

Natural Solutions to Flooding Issues in the Blanchard River Watershed



Parks designed as natural flood retention area, like Riverbend

The August 2007 Blanchard River flood that continues to affect residents, businesses and property owners has resulted in a commitment to bring solutions for the long term stability of life in the watershed. All effective measures that will be implemented are going to change the face of the river corridor, the countryside and communities. This region is now presented with an opportunity to make it naturally better for future generations.

A team of area natural resource leaders partnered with Hancock Park District and the National Park Service to look at “green solutions” in combination with the US Army Corps of Engineers plans. Examples from other flood-stricken communities show that natural solutions compliment the engineered plans, can decrease the cost of flood-loss reduction projects and enhance the community character, along with a host of other benefits. Many of these natural solutions are well-documented, already working today for floodplain management, ecosystem restoration and recreation as good examples. These best management practices are well suited to help the Blanchard River Watershed.



Nature using the flood plains as intended near Riverside Park

Natural Solution Options

Water retention is a major factor in handling flooding, with a need to slow it and store it.

- o Restore and expand floodplains along rivers and creeks.
- o Increase wetlands throughout the watershed.
- o Utilize rain gardens and storm water retention at home and around businesses.

Improvement of drainage characteristics is critical to handle water volume and velocity.

- o Diversion channels with natural vegetation and meanders.
- o Two stage ditches to increase capacity.
- o Naturalize dikes or levees with native plantings.

Encourage more sustainable natural systems to let nature function properly.

- o Riparian buffers and filter strips.
- o Streamside forests and wetlands.
- o Land management practices to reduce topsoil loss.

Adapt the built-environment with green features.

- o Smart Growth – Keep floodplains for nature’s intended uses (no construction or filling floodplains).
- o Decrease impervious surfaces, provide more natural absorption.
- o Vegetation and beautification of flood structures where possible.
- o Use green space for recreation –trails, ballfields, hunting and fishing.
- o Utilize Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan to protect conservation corridors.
- o Urban design team to naturalize man-made solutions.

Watershed education is key to solutions.

- o Why green solutions are important watershed-wide.
- o How everyone can contribute to natural solutions.
- o Watershed Action Plans for best management practices.

YOU! It starts in your backyard.

- o Water Conservation – wise use of the resource.
- o Drainage improvements to reduce run off.
- o Support watershed-wide green solutions.
- o Individual projects at home & on the farm (rain barrels, rain gardens, farm ponds).



Riparian corridors in watershed provide filter strips and buffers along the “Old Mill Stream”

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Peaceful Blanchard a scenic, natural and recreational asset most of the year

The Benefits of Natural Solutions

Economic impact boosted locally.

- o Reduce public cost, more economical initial construction due to less built environment and reduced maintenance.
- o Increase property values result from reduced flood damage, open space, greenways and parks nearby.
- o Business retention and growth – new amenities resulting from greenway projects attract higher values.
- o Natural solutions open the door to partnerships and funding sources such as NatureWorks, LWCF, Clean Ohio, etc.

Environmental assets protected and enhanced.

- o Water & air quality improved.
- o Productive farmland conserved.
- o Enhanced wildlife habitat through protected and connected green space.
- o A “green look” restored to the Old Mill Stream for community pride.

Better access to life along the river.

- o Provide solutions as a connection, not a barrier, to countryside, neighborhoods and nature.
- o Opportunity to allow residents and visitors to interact with the river’s scenery and heritage.
- o Year around active and passive outdoor recreation opportunities.

Supplemental map available on request from Hancock Park District

Partners working together for natural solutions in the Blanchard River Watershed include:

Blanchard River Watershed Partnership, OSU Cooperative Extension, area Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Regional Planning organizations, Chambers of Commerce, schools / universities, Hancock Park District, Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership and other interested groups.

Resources to learn more:

Right responses to flooding

<http://www.betterenvironmentalsolutions.com/flood.html>

<http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/Greeninfrastructure/Technology.cfm>

Eco-Logical - An Ecosystem Approach to Developing Infrastructure

http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecological/eco_index.asp

Wetlands: Protecting Life and Property from Flooding

www.epa.gov/owow/wetlands/pdf/Flooding.pdf

Truckee River Flood Plan – The Living River

http://truckeeflood.us/55/living_river_plan.html

Lenexa KS – Rain to Recreation

<http://www.raintorecreation.org/>

Flood Mitigation leads to Preservation and Economic Success

<http://emergencymanagement.wi.gov/docview.asp?docid=111>

Floodplain open space a valuable asset to community

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/greenways/GrnwyFloodplains.html>

Lincoln Creek Project saved a city from concrete lined ditches

<http://milwaukee.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/stories/2002/03/25/focus3.html>

Economic Impacts of Protecting Rivers, Trails and Greenway Corridors -

http://www.nps.gov/pwro/rtca/econ_index.htm



Reservoirs and river oxbows help store water, provide habitat



River clean-ups help improve water quality and keep free flowing, natural streams

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