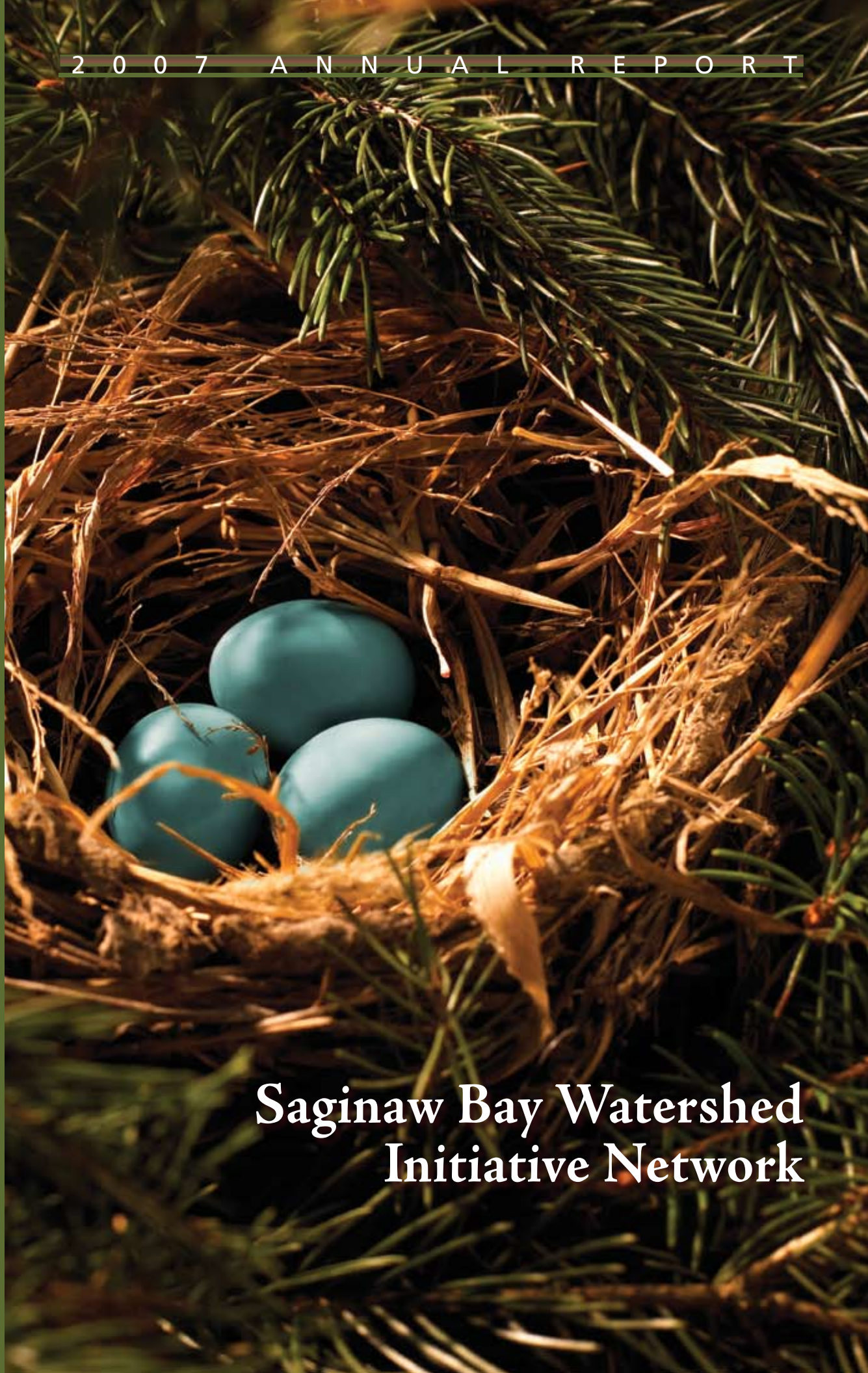
2007 ANNUAL REPORT



Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network

Just over ten years ago, a group of individuals came together to discuss opportunities for promoting – and strengthening – our region's communities, economy and environment. Representing corporations, foundations, academia, nonprofit organizations and governments, these community leaders envisioned an umbrella organization that could provide not only leadership in promoting the concept of "sustainability," but also provide better incentives toward sustainability.

