



Rachel Sabre
Water Resources Management Specialist
Department of Natural Resources
Waukesha Service Center

Dear Rachel:

Tall Pines Conservancy and the North Lake Management District on behalf of the entire Mason Creek Watershed Partnership group, would like to request that the Mason Creek Watershed be considered for the Tier III Monitoring program offered through the DNR for the following reasons:

Mason Creek has been listed on the 303d impaired water list since 1998.

Mason Creek originates in Washington County in the Town of Erin. The more natural east branch (about 1 mile long) and the more impaired agricultural west branch (about 2 miles long), converge to form the main stem of the creek above Hwy CW in the Township of Merton in Waukesha County. The creek then maintains a relatively shallow gradient of 6-7 feet per mile for 5.2 miles emptying directly into North Lake. The west branch is extensively ditched for agricultural drainage due to original wetland habitat being converted into agricultural cropland and pasturelands. The east branch contains excellent habitat for trout.

The main stem of the Mason Creek supports a brook trout population along with its associated food source such as the Stone Fly, but their distribution fluctuates. From past surveys, the presence of the slender Madtom, a state endangered catfish has been recorded. Many areas of the creek contain a deep sediment bottom while other stretches of the creek possess highly desirable cobblestone bottoms.

The main pollution and impairments include: Low DO, Elevated Water Temperature, Degraded habitat, Sediment/Total Suspended Solids and Total Phosphorus. We also remain perplexed and curious about the source of some of the high turbidity values collected during drought years. We are hoping a Tier III-monitoring program may help us solve and remediate this mystery. Another concern is the water quality of North Lake, which is seriously affected by the impaired conditions of Mason Creek.

Project Background:

In 2010 a Mason Creek Watershed Partnership Group was formed to explore and address the serious pollution issues related to the Creek.

The main partners include: North Lake Management District, Tall Pines Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Rock River Coalition, Waukesha and Washington Counties, Town of Merton, Village of Chenequa, SEWRPC, DNR, Carroll University and the School of Fresh Water Sciences - UW Milwaukee and UW-Extension.

In 2012, due to our deep concern over the water quality of the Mason Creek and the chain of lakes located downstream, the North Lake Management District applied for and was awarded a \$10,000 River Protection Planning Grant from the DNR.

In March of 2013, over 65 concerned citizens attended our first public informational meeting conducted by SEWRPC. Due to this high level of public interest, we are forming a Citizen's Advisory Work Group to assist our main Watershed Planning group. We hope to generate and cultivate a widespread education/outreach program, encourage citizen involvement in our water quality/wildlife monitoring programs and encourage participation in our future volunteer work parties. Management strategies for remediation of potential causes of the sediment build up and pollutants will be explored and associated actions plans will be created. Within the Mason Creek watershed, the NRCS and County Conservationists will be assisting with our partnership group's mission of encouraging landowners to protect the water's edge by implementing best management practices.

The Town of Merton also owns 21 acres along the Mason Creek containing some of the best habitat for cultivating healthy wildlife and fisheries. We hope to work with the Town of Merton and the Park Board to develop a natural park including a public access point to the Creek.

In conclusion, with all of the above information, we feel strongly that Mason Creek is worthy of your consideration for a Tier III-Monitoring program.

Sincerely,

Jill Bedford, Tall Pines Conservancy
For the Mason Creek Watershed Partnership Group.

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