

Extraordinary People

Creating Extraordinary Communities

A Profile of Land Use Decision Makers



Angie Brown



Don Lee



Marta Moody

Introduction

This poster highlights extraordinary people in Central Ohio and Western Indiana and their decisions to improve their communities by protecting water and providing access to streams for recreation and study.

Purpose:

By sharing these stories we hope to inspire others who want to improve their communities using local people and resources.

Background:

The individuals involved in these decisions (Don Lee, Ohio, Marta Moody and Angie Brown of Indiana) are extraordinary in their ability to initiate individual and collaborative efforts for community-wide change. Don on his farm and in the Village of Cardington in Central Ohio and Marta and Angie in their collaboration to protect the Prairie Creek Watershed just Southeast of Muncie Indiana. The decisions and collaboration of these individuals will protect watersheds and provide lasting community benefits such as access to streams and cleaner reservoirs. The individuals selected for this poster have made on-farm decisions as well as community wide decision involving water resources protection.

Key Outcomes Featured:

-  200 foot strips of prairie buffer planted to protect 90 acres of stream bank along Shaw and Whetstone creeks in the headwaters of the Olentangy River in Ohio.
-  0.5 mile of permanent flood plain protection and creation of Maxwell Park a study and recreation area for the Village of Cardington along the banks of Whetstone Creek.
-  Formation of a successful collaboration between the White River Watershed Project and the Delaware-Muncie Metro Planning Commission.
-  A Master Plan for Prairie Creek Reservoir in Eastern Indiana that will protect the Prairie Creek reservoir with locally led recommendations guiding land use decisions.

Prairie Creek Watershed

Whetstone Creek, Village of Cardington



The Prairie Creek Reservoir Master Plan

A Case-Study in Collaboration between the White River Watershed Project and Delaware-Muncie Metro Planning Commission

Indiana interview for Farm Science Review poster, Brent Ladd, Purdue University

Key Outcomes:

- White River Watershed Project collaborates with the Delaware-Muncie Metro Planning Commission on decision making in the watershed.
- A Master Plan for Prairie Creek Reservoir that is locally led, with public-private supported recommendations, becomes an official supplement to the City-County Comprehensive Plan guiding land use decisions.

Where did the decisions take place and what was the context?

The Prairie Creek Watershed is located three miles southeast of Muncie, Indiana, a city of 90,000 people, within Delaware County. The watershed contains the Prairie Creek Reservoir (40.12,-85.29), which flows into the White River 30 miles from the central Indiana-Ohio State border*. Local residents use the reservoir for boating, fishing, camping, picnicking, and swimming.



The historical context that laid the foundation for a Master Plan to occur involved several people and significant actions that took place at the time the Clean Water Act and the EPA formed in the early 1970's.:

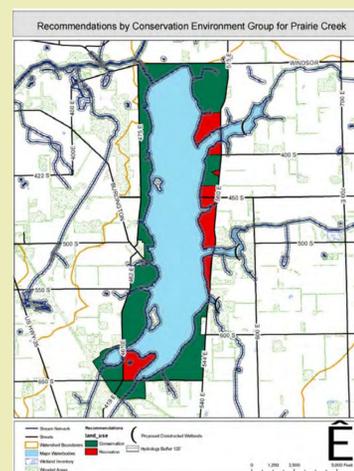
- John Craddock spearheaded the creation of a Muncie Bureau of Water Quality in 1972 to focus on the White River Clean Up
- The White River is used as the primary source of drinking water for Muncie
- Marta Moody, Executive Director of the Plan Commission for 25 years, is committed to including natural resource issues within the comprehensive plan for the city and county
- Growing public support for improved quality of life and the value of natural amenities

What led to the decision to work together (watershed org and plan commission) and create a Master Plan?

With the foundation in place, the White River Watershed Project hired Angie Brown in 2005 to serve as coordinator of the partnership. With the combination of Marta being involved in the watershed partnership from the start, Angie's ability to present the partnership's goals as overlapping with the comprehensive plan goals, and wide public support to protect the natural amenities and drinking water quality of the reservoir, it was a natural fit to develop a Master Plan for the Prairie Creek Reservoir.

