



Surveying the Public

In the beginning of 2006, a mail-in survey was sent out to 1,500 randomly selected residents throughout Delaware County. Concurrently, the survey was placed on the Prairie Creek Master Plan website so that anyone that wanted to participate in the survey could. The surveys concentrated on exploring the importance of Prairie Creek Reservoir in the community and to discover pertinent values of the community. Questions allowed participants to convey perceived positive and negative aspects of Prairie Creek Reservoir, what types of activities they participated in at the reservoir, and whether the property should be pursued by the city.

To discover the values of the community, participants were asked about the importance of water quality, and multiple questions concerning the character of the area. For example, participants were asked if they would like to see the area's character change and how. This type of question reveals the importance of naturalized environments or built environments to the community.

From the mail-in survey there were 208 responses (nearly 14%). The online survey had 92 participants. A copy of the surveys and their results are contained in Appendices G, H & I. The following outlines the mail-in survey responses followed by the responses from the online participants in italics:

- 96.1% of responders of the mail-in survey had visited Prairie Creek Reservoir and 69% lived in the watershed.
- *97.8% of the online participants had visited Prairie Creek Reservoir while 77.2% were current residents of Delaware County. 15% lived in Prairie Creek Reservoir's watershed.*
- 92.1% felt that Prairie Creek Reservoir was a positive asset to the community. Only 1.5% disagreed and 6.4% didn't know if it was a positive asset to the community or not.
- *95.7% felt that Prairie Creek Reservoir was a positive asset to the community.*
- 85.1% knew that Prairie Creek Reservoir is a backup drinking water source for Muncie, and 97.5% agreed that water quality in Prairie Creek Reservoir is important.
- *91.4% knew that Prairie Creek Reservoir is a backup drinking water supply for Muncie, and 100% agreed that the water quality in Prairie Creek Reservoir is important.*
- 59.3% found out about the reservoir from friends. The rest of the respondents had heard about the reservoir from the newspaper, coworkers, church and TV. 45% felt that the reservoir should be made more visible through the community while 33.7% disagreed and 20.8% didn't know.
- *44.1% found out about the reservoir from friends and nearly 40% found out about the reservoir from other sources. Nearly 45% felt that the reservoir should be made more visible through the community while 31.5% disagreed and nearly 24% didn't know.*
- 52.5% agreed that the City of Muncie should consider expanding park services at PCR, while 16.2% disagreed, and 31.3% didn't know. However 61.6% agreed that Muncie should buy the area surrounding PCR currently owned by the Indiana American Water Company to provide more public open space and/or park space for the community. 22.7% disagreed and 15.7% didn't know.

- *71% agreed that the City of Muncie should consider expanding park services at PCR and nearly 70% agreed that Muncie should buy the area surrounding PCR currently owned by the Indiana American Water Company to provide more public open space and/or park space for the community.*
- Respondents were asked which activities or amenities they have used at PCR. Picnicking was the most common activity followed by boating and fishing. Swimming at the beach and playing at playgrounds were also relatively common activities. The campground, horse trails, and ATV site were used by the least amount of the responders.
- *Participants were asked which activities or amenities they have used at PCR. Most participants noted boating and picnicking followed by fishing. Swimming at the beach and playing at playgrounds were somewhat common activities. The campground, horse trails, and ATV site were used by the least amount of the participants.*
- When asked what type of recreation should be allowed at PCR, most people agreed with swimming, fishing, boating, sailing, camping, and horseback riding. Only a few respondents agreed that off-road vehicles should be allowed.
- *When asked what type of recreation should be allowed at PCR, most people agreed with swimming, fishing, sailing, camping, horseback riding, and boating. Only a few participants agreed that off-road vehicles should be allowed.*
- Just over half of the respondent would like to see the character surrounding the reservoir become more naturalized. Over 25% preferred no change to the character surrounding the reservoir. Only a few respondents would like to see more agriculture, commercial, or residential. Even less wanted to the area's character less naturalized.
- *Nearly 60% of the participants would like to see the character surrounding the reservoir become more naturalized. Over 25% preferred no change to the character surrounding the reservoir. Only a few participants would like to see more commercial, residential, or agriculture areas. None of the online participants would like to see the character become less naturalized.*
- 79.9% do not want to see waterfront lots for sale to home builders along PCR.
- *Over 90% do not want to see waterfront lots for sale to home builders along PCR.*

