

I. Introduction

A. General

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and information to Elkhart County and other entities interested in the water quality of the Puterbaugh Creek – Heaton Lake Watershed. The planning process for the Watershed Management Plan was initiated by the Elkhart County Commissioners as part of an IDEM Section 205(j) Grant Project. The goal of the grant project was to address water quality issues related to point and non-point source pollution in the watershed. The Puterbaugh Creek Watershed was selected as the study area due in large part to the expansive growth and development within its boundary. The vision and mission statements developed for this planning endeavor are stated below:

Vision: *Improved water quality within the Puterbaugh Creek – Heaton Lake Watershed to support aquatic resources, protect public health and provide an enhanced aesthetic environment.*

Mission: *Provide the framework by which to reduce contaminants to Puterbaugh Creek and to work closely with other watershed groups whose focus is on improving the water quality within the Elkhart River and St. Joseph River Basins.*

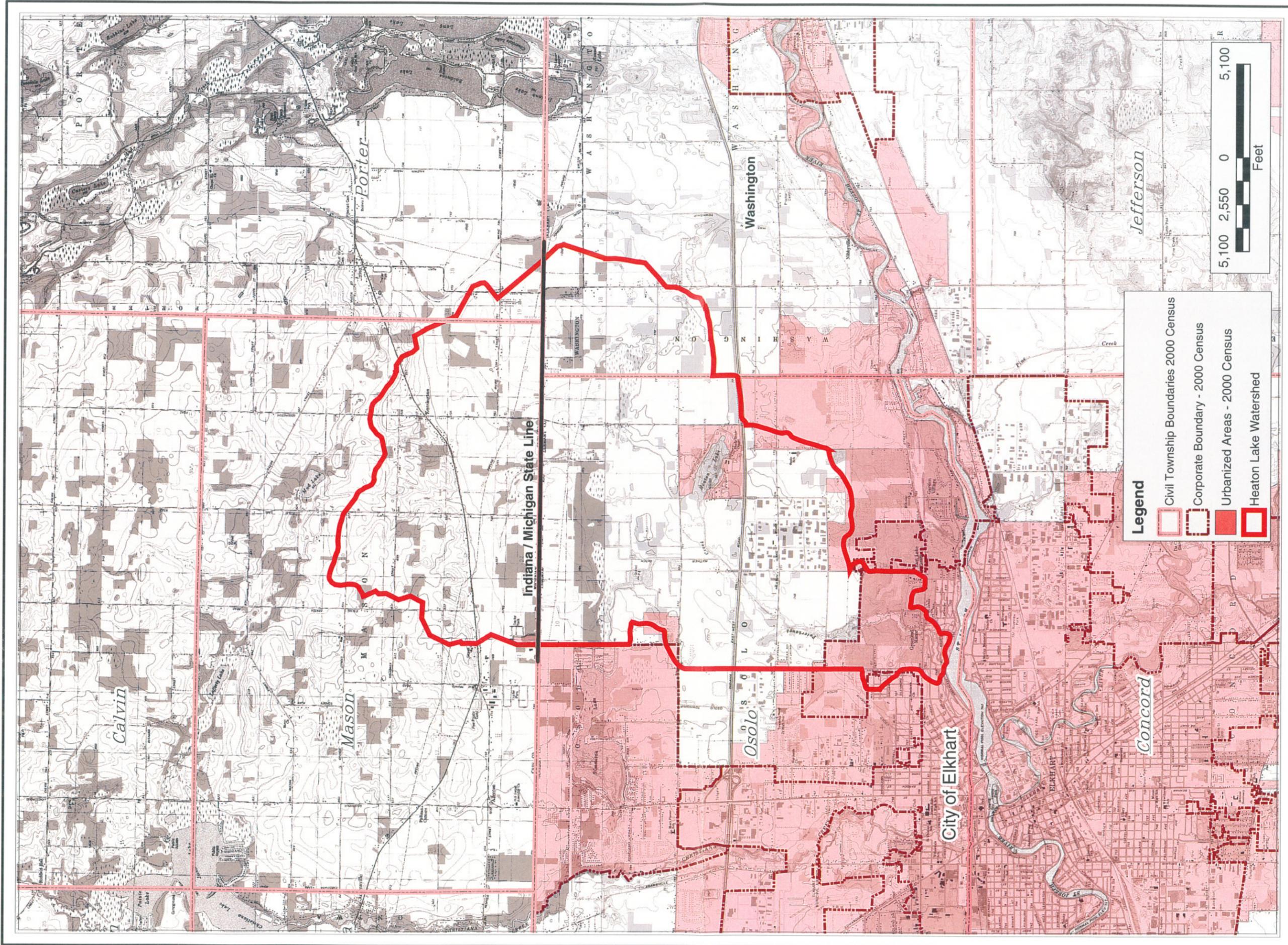
B. Watershed Introduction

Most of the Puterbaugh Creek – Heaton Lake Watershed is located within the unincorporated area of Elkhart County. The northern portion of the watershed is within the State of Michigan, and the southern portion of the watershed is within the City of Elkhart limits. The watershed area is 10,909 acres and is composed of a variety of land uses. The watershed is shown in Figure 1. Portions of the watershed around Heaton Lake and at the southern tip of the watershed are classified as urban areas (population density of 500 per square mile or greater) and are subject to the NPDES Phase II Stormwater Regulations, as administered by IDEM through Indiana Rule 13. Puterbaugh Creek is a tributary to the St. Joseph River. The St. Joseph River discharges into Lake Michigan. The southern portion of the watershed is primarily residential and industrial. The remainder of the watershed is primarily agricultural and undeveloped land, with some residential clusters throughout.

C. Concerns

A number of concerns have been raised regarding water quality within the Puterbaugh Creek – Heaton Lake Watershed throughout the watershed management planning process, as well as prior to the initiation of this watershed management plan. The following provides a summary of the concerns that have been raised by various entities:

- The effect of increased development on water quality with respect to use of on-site wastewater disposal systems. (Elkhart County Health Department, Elkhart County Commissioners, and Local Residents).



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Figure 1

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Elkhart County 205(j) Grant
Puterbaugh Creek - Heaton Lake