What is the Master Plan and what is its significance for the future of the watershed and the community?

Without natural resource considerations in comprehensive plan guidance, community land use can change rapidly seriously impacting water quality. The Delaware-Muncie Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2000 contains seven elements, including a strong natural resource element. This document serves as a long range plan that guides physical development decisions of land use. The Master Plan in turn allows for legally recognized recommendations and restrictions focused on a specific location, and is an official supplement to the City-County Comprehensive Plan. The Master Plan becomes the guide book for land use decisions in the Prairie Creek Reservoir area. Implementing its recommendations will serve to protect and improve the quality of water and wildlife habitat areas of the reservoir. A draft listing of the conservation, environmental, economic, and recreation recommendations of the Master Plan, along with maps are available online at http://www.co.delaware.in.us/watershed/PC_master_plan_focus_group.htm.



LESSONS LEARNED

What did decision makers learn from the process?

The fact that the Master Plan process has been entirely locally led and supported has been very helpful. It has taken longer than if they had hired a consultant, however the implementation of the recommendations are much more likely due to local support and buy-in throughout the process. The entire process reflected local needs and the local vision of the community, and this is embodied within each recommendation of the Master Plan.

What if anything would you do differently?

"Because our organizations are housed in different buildings, I would have taken the time to define our roles and set up a clear, consistent line of communication between the watershed project and the planning commission from the beginning." – Angie Brown



"Marta Moody (left) and Angie Brown discuss with Brent Ladd their collaboration to develop a Master Plan for Prairie Creek Reservoir, Madison County, Indiana."

Advice for working effectively with planning commissions:

Angie:

- Concentrate on people to people, and not on organizations. Sometimes people have a knee-jerk reaction to a particular organization because of past issues. However, finding the right person from all of the key stakeholders is necessary.
- You must find your friends wherever they are and bring them to the table.
- Don't compete in any way with the planning commission, but instead offer your strengths to enhance the planning and implementation process.
- Find out who on the planning commission will be supportive of your watershed project efforts (and likewise, who might not be supportive), and then request to the plan commission director for that person's participation on your steering committee.
- If your group is affiliated with the local soil and water district, remember that you are part of the local government structure. Use these connections to help bring some funding and people commitments to work on a Master Plan for your watershed.

Marta:

- Start by thoroughly understanding your area's comprehensive plan if you have one. Find the natural resource issues in the plan. The plan is supposed to represent the goals and desires of your community. Find goals from the plan that overlap with the goals of your watershed effort.
- Build relationships and partnerships.
- Build rapport with your plan commission. Meet with them individually and find out what they would like to do or see happen in the community...especially find out what they would like to do, but can't do within the scope of their current framework. You might be the catalyst that can help them do these things, and they probably are looking for someone to carry the torch on these issues.
- Then build coalitions by lining up key supporters for your cause.
- Don't forget about phase II storm water communities. Use this as a common denominator if your community is a phase II entity.
- For those in small rural communities, remember that the plan commission may not have a professional staff. In these cases it may be appropriate to hire a consultant, but you may have to help bring funding to the table to get anything to happen. You could also look for a local person with planning expertise to help.

Location



Don Lee's Farm
Village of Cardington



Whetstone Creek
Village of Cardington

- 🌿 The 500,000 acre Olentangy watershed is part of the Scioto River Basin located in central and Southern Ohio.
- 🌿 Don's farm is within the Whetstone and Shaw Creek subwatersheds.
- 🌿 Don Lee's farm and the Maxwell park are located in the Village of Cardington Ohio in the Upper Olentangy Watershed.
- 🌿 The watershed here is lightly rolling to flat, with intense wheat and corn production.
- 🌿 Whetstone creek starts about 11 miles North of Cardington and runs directly through the Village.
- 🌿 Cardington Ohio is approximately 45 minutes North and West of the City of Columbus.