Furthermore both surveys had open-ended questions allowing respondents and participants to express what they felt were strengths and weaknesses of Prairie Creek Reservoir. The feed-back from these open-ended questions showed that there are some polar views concerning the reservoir. Some responses indicated that a strength of PCR was that it is not too crowded, while other responses indicated that a weakness of PCR was that it was overcrowded in some areas. Similarly, the Muncie Sailing Club, fishing, water quality, waterfowl, and the facilities were seen as both strengths and weaknesses. See Appendices H & I for a summary of all of the submitted comments from the surveys.



Focus Groups

After analyzing the public survey, three areas of public interest and concern that stood out. Nearly all comments could be categorized as Conservation/Environmental, Economic Development, and/or Recreational issues. In order to focus on the spectrum of factors, focus groups were created for each issue. Each member of the steering committee was asked to volunteer to sit on a focus group. To complete the groups, members from the community with special expertise were asked to join the appropriate focus group.

Each focus group met with the charge of creating the ideal land-use plan for the Prairie Creek Reservoir watershed and surrounding area within a focus on the topic of their group. For example, the Recreation Focus Group was charged with creating the ideal land-use plan for recreation. While each group deliberated on their focus they also looked at the region as a whole, thus considering all types of developmental scenarios.

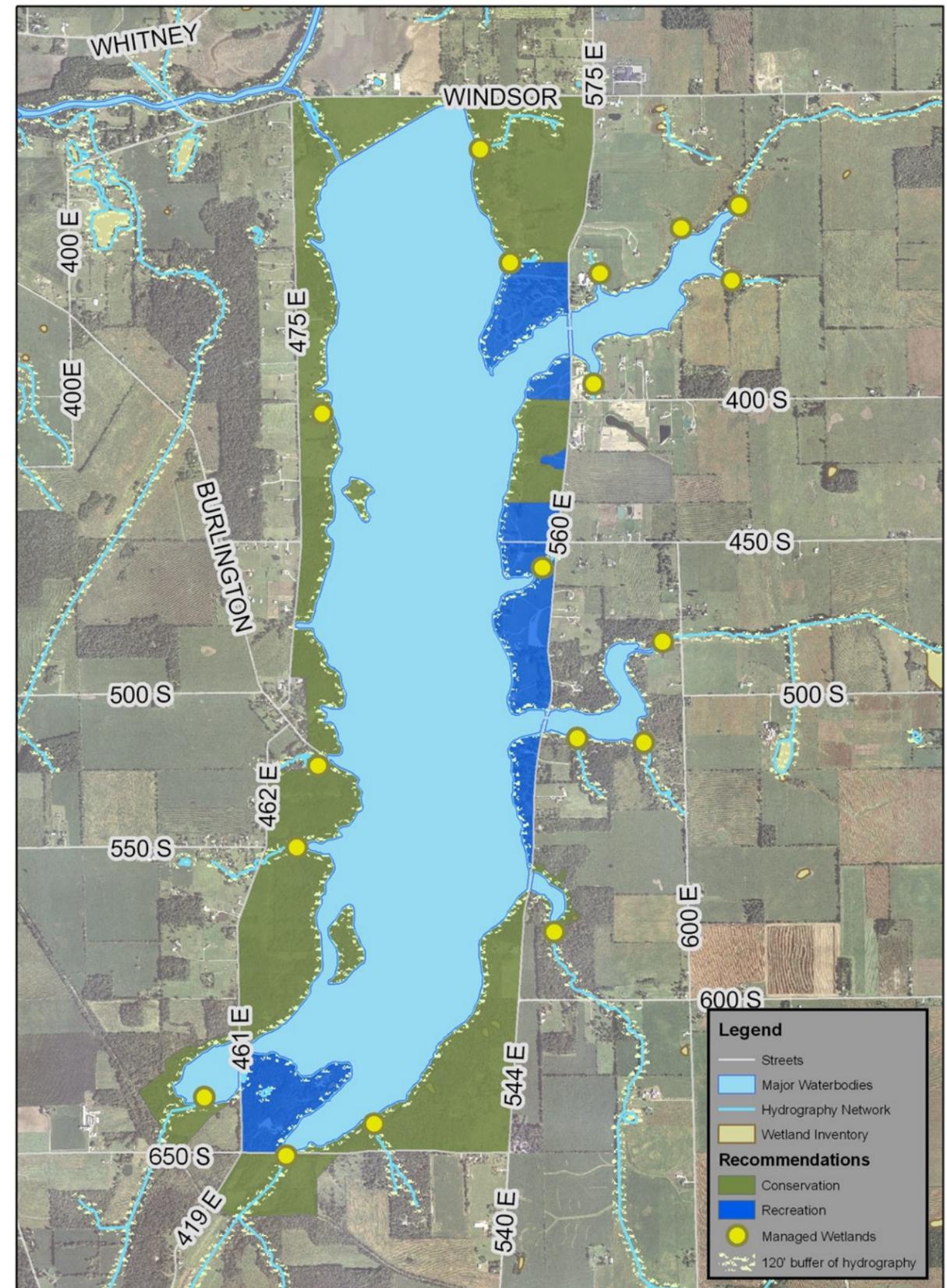
Beyond creating their ideal land-use plan for the area, each group was also asked to recommend how to implement their ideas. The following pages contain the recommendations suggested by each of the focus groups.