Watershed Management Plan

Puterbaugh Creek - Heaton Lake Watershed

- The effect of agricultural practices on the water quality of Puterbaugh Creek, including the use of fertilizers and pesticides and surface runoff. (Soil and Water Conservation District).
- The effect of increased development on water quality related to construction activities and increased impervious areas. (Elkhart County Health Department, Elkhart County Surveyor, and Local Residents).
- Direct discharge of septic tank effluent to creeks and ditches. (Elkhart County Health Department and Local Residents).
- Failing on-site wastewater disposal systems. (Elkhart County Health Department and Local Residents).
- The effect of increased development on the volume of stormwater runoff, possibly contributing to increased peak flows and erosion potential. (Elkhart County Government and Local Residents).
- The effect of increased industrial/manufacturing activities in the south-central and eastern portion of the watershed on water quality. (Local Residents).

D. Partnerships

Throughout the watershed planning process, a number of partnerships were developed. A list of the various stakeholders follows:

- Elkhart County Commissioners (ECC)
- Elkhart County Health Department (ECHD)
- Elkhart County Department of Planning and Zoning
- Elkhart County Surveyor's Office
- Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District (ECSWCD)
- Elkhart County Natural Resource Conservation Service
- Heaton Lake Conservation Club

E. Public Involvement

The public has been involved throughout the watershed planning process. This involvement was achieved through public meetings, as well as the quarterly planning meetings of the Joint Steering Committee.

An initial public meeting for the Puterbaugh Creek – Heaton Lake Watershed Management Plan was held at the Eastwood School on March 11, 2004. The meeting included an overview of water quality issues (point and non-point source pollution, the watershed planning process, and on-site waste disposal systems). Additionally, a Joint Steering Committee was established with some of the attendees of the meeting. The Joint Steering Committee was primarily composed of local residents and County employees.

Six (6) planning meetings were held with the Joint Steering Committee. These meetings were held on:

June 16, 2004
September 29, 2004
December 15, 2004
March 24, 2005
June 30, 2005
October 6, 2005

A final Public/Stakeholder Meeting to present the Watershed Management Plan was held on November 16, 2005 at Eastwood School.

Items discussed at the Joint Steering Committee Meetings and Public Meetings included water quality results, community concerns, and watershed planning progress. Public meeting notices, agendas, sign-in sheets, and handouts are included in Appendix A.

The Watershed Management Plan was also presented at the October 31, 2005 Elkhart County Commissioner's Meeting.