This unique collaborative effort is the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) and has become one of the Saginaw Bay area's most successful regional coordination efforts. By providing three things: technical support for organizations interested in supporting sustainable efforts, fostering a network of like-minded organizations to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest, and providing a financing mechanism to turn good ideas into successful programs, the WIN project provides our region with a unique opportunity to solve many of our challenges.

In addition to celebrating a decade of service to our region in 2007, the WIN project continued to make smart investments in several amazing projects across our landscape. From a unique program in Birch Run that allows at-risk students to use chemistry (and recycling!) to turn waste into fuel, to support of a new children's museum in Saginaw that will serve as a catalyst for regional economic growth, WIN continued to strategically evaluate projects that fit with our mission, and direct resources to ensure that these projects succeed. You'll learn about these projects, and others, in this report.

But that's not all. Recognizing that it is good practice to re-evaluate our objectives regularly, WIN partners went through a strategic direction process in 2007. We were pleased to learn that our key focus areas (land use, water resources, agriculture, wildlife, and regional communication) were still important and relevant. Additionally, we learned from our partners that while our investment program is still a key attribute that sets WIN apart from other regional efforts, perhaps WIN's most important strength is the simple fact that we serve as a convener that can bring together organizations under a neutral umbrella to think about positive solutions to many of the challenges we face in our region. We have reiterated our commitment to doing that as we move forward.

What a decade it has been. With more than 150 projects receiving WIN investments totaling nearly $4 million, and partner funding of over $7 million in non-WIN support, we can look back at a tremendous alliance that has been able to do things that simply would not have been completed without this program. We can look forward to our continuing work to find new solutions to the environmental, economic, and community challenges that we face in the Saginaw Bay Watershed – and know that the solutions to many of these lie within the important network that we have all helped to create.

Mickael Kelly
The Conservation Fund

About the Saginaw Bay Watershed

- Home to more than 90 fish species, 138 endangered or threatened species, and 1.4 million people
- Includes more than 175 inland lakes
- Contains about 7,000 miles of rivers and streams
- Path for migrating song birds and waterfowl on the Mississippi Flyway
- Significant agricultural and industrial resources supporting Michigan's economy

Where Is the Saginaw Bay Watershed?

The Saginaw Bay Watershed region contains rich resources in agriculture, forestry, industry, and recreation. As the state's largest watershed, it encompasses nearly 8,700 square miles in all or part of 22 counties in central Michigan. Fifteen percent of the state's waterways drain into the Saginaw Bay.

WIN Funding Process

WIN follows a unique, interactive process for awarding grant funding for projects and initiatives. Throughout the community-based review process, individuals from many organizations take part by reviewing project applications and offering their expertise on a variety of topics.

WIN awards grant funding twice each year. If you have a project to submit for funding consideration, contact WIN for an application.

Our Vision

As stewards of the Saginaw Bay Watershed, we value our shared, unique resources, and together we will balance economic, environmental, and social priorities to enhance the quality of life for this and future generations.

WIN's Guiding Principles

- Provide a pleasant and healthy environment
- Conserve historic, cultural, and natural resources
- Integrate economic prosperity, ecology, and aesthetics
- Use land and infrastructure effectively
- Continually evaluate and refine shared vision and goals

The WIN Funders' Network

A committed group of 11 foundations and corporations support WIN with financial contributions and technical support.

Bay Area Community Foundation
Charles J. Strosacker Foundation
Consumers Energy Foundation
Cook Family Foundation
The Dow Chemical Company Foundation
Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation
Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation
Midland Area Community Foundation
Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation
S.C. Johnson Fund
Saginaw Community Foundation

Project Focus

It's Raining Native Plants and Water Quality

Hampton Elementary Rain Gardens

Who would have guessed that a stormy day could have spawned such an educational and exciting project for Bay City elementary students? Joy McFadyen, for one. She's a fifth-grade teacher at Hampton Elementary, where rain gardens have sprouted for her students.

