

# Your Watershed is..... Nippersink Creek

- The largest tributary to the Fox River, draining 137 square miles in Illinois and about 50 square miles in Wisconsin.
- Among the finest of Illinois streams. Surveys for the presence of pollution-sensitive fish found that the Mainstem rates as a 'B' quality stream and the North Branch received a 'Class A' ranking
- Home to at least 21 animals and 30 plants listed as Illinois endangered or threatened species.
- Contains 46 McHenry County Natural Area Inventory Sites-quality upland, wetland and reaches of stream which are remnants of the region's original natural diversity.
- Offers one of the best river trails for canoeing and kayaking in NE Illinois.



named by Native Americans as the "Creek of Little Waters" for its many springs

## Critical Issues of the Nippersink Watershed

**D**evelopment The Nippersink Watershed is beginning to experience the level of development which has degraded the quality of other streams in Northeastern Illinois. Towns in the Nippersink Watershed will have to grow differently if Nippersink Creek is going to continue to be a high quality stream and the watershed's quality habitat for wildlife is not going to be squeezed out by development.

### Keys to Watershed-Sensitive Development---

**Wetlands** must be maintained as critical habitat, for their ability to store floodwaters and as buffers to Nippersink Creek. Wetlands too must be buffered sufficiently to prevent their degradation from polluted runoff.

**Open space** must be incorporated into developments in order to supply land where rain and snow can naturally soak into the ground, replenishing our drinking water source and preventing increased runoff from overwhelming Nippersink Creek and causing flooding and bank erosion. Natural areas also provide wildlife habitat and recreational space.

**Paved surfaces** should be minimized to retain the natural infiltration capacity of the land. Stormwater needs to be routed to vegetated swales where it can be naturally cleansed rather than channeled directly as polluted runoff into the creek from curbs, gutters and storm sewers.

**S**oil Erosion Erosion washes fine sediment into Nippersink Creek, covering the natural sand and gravel streambed which is the home to aquatic insects, the base of the creek's food chain.

### Keys to Erosion Prevention---

**Construction sites** must use soil erosion control measures such as silt fences, mulching and rock dams, as required by ordinance and enforced by local governments.

**Cropland practices**, such as minimum tillage, grassed waterways, streamside filter strips and terraces, especially on high sloping land, are all practices which the McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District can help farmers establish on their lands.

**Streambank stabilization** of severely eroding streambanks is achieved by a variety of methods using vegetation and rocks. Contact USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service for help in analyzing streambank erosion problems and solutions.

**Stream buffers** have historically been provided for Nippersink Creek by pasture land which filters runoff through vegetation before entering the creek. As more urban uses, both residential and commercial, come to the watershed, buffers need to be maintained. For a stream as good as Nippersink Creek, wide buffers of undeveloped land of at least 100 feet along each side of the stream are recommended. Buffer land should also cover any streamside wetlands and include floodplains.

# Critical Issues (cont)...

**Waste Management** The disposal of human and animal waste is of critical importance to the health of Nippersink Creek and the enjoyment of the creek as a canoe trail.

## Keys to Waste Management---

**Municipal wastewater treatment** becomes a key factor in water quality as the populations of the municipalities in the Nippersink Creek Watershed grow. Municipalities can maintain the water quality of Nippersink Creek by avoiding discharges to the creek. This can be done through the promotion of water conservation by community residences and businesses and using treated wastewater to irrigate cropland, golf courses and other open space areas that have the proper soil and water table requirements. Beyond reducing discharges, treatment plants can protect water quality by utilizing advanced treatment methods that remove ammonia and nutrients from effluent.

**Septic systems** must have proper placement and design to fit the soils, geology and hydrology of the watershed. Regular upkeep of septic systems, especially in densely situated areas such as around Wonder Lake, is key to maintaining the water quality of Nippersink Creek and Wonder Lake itself.

**Livestock waste** must be kept from flowing into Nippersink Creek in order to maintain the creek's high quality. This can be done through buffers along the creek, fences to prevent livestock from entering the creek, and the proper management of onsite livestock waste. Technical and costshare assistance is available to livestock owners in the watershed who wish to improve the management of livestock waste on their property. Contact the McHenry County Soil and Water Conservation District.

## Resources

### Publications

- Creating a Nippersink Creek Watershed Community*, June 2003, available from McHenry County Defenders
- Nippersink Creek- Opportunities for Enhancement: Technical & Financial Assistance Programs for Landowners*, August 2002, available from McHenry County Defenders & McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Recommended Standards for Development in the Nippersink Creek Watershed*, September 2000, available at McHenry Co. Soil & Water Conservation District office
- Nippersink Watershed- A natural resource plan for the watershed community*, Executive Summary, October 1999, available from McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Nippersink Creek Watershed Plan*, September 1998, available from McHenry County Defenders & McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District
- Nippersink Creek Fact Sheet*, available from McHenry County Defenders

### Staffing

- Becki Clayborn, Outreach Program Director, McHenry County Defenders- coordinates the Nippersink Creek Watershed Collaboration Group, a working group of local and regional agencies and organizations working to foster a watershed community to protect and enhance the high quality natural resources of the watershed, 815/338-0393, mcdef@owc.net
- Dave Brandt, District Conservationist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (housed with McHenry SWCD)- contact for federally funded conservation programs, 815/338-0099x3, Dave.Brandt@il.usda.gov
- Ed Weskerna, Executive Director, McHenry County Soil & Water Conservation District- provides assistance to private landowners and municipalities on soil and water conservation issues, 815/338-0099x3, ed.weskerna@il.usda.gov



**Friends of Nippersink Creek**

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### Websites

**Friends of Nippersink Creek/  
McHenry County Defenders**  
[www.mcdef.org](http://www.mcdef.org)

**McHenry County Soil &  
Water Conservation District**  
[www.mchenryswcd.org](http://www.mchenryswcd.org)

**McHenry County  
Conservation District**  
[www.mccd.org](http://www.mccd.org)

**Friends of the Fox River**  
[www.friendsofthefoxriver.org](http://www.friendsofthefoxriver.org)

**Fox River Ecosystem  
Partnership**  
[www.foxriverecosystem.org](http://www.foxriverecosystem.org)



**Nippersink Creek Watershed Planning Committee**

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