Recommendations by the Conservation/Environment Focus Group

- 1) Delaware County should set up a regional on-site wastewater district to regulate wastewater treatment in the Prairie Creek watershed and collect taxes for improved wastewater treatment technologies if soil is not suitable for individual leach fields.
- 2) Install 50-foot buffer strips around the shoreline of the existing ATV course to mitigate sediment loading and erosion impacts caused by the extensive use of the course.
- 3) Look for alternative areas within the watershed to eventually replace the ATV course currently adjacent to the Prairie Creek Reservoir.
- 4) No individual leach fields for new concentrated developments located within the ring road boundary.
- 5) If development pressures continue to increase, the Muncie Sanitary District should extend sanitary sewer lines out to the Prairie Creek Reservoir loop road for new developments.
- 6) Encourage best management practices for sediment-reduction in the watershed.
- 7) Constructed wetlands should be built along the bays and inlets of the Prairie Creek Reservoir and managed by the Muncie Parks Department to mitigate septic and agricultural runoff and enhance habitat for waterfowl and fish reproduction.
- 8) Every drainage ditch in the watershed should have a buffer strip with natural vegetation to reduce sediment and nutrient loading from agricultural runoff, to stabilize the ditch bank, and to reduce the need for dredging: 120 feet wide on each side for ditches with permanent flows of water and 30 feet wide on each side for intermittent ditches.
- 9) Conservation districts are zoned for the intent of humans to enjoy wildlife and greenspace, not solely to protect wildlife; No structural buildings such as playgrounds or shelters should be built in the conservation zones.
- 10) Land within the “ring roads” on the West side of the reservoir should be rezoned to conservation instead of residential because it provides a buffer from the development outside the “ring roads” on the west side.

