

## As a Service to the Little Manistee River Watershed, the Alliance for Economic Success Announces

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### **LITTLE MANISTEE RIVER WATERSHED STEERING COMMITTEE FORMED AND SELECTS CONSULTANT TO HELP DEVELOP WATERSHED PLAN**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MANISTEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN --** A Little Manistee River Watershed Steering Committee has been formed to encourage wise use and management of the watershed that drains 145,280 acres in Lake, Mason, Wexford, and Manistee Counties, originating about eight miles east of the Village of Luther.

"We could not be more pleased to begin a process to engage all interests in charting a course that is in the best interests of the Little Manistee River and its watershed," said Armas Soorus, Chair of the Steering Committee. "We have had more than 90 local governments, agencies, organizations and individuals sign a partnership agreement supporting the development of a Watershed Plan through an open process that will help communities in managing the wise use of the natural, cultural, historical, social and economic resources of the watershed. It's important to note that the plan is not regulatory and does not prevent development. The grass roots, volunteer-led planning process and the plan itself are intended to unify all interests around ensuring the wise use and management of the watershed, now and for the future."

The Little Manistee River is free flowing below the Luther, Michigan dam for 55 miles before entering Manistee Lake, which empties into Lake Michigan in the City of Manistee. It is a high

quality trout stream that supports angling, canoeing, and kayaking. It hosts large runs of lake-run Steelhead, Brown Trout, Chinook and Coho Salmon. The Little Manistee Weir and Egg Taking Station has historically supplied fertilized eggs for Chinook salmon stocking in Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, and has provided steelhead eggs for stocking in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio.

One of the first steps of the Steering Committee was to select the firm Public Sector Consultants (PSC), based in Lansing Michigan to help develop the Plan to meet State and Federal guidelines. Jack Bails and Jon Beard from PSC have extensive expertise in natural resource and environment management with a specialization in fisheries will serve as consultants to the project. PSC had a similar role in completing the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan and the Greater Bear Watershed Plan. A contract with PSC is pending funding for the work.

"The plan will be used for a number of purposes," said Joyce Durdel, Secretary/Treasurer of the Steering Committee. "It will educate all sectors about the watershed, engage youth in watershed projects, guide water quality monitoring and watershed restoration and help develop complimentary recreational, business and other uses. When completed, the plan will be submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for approval at the State and Federal levels. An approved watershed plan will also qualify the watershed for grants to help implement the plan." Durdel said that the LMWCC.org web site will be updated to keep everyone informed of the schedule and meeting dates involving the Plan.

The Little Manistee River Watershed Plan Fund was established at the Manistee County Community Foundation by the Little Manistee Watershed Conservation Council to accept charitable donations and grants to complete the plan, expected to cost about \$90,000 and take over two years to complete. Charitable donations can be made online at [www.manisteefoundation.org](http://www.manisteefoundation.org) or by contacting the Foundation at [231-723-7269](tel:231-723-7269).

"Other area watershed groups have established similar funds to accept donations to complete their plans," said Foundation Executive Director Laura Heintzelman. "The health of the Little Manistee River Watershed has great significance to the quality of life and economy of our region. We hope that groups and individuals who care about the future of the River and its watershed will consider taking part in the plan development as well as a financial gift to help complete the watershed plan."