

## **"A Watershed Mentality"**

"According to the U.S. E.P.A., non-point source pollution, specifically sediment, is the greatest threat to water quality..." **"A Watershed Mentality"** (2007)

When I joined the Allen County Partnership for Water Quality, I was aware of the localized impacts of non point-source pollution. I hadn't considered sediment to be one of the contaminants. Upon learning of my duties as Water Resource Education Specialist, I learned that I had inherited a project to create a relevant and interesting documentary on soil erosion and sedimentation with our local PBS station. I was then asked about my ability to complete this project. I related my willingness, despite any real experience.

The process for the creation of the documentary was already in place. My predecessor and our local public television affiliate, [WFWA PBS39](#) had already initiated and won the project funds from the [Great Lakes Commission](#) and the grant-matching partners. This is where the project stood though, as there was no action since the departure of the last Specialist. With a shortened deadline, the videographer/producer, Ray Steup and I plodded on. I provided content and technical advice as well as writing and scheduling the interviews as he worked his magic with the rest of the writing, editing and videography.

The intent of this video is to communicate water quality issues, specifically sediment and erosion, to non-traditional audiences with updated methods of conveying information. In order to keep the interest of the layperson, it was decided that the video had to be topical, entertaining, educational and, mostly, no-fault. In order to keep the viewer interested, an HD format was chosen with beautiful sites to convey the visual imperative of conservation.

The main questions addressed in the video, as per GLC request, are: Where is the problem occurring? What is causing the problem? What is being damaged on-site and downstream? Over how large an area is the problem occurring? How long has the problem been occurring? Is the Problem in a recognized critical area?

By explaining some of the physical aspects of sedimentation we hope to bring the science of sedimentation back into the conscious mind of the audience.

Through indicating the nature of non-point source pollution, we hope to convey everyone's personal responsibility. In creating a sense of "cause and effect" for seemingly harmless human activity, we attempt to "connect-the-dots." Instead of trying to "sell" the notion of "silver bullets" we attempt to engage the viewers' common sense.

Even though the object of the documentary is the Maumee River basin, the format of the video focuses on the subjects of sedimentation and erosion that are relevant to any place where these processes occur. Incidentally, the Maumee River system is the largest watershed and tributary in the Great Lakes and contains over 4,000 miles of stream length.

As long as there is water running over land, there will be sediment and erosion. This is not a process limited to human activity. It is the human activity that has altered the natural processes, though. So as not to perpetuate the "man versus nature" mentality, we acknowledge the fact that this problem is not caused by any one source. Adding to that, we attempt to enlist the creativity and problem-

solving of humankind in rectifying the situation in all habitats.

As a result of this video project, we were able to produce a program that looks beyond any of our individual disciplines. We found, instead, that this formed a dialogue that spanned all our mutual interests and recognized and respected the contributions we gleaned from each other. This documentary is not just reaching out to the audience. This video project has helped to reconnect those of us independently working toward our mutual goal; a revitalized and healthy watershed.

*In conclusion, we wrote and directed this video to convey a portrait of the contemporary Maumee River Basin. This portrait includes the challenges, economic impact of impairments in money, jobs, recreation and quality of life in general.*

*Along with all of this, though, we wanted to demonstrate that this effort is not a "lost cause" or insurmountable. We wanted to convey to the audience that there are successes every day and their participation is integral to those successes.*

*Part of these successes are the comments and awards that have been made in reference to this project. "A Watershed Mentality" has been cited by the Great Lakes Commission as the "new standard on sediment and erosion education." In addition to this, it has won an award from the International Videographers association for its videography, the Indiana Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in Outreach or Education and was a finalist as a nominee for a regional Emmy for Informational Programming.*

*This program is available to your local PBS station. If there are enough requests within their area, they may air the program. There is no fee involved. If you wish to screen this documentary online you can find it [here](#).*

*For more information about this documentary, contact me at: [matt.jones@one.usda.gov](mailto:matt.jones@one.usda.gov) or by calling 260/484-5848x111.*