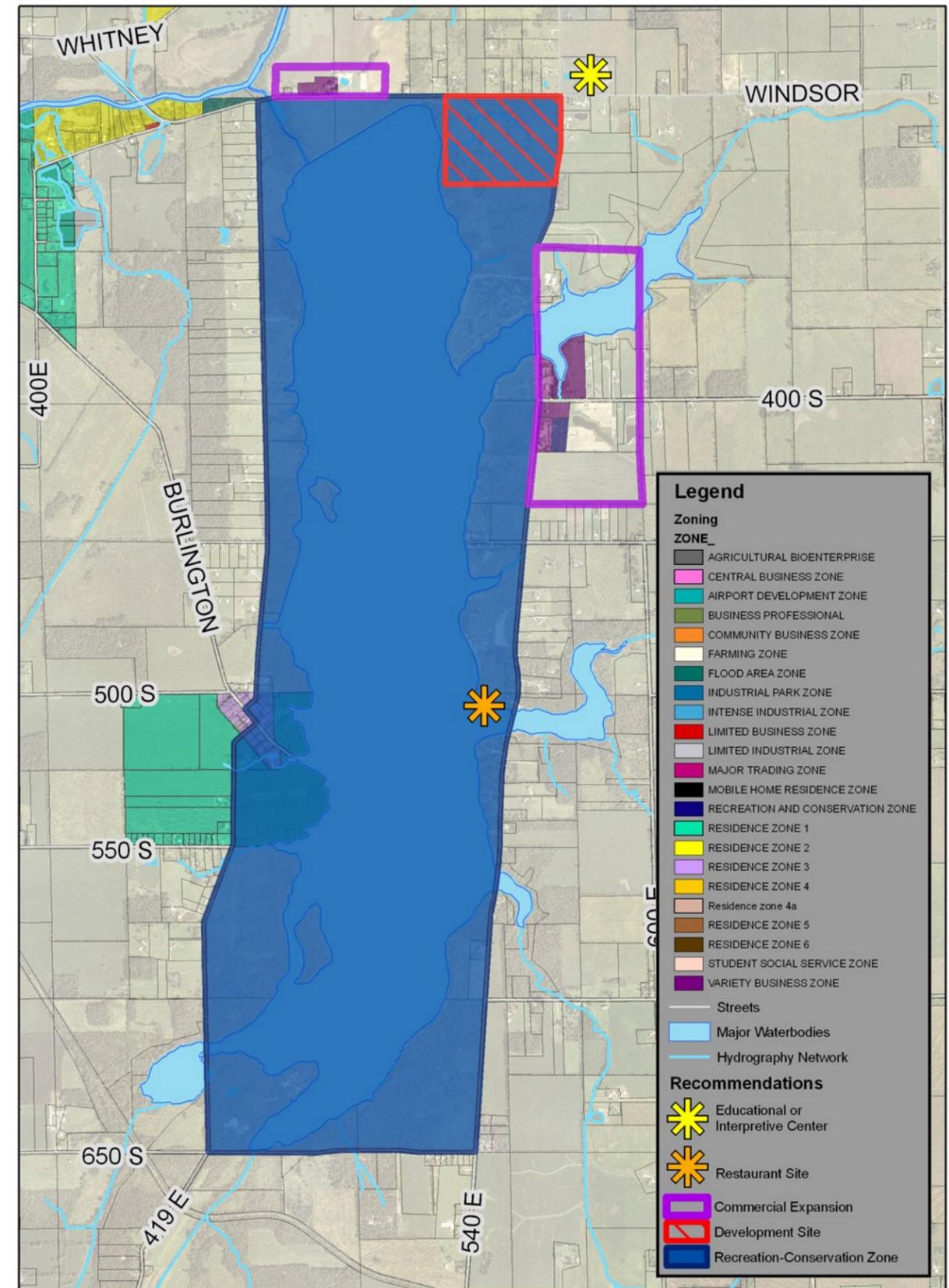
Figure 31 (pg. 75): Recommendations by the Conservation / Environment Focus Group.



Recommendations by the Economic Development Focus Group

- 1) It is the opinion of the group that the reservoir and park represent a regional destination attraction and that is the principle economic reality.
- 2) The area inside the ring road should remain mostly as is. Rezoning as recreational and conservation may be appropriate.
- 3) There should be more marketing of the park and existing facilities and opportunities available in the area. A park brochure and event attractions that would appeal to visitors and residents were suggested. Improvements in the park facilities and the addition of trails on the west side that connect to the greenway could make the park more appealing.
- 4) Improved informational signage to help locate the reservoir is needed.
- 5) It was felt that the east bank is pretty well used currently and that the only opportunity for further development inside the ring road would involve the west bank. Such use of the west bank would be inconsistent with the desire to keep that area in an undeveloped and “natural” state and would impair the overall appeal of the reservoir.
- 6) It was recommended that the city either extend their lease beyond the expected expiration date or purchase the reservoir grounds so the community might continue to enjoy the benefits of this unique area.
- 7) If the school becomes available it could be an opportunity for development. An educational or interpretive center focusing on water was suggested.
- 8) Road access could be improved to allow for easier travel to and from the reservoir. This would be especially important if the reservoir is to host many events of any size.
- 9) The construction of additional resources could benefit the area. Such construction might include an educational area or facility, cabins or a facility for overnight stay.
- 10) Limited development may be appropriate in the future if demand increases, but currently there seems to be commercial and residential resources available to meet the demand.
- 11) If the demand for commercial resources increases it is recommended that it be met by clustering any new use near or adjacent to the exiting areas. A possible exception to this general rule could be a specialty restaurant sited to overlook the reservoir just north of the sailing club.
- 12) It is recommended and seems practical that no residential development occur on a large scale in the area without the existence of sewer and water utilities. The absence of large tracts near the water and the desire to maintain water quality seem to preclude residential development on any large scale.