The project started when fifth-graders were studying the Saginaw Bay Watershed, the relationship between land use and sources of water pollution, and best practices for water-quality management. After learning about the problem of stormwater runoff, they paid closer attention the next time they experienced a heavy rain.

"Our class watched rain pelt the roadway and pour off the pavement. They became interested in a way to clean the water of the pollutants being picked up before the water entered the storm drains," says McFadyen.

Students researched and found that a rain garden could be a good solution. Rain gardens incorporate rainfall and stormwater runoff in their design and in plant and soil selection. The rain garden collects the runoff and allows rain water to infiltrate slowly into the ground, thereby cleaning the water runoff.

"A rain garden is never wet more than three days," says McFadyen. "It's not a body of water – except for the day after a heavy rain."

The rain gardens were created on low-lying school land, where water already collected. A large swale – approximately 150 by 300 feet – collects runoff from three paved areas and the playground. At the lowest point is a storm drain. By planting native plants and placing soil that absorbs and holds water, runoff water is reduced and filtered before flowing to the Saginaw Bay.

"Each child at Hampton School – that's more than 500 students – participated in planting the native flowers, plants, and grasses in September 2007," says McFadyen. "The students' excitement resonated throughout the building on the planting days. Our physical education teacher commented that their excitement was so palpable that it felt like Christmas!"

By the end of the 2007-2008 school year, McFadyen expects to see the students' transplants sprouting and growing.

"Students will be observing and recording plant growth throughout the spring. We will be working to nurture our new plants through the next two summers, via weeding and watering. Once roots of the native plants are established, the rain gardens will be self-sustaining," she says.

Students have made educational presentations, presented skits, and shared informational brochures that they created. The fifth- and third-graders are learning about the specific plants and grasses planted in the rain gardens. They have marked the native plants along the path through the large garden and will host informative "rain garden tours" when the plants sprout in the spring.

"The rain gardens are wonderful educational tools for life, earth, environmental, and social sciences and for citizenship, writing, and oral language. This has helped students understand our watershed and stormwater pollution," says McFadyen. "We do not have many public rain gardens in our area. Many people in our townships do not think of the disadvantages of having runoff from farms and yards flow into the ditches and into the Saginaw Bay. The students are educating their own families and their community about stormwater pollution."

Students in all grades – now and in the future – will use the rain gardens as an outdoor laboratory to learn about the food web, the life cycle of insects and plants, and the interdependence of living things.

"The WIN investment was crucial to the success of our project because of the cost of the excavation and construction of our large rain gardens," says McFadyen. A significant 30 inches of soil was excavated and replaced with 50 percent sand and a mixture of compost and topsoil.

"The WIN financial support also made it possible to lay a drain tile under the rain gardens. With this, students will be able to retrieve water and do water testing comparisons with water captured in the storm drains," she says. "The WIN investment leveraged funding from the Bay Area Community Foundation, encouraged contributions from businesses, and helped us receive significant in-kind services to complete our project."

More than 3,600 plants were placed in the ground by Hampton Elementary's 500 students, with help from parents and community volunteers. Combined, the two rain gardens cover nearly 6,000 square feet.

"Our children are our future. Our students are learning that they can make a difference in the environment. They are learning to be stewards of our Great Lakes and how to work in the community. Some of the students went into the neighborhood with me to share their brochures and information on the rain gardens with residents. Students are being active citizens of the community, by sharing their knowledge at events."

– Joy McFadyen
Hampton Elementary

Local Champion:

Bay City
Public School District

Partners:

GM Powertrain, Chippewa Nature Center, the City of Bay City, Wild Ones, and Henkel Technologies

WIN Grant Award:

$21,655

Project Focus

Sustainability Is Fun

Mid-Michigan Children's Museum

There's a new museum in town, and it's all for the kids (and the young at heart). Scheduled to open in spring 2008, the $6.2 million Mid-Michigan Children's Museum will provide fun, hands-on learning opportunities for children to use their curiosity and creativity to find out about their world.