Protecting Whetstone Creek with a Prairie Buffer Extraordinary Individual: Don Lee AKA Farmer Don

- 🌿 Don is a farmer, President of the Olentangy Watershed Alliance, and water superintendent for the Village of Cardington
- 🌿 Don's decision to establish a 200 foot prairie buffer on his farm stemmed from his desire to "leave things better than when he started" and to work with water that is moving to slow it down to get a "purer product" as well as what he learned about water quality while working for the Village of Cardington.
- 🌿 As a water superintendent and watershed group president his experience lead him to the realization that small steps matter when it comes to protecting a watershed...
- 🌿 Don planted extra wide buffers in hopes of getting farmers to ask questions about it and seek answer for themselves as to: "What is water quality?"
- 🌿 Don especially wants to get other farmers interested in water quality by focusing on how it relates to their economic "bottom line."

Farmer Don Demonstrating Prairie Buffer Height

- 🌿 Recently Don has noticed water moving faster in the upper Olentangy watershed he suspects this is due to new development and more intensive farming.
- 🌿 Don decided to plant prairie buffers alongside the creeks on his farm to slow the water movement. Eventually the prairie grass will create a 6-7 foot filter that will also allow wildlife habitat to hopefully come back.
- 🌿 Don is especially hoping to bring back the quail that used to talk to him in the morning.



Don planted extra wide prairie buffer strips to generate questions about what he's up to and then he can start talking about water quality and practices they can change. He planted rye on his own for cover and because it is an adaptable crop.



Critical Experiences

While attending a meeting with state agency professionals to the Olentangy Watershed Alliance Don sensed that their approach to watershed improvement focused on looking for farms not using best practices...this got him thinking... "Why build working relationships with farmers, developers, and landowners instead of seeking out the bad actors?"

Bridge Builder and Innovator

- 🌿 Don has worked with conservation agencies and university specialists outside the watershed to get new ideas and views to help him answer "What is water quality?"
- 🌿 Working with OSU student John Whitter on stream assessments Don found a view from under the rocks and noted most farmers if they got that view would start getting that concept of water quality.

Creating a new park for the Village of Cardington

- 🌿 The decision to create Maxwell Park that will include education and recreation facility as well as permanent buffer protection of Whetstone creek in the Village of Cardington came about over five years and many conversations between Don and land owner and former Village mayor Cecil Maxwell.

As Don puts it creating the Park has ..."not been fast but a steady direction and pieces just starting fitting..."

Future Site of Maxwell Park



Key Players

- 🌿 Cecil Maxwell former mayor village of Cardington
 - And Lifelong friend of Don. Cecil and Don discussed the state agency priorities for stream corridor protection in the Upper Olentangy Watershed, as well as Cecil's interest in shaping the future of Cardington, these conversations were crucial to donation of his property to the Village of Cardington.
- 🌿 Dan Ralley, Village of Cardington Administrator
 - Dan brought an outsiders viewpoint on the up and coming needs of Village of Cardington residents including a focus on lifestyle and community as well as recreational opportunities for families. Dan viewed a new center of town, instead of the stoplight, Whetstone creek...
 - Dan brought experience with unplanned stream corridor development from the Columbus area...instead of paying later to create bike paths, Dan saw an opportunity to protect valuable streamside property as development occurs.

Dan Ralley: An Outsider Brings New Vision and Leadership

- 🌿 According to Don, Dan's patience and vision have been able to counter the "that's not the way we've done it" philosophy.

Critical Structures for Change

- 🌿 Strategic planning held by the Village of Cardington
 - A strategic planning session for the Village allowed landowner Cecil Maxwell's to donate his land along Whetstone Creek for creation of Maxwell park these planning sessions helped him to fulfill his vision for the Village, and restore elements of his former farm such as a garden that was there when he was a child.
- 🌿 Olentangy Watershed Alliance (OWA)
 - The existence of OWA and their watershed planning process gave Don the opportunity to connect interests of farmers and landowners to the interest of State conservation agencies.
- 🌿 Personal Relationships
 - Don's community connections especially with Cecil's were critical in what led to creation of Maxwell Park