Figure 32 (pg. 77): Recommendations by the Economic Development Focus Group.

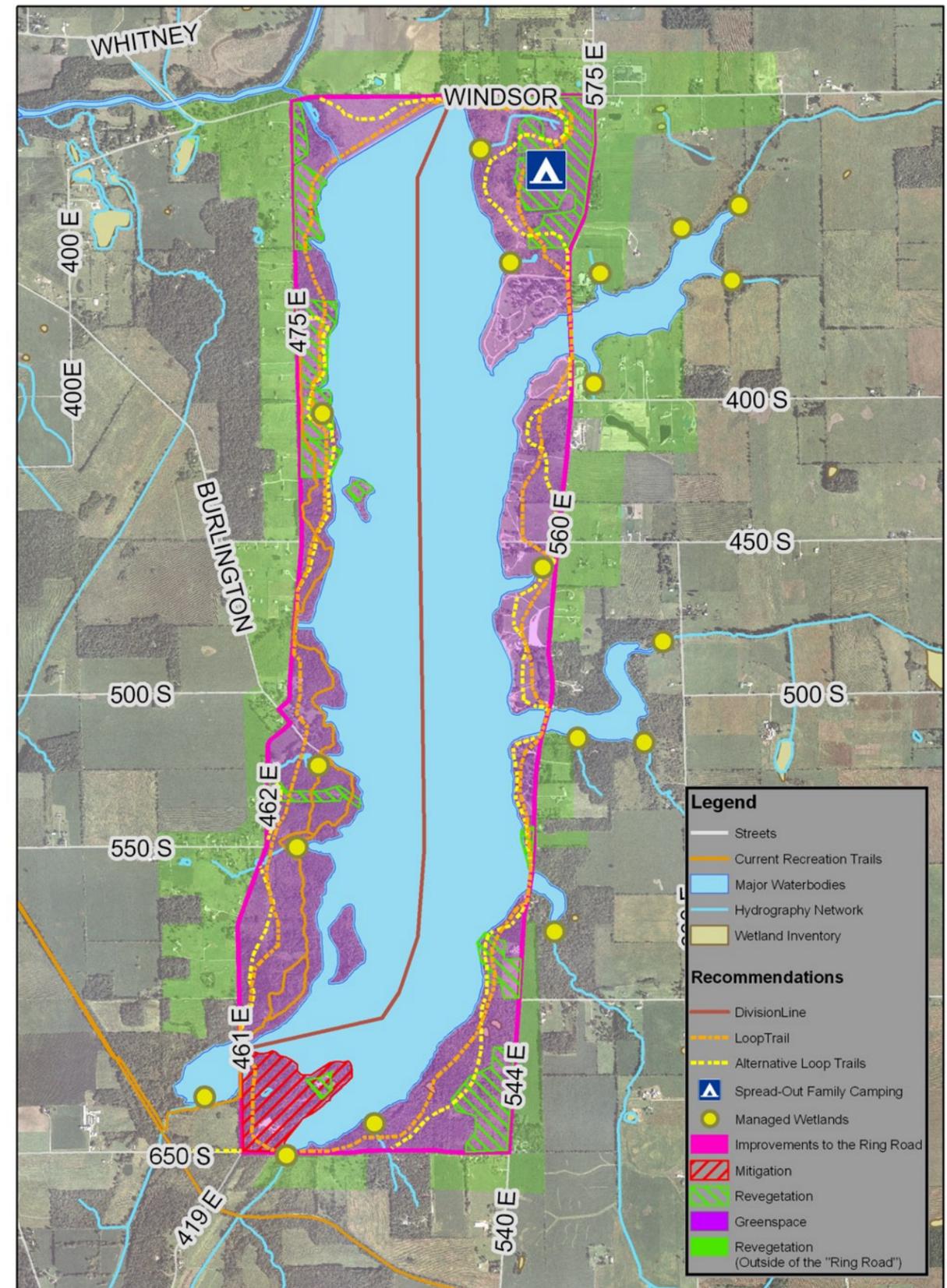


Recommendations by the Recreation Focus Group

- 1) Attach a recreation/conservation land use and future zone to the area within the “ring road” and other areas as appropriate.
- 2) The City and/or County should buy the land inside the “ring roads.”
- 3) Establish an agreement for “flipping” ownership of the reservoir that is embraced by both the city of Muncie and Delaware County that:
 - Establishes that the Water Company wants to retain control of the reservoir as long as they are using it as water supply.
 - The City (or county) shall obtain 1st right of refusal for purchasing any of the land for public use/ public protection in or out of the “ring roads.”
- 4) Establish a Land Restoration-Revegetation Management Plan:
 - Identify 3 native revegetation scenarios that would enhance the natural character of the reservoir.
 - Involve 501(c)3s in the planting of areas within the ring road.
 - Create a provision for tree replacement. Currently when developers remove large trees they have to replant multiple trees in their place. If there isn't enough space onsite to plant all the trees necessary, then there could be a designated replacement area at Prairie Creek for the additional trees.
 - Create a Cost-Share program to reforest corridors along and outside the ring road.
- 5) Establish wetlands on inlets to the reservoir.
- 6) Improvement of the road structure is needed as well as routing through New Burlington. When these improvements are prepared/constructed, it is recommended that:
 - New road construction around the reservoir shall include a road side trail or bike lanes.
 - This main “loop trail” must connect to the Cardinal Greenway (most sensibly on the southwest side of the reservoir).

*This would establish the desired main route around the reservoir (“loop trail”), and then additional trails leading into natural areas would create destinations. Multi-use trails shall maintain visual separation from the horse trails.