This investment in children also helps create a sustainable region. Located in Saginaw, the museum will serve the Tri-Counties, the state, and beyond. An estimated 90,000 annual visitors will use the 23,000-square-foot museum, which will have 15,000 square feet of interactive exhibit experiences including 11 themed learning galleries.

"Having a museum of this caliber and size sends a message that this is a region that values children, education, and our community's quality of life," says Angela Barris, CEO of the Mid-Michigan Children's Museum.

Three of the galleries have ties to WIN's sustainability initiatives and are being supported through the grant. These galleries include "Water, Water Everywhere," "Aunt Sugar's Farm," and "Night 'n Day."

In the "Water, Water Everywhere" gallery, children will investigate the physical properties of water in all of its forms. They can direct, divert, and contain actual water in a central, hands-on display. They can measure and pour the water, as well as float and sink objects during their explorations. They will learn the importance of water, the watershed, and water quality.

"Aunt Sugar's Farm" helps children connect the food in the supermarket with how things are grown. At this bustling farm, children can role-play, imagine the life of a farmer, and learn about the value of nutrition and healthy eating. The farm will also include an outdoor garden where children will plant and care for real crops.

After four years of planning, the groundbreaking for the $6.2 million Mid-Michigan Children's Museum took place in May 2007. When completed in 2008, it is expected to be Michigan's premiere children's museum.

The "Night 'n Day" gallery brings the great outdoors inside. Children can try out a tent, explore the nooks and crannies of a tree, and watch the stars. This stimulates an appreciation and love for the wonders of nature.

"Hand-in-hand with area schools and families, we will nurture creative, entrepreneurial problem-solvers who can use information in innovative ways," says Barris. "The museum is making an investment in future citizens who will be able to respond to new challenges, technological innovations, and new working relationships."

Children visiting the museum will experience and learn about WIN partners/projects and sustainability through educational programming. "The museum meets the Michigan Educational Framework and Early Learning Standards," says Barris. "This makes it an ideal location for teachers to bring their classroom lessons to life."

"The WIN investment in children validates the Mid-Michigan Children's Museum project in this region. Support from the 11 area foundations and corporations provides essential legitimacy for this unique child-centered destination, which will benefit the entire region by building family relationships, advancing education, improving literacy, inviting tourism, and adding economic development."

– Angela Barris
Mid-Michigan
Children's Museum

Local Champion:

Mid-Michigan
Children's Museum

Partners:

Saginaw Valley
State University,
Saginaw County
Vision 2020,
Saginaw Community
Foundation,
Midland Area Community
Foundation, and area
funding partners

WIN Grant Award:

$35,000

Project Focus

Connecting Two Colleges – Literally

University Center Trail

In 2007, fundraising began on a very long project – four miles long, in fact. The proposed non-motorized trail will connect the campuses of Delta College in Bay County and Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) in Saginaw County. With a goal of constructing the University Center Trail in 2010, organizers envision students riding their bikes between campuses and others using the trail for recreation.

The estimated $1.2 million project is expected to receive funding from a federal Transportation Enhancement Grant, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and area businesses, foundations, and residents.

This new trail would also connect to existing trails at Delta and SVSU. "This Bay Area Riverwalk/Railtrail System currently consists of 17.5 miles of paved, non-motorized pathway," says Diane Demers, Riverwalk/Railtrail committee member, Bay Area Community Foundation.