- 7) The area inside the “ring road” shall be dedicated to public use, whether recreation or conservation.
 - The west side shall be dedicated to passive recreation.
 - The east side shall be dedicated to active recreation.
- 8) The area inside the “ring road” shall be returned to green space.
- 9) The City and/or County Park should increase pier fees for out-of-county residents. If the park is run by the City of Muncie, pier fees should increase for county residents.
- 10) The City and/or County Park needs to update the bathrooms/showers.
- 11) A management plan shall be imposed on the ATV site. The city/county should also look into alternative areas for an ATV site.
- 12) The City and/or County Park should extend services to include:
 - An access area for non-motorized boats (canoes, rowboats...).
 - Additional camping, including
 - o Spread out family camping in the north-eastern section of the park.
 - o Primitive camping- requires a short walk to the campsite from parking area.
 - Use of alternative waste disposal is recommended (composting toilet systems).
 - Additional Cabins
- 13) Establish plat restrictions to any land in the area that gets platted.
- 14) Encourage private landowners to use covenants/deed restrictions.
- 15) It is recommended that a 501(c)3 is set up to help gather resources to defend the reservoir and the long-term transition envisioned in this plan.
- 16) Encourage conservation farming practices.

Figure 33 (pg. 79): Recommendations by the Recreation Focus Group.



The Public Meeting

During the summer of 2006 the Delaware-Muncie Metropolitan Plan Commission, in a joint effort with the Soil and Water Conservation District, conducted a public meeting to obtain feedback from the public. The public was invited to review the process undertaken for the Prairie Creek Master Plan and to evaluate the progress made. Staff priority for the public meeting was to obtain feedback concerning the recommendations made by the focus groups.