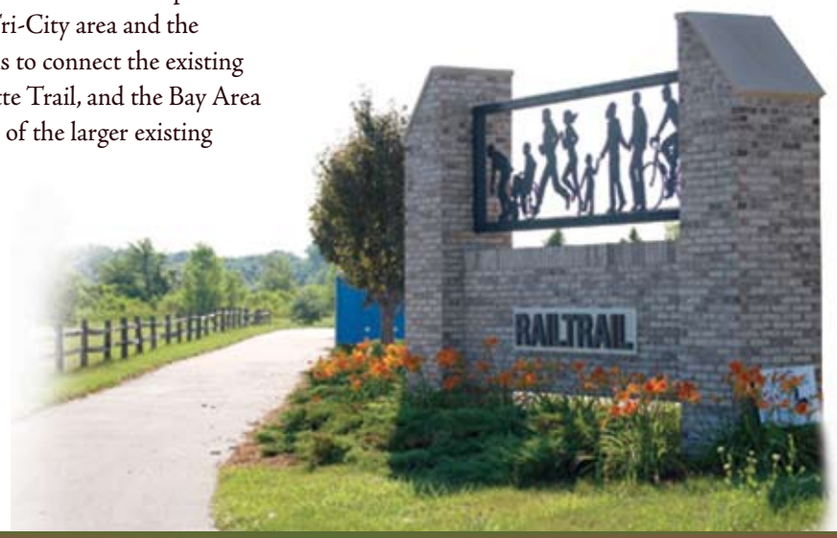
In 2007, the existing Riverwalk/Railtrail received the Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance Award, which recognizes trail systems that provide access to nature, innovative use of community resources, and exceptional use of man-made amenities.

"It has long been a goal to identify and link our natural areas, managing them for conservation and recreation purposes. This common goal has brought together trail enthusiasts, conservation groups, community leaders, and land-use experts," says Demers.

"Over the years, a number of groups worked within their jurisdictions to promote trail development. Now there are more concerted efforts to look outside political boundaries and plan for a network of green infrastructure within the Tri-City area and the Saginaw Bay Watershed," she says. "There are goals to connect the existing Saginaw Valley Railtrail, Midland's Pere-Marquette Trail, and the Bay Area Riverwalk/Railtrail System, just to mention a few of the larger existing trail systems."

The University Center Trail is an important "first link" between two different counties. "It brought various entities together, showing that the capacity for on-the-ground regional trail development is growing. This will link major hubs in our community and will provide an instant linkage to the Fashion Square shopping area and Kochville Township trails, and it will provide future linkages to the Bay City trail system, downtown Bay City, the Bay City State Recreation Area, and the future Bay-Zilwaukee Trail," says Demers.

The Saginaw Bay Greenways Collaborative identified the University Center Trail as a priority in its 2005 "Vision of Green" report. Local conservation groups have created the "Vision of Green" plan to preserve the natural corridors between Tri-County recreation areas.



"Talk about the spirit of collaboration! This project has brought together representatives from the state, several counties and townships, foundations, and colleges. Thanks to WIN we now have the first major piece of funding. This will help us secure greater support."

– Diane Demers
Riverwalk/Railtrail Committe

Local Champion:

Frankenlust Township

Partners:

Bay Area Community Foundation,
Michigan Department of Transportation,
Bay County Road Commission,
Saginaw County Planning,
Bay County Transportation Planning,
Bay County Drain Commission,
Kochville Township,
Zilwaukee Township,
Saginaw Valley State University, and
Delta College

WIN Grant Award:

$50,000

Project Focus

Do You Want Fries With That Fuel?

Birch Run Area School District's Bio-Diesel Project

What do restaurants and food services do with used vegetable cooking oil? Typically, they pay for its disposal. But an innovative project saves on disposal costs, converting the waste oil into bio-diesel fuel, while teaching valuable work and recycling lessons to students and the community.

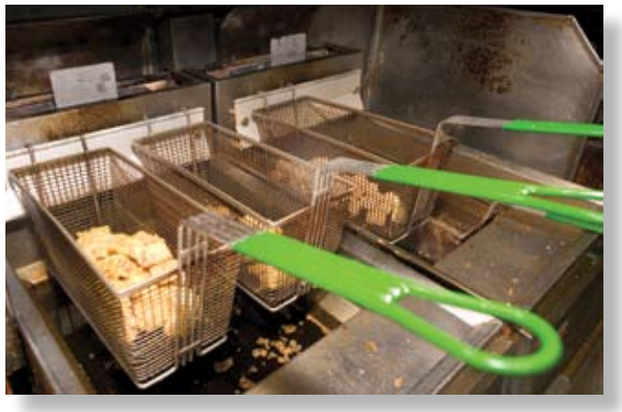
At the Birch Run Area Schools, 20 high school students started converting waste vegetable oil into bio-diesel fuel in 2007. The vegetable oil comes from the schools' food services and from area restaurants. The resulting fuel is then used in the district's buses. The Birch Run buses already used a bio-diesel blended fuel, so the fleet of 22 buses didn't need modifications to benefit from the students' fuel.

With special equipment from the Azure Biodiesel Company – including two 40-gallon bio-diesel production processors – the students are helping reduce the district's current fuel bill of approximately $40,000. In fact, students are making batches of 60 to 80 gallons of fuel per week – with a potential capacity of 60 to 80 gallons per day.

"The kids can process as much vegetable oil as we can collect," says Jan Pollard, chemistry/physics teacher at Birch Run. Currently, they are collecting the used oil in drums. "We're moving on to the second phase of the project where we create a trailer to expand the collection at restaurants."

The project is especially beneficial to at-risk students in the Youth Workforce Investment Act Program and those interested in careers in engineering, chemistry, and entrepreneurship.

And the project is also an excellent model. "A number of school districts in the region have made a switch to bio-diesel fuel, but none have begun the process of developing bio-diesel from commercial-grade, used vegetable oil," says Pollard. "The bio-diesel



project is a real-life model of conserving the environment, cost-effective recycling, and a reduced dependence on petroleum-based fuels. This example is a good educational tool for students, other schools, restaurants and businesses, farmers, and the community."

With the goal of creating a more sustainable future, this bio-diesel project is creating a sustainable fuel source from materials that are currently disposed of – and for a cost!

"Our bio-diesel fuel is made entirely from biodegradable material," says Pollard. "The byproduct of our process is glycerin, which is taken to a local farm and incinerated in a boiler to help heat the farm. There is a very low percentage of unusable waste from the filtration process. The fuel's emissions are 80 percent less than normal diesel fuel, thereby cutting pollution and being more environmentally friendly."

"This bio-diesel fuel project shares WIN's vision of balancing economic, environmental, and social priorities. The WIN grant gave a group of at-risk kids a project that kept them in school – and provided a way for them to give back to the community."

– Jan Pollard
Birch Run Area Schools

Local Champion:
Birch Run Area Schools

Partners:
Area commercial restaurants and school food services departments

WIN Grant Award:
$10,000

A Decade of Sustainability

This year Saginaw Bay WIN celebrates 10 years of investing in sustainable projects in the Saginaw Bay Watershed. With a focus on joining ideas, innovation and resources for a better watershed, in 2007 WIN funded nine projects that are addressing some of the area's pressing economic, community and environmental challenges.

The following projects received WIN funding in 2007:

Bay City School District, Hampton School Rain Garden

Birch Run Area Schools, Bio-diesel Project

Frankenlust Township, University Center Trail

Genesee County Land Bank, Clean and Green Program

Michigan Nature Association, Thumbs Up! Restoration Project

Michigan State University Extension,
Low-intensity Tillage and Slurry Seeding Demonstration

Michigan State University Extension, Michigan's
Bio-Energy Crop Production Plan

Mid-Michigan Children's Museum,
Creating a Sustainable Region through Exhibits for Children

Oakland Land Conservancy, Metamora Horse Country Project

Saginaw Bay WIN

For more information about WIN, visit
www.saginawbaywin.org or contact:

Saginaw Bay WIN • P.O. Box 734 • Bay City, MI 48707
(989) 892-9171 • Fax: (989) 892-9172
E-mail: info@saginawbaywin.org

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