Informational boards were used to communicate pertinent background information including an inventory of the area, the results from the public survey, and the recommendations prepared by the focus groups. Participants were also encouraged to utilize “work maps” to make comments. The project team was on hand to encourage participation, answer any questions, and to absorb any concerns or recommendations posed. Participants were asked to fill out comment sheets that asked how much they agreed or disagreed with each recommendation as well as to make any additional comments.

With 123 people that signed in at the meeting and over a dozen more than didn't sign in, the meeting had an attendance of nearly 150 people. 82 participants filled out and returned the comment sheets. Overall most recommendations had the support of the majority of the participants. See Appendix K for the feedback in its entirety. The following summarizes the feedback from the public meeting:

Conservation/Environment Recommendations

- Out of 10 recommendations, 2 recommendations were supported by less than 55% of the participants. Recommendation #1 advised that Delaware County set up a regional on-site wastewater district. While 32% supported this recommendation, 56% rejected the measure. Similarly, recommendation #5 advised that if development pressures increase, then the Muncie Sanitary District should extend sanitary sewers to the area. This advice was supported by 34%, however 64% rejected the recommendation.
- 4 recommendations had the support of more than 75% of the participants. Recommendation #4, supported by 76%, stated that no individual leach fields for new development should be created within the “ring roads.” Supported by 88%, recommendation #6 encourages BMP for sediment reduction in the watershed. Similarly 80% supported recommendation #7 which advised using constructed wetlands along the bays and inlets of the reservoir. 78% supported recommendation #10, rezoning the west side of the ring road to conservation.
- Recommendation #2 to mitigate impacts from the ATV course was supported by 73% of the participants and the recommendation to look for alternative sites for the AVT course (#3) was supported by 58%.

Economic Development Recommendations

- Out of 12 recommendations, 2 recommendations were supported by less than 55% of the participants. Recommendation #7 suggested that if the local elementary school becomes available it could be an opportunity for development as an educational or interpretational center. This recommendation was supported by only 38%, however 37% had no opinion regarding this issue. Recommendation #9 advised that developing additional resources such

as cabins or an educational facility would benefit the area. This recommendation was both supported and rejected by 41% of the participants.

- 3 recommendations that were supported by more than 80% dealt with measures that would keep the area in its current condition. Supported by 89%, recommendation #2 suggested rezoning the area within the “ring road” to recreation and conservation. Supported by 83%, recommendation #6 endorsed that the City of Muncie extends their lease or purchases the area in order to sustain the park. Recommendation #12, supported by 86%, maintains that there should be no large scale residential development in the area without the existence of sewer and water utilities.

Recreation Recommendations

- Out of 16 recommendations, 2 recommendations were supported by less than 55% of the participants. Recommendation #8, recommending that the area inside the “ring road” be returned to green space, was supported by 49% and rejected by 37%. Recommendation #9, advising that pier fees be increased for out-of-county residents and increased for county residents as long as the park is run by the City of Muncie, was only supported by 26% of the participants and rejected by 48%.
- 4 recommendations were supported by 75% or more of the participants. Those recommendations included: establishing wetlands on inlets to the reservoir (75% approval), road improvements including widening to allow a bike lane on the “ring road” (78% approval), dedicating the area inside the “ring roads” to public use whether recreation or conservation (83% approval), and encouragement of conservation farming practices (86% approval).
- 7 recommendations were supported by 60-74% of the participants. Those recommendations included: rezoning the area inside the “ring roads” to recreation/conservation (74%), the city and/or county buying the area inside the “ring roads” (61%), establishing an agreement with the Indiana American Water Company for obtaining ownership of the property (71%), establishing a land restoration-revegetation management plan (70%), imposing a management plan for the ATV site and looking for alternative sites to relocate the ATV course (61%), using plat restrictions to control future development (66%), and using a 501(c)3 to help defend the reservoir and the long term transition envisioned in the plan (61%).

Overall the feedback from the public meeting suggested that participants were supportive of measures that would preserve the current land-use of the area while protecting and enhancing the natural environment. One of the most controversial issues concerned wastewater treatment. While a majority of participants agreed that there should be no large scale developments without sewer and water utilities, a majority of participants also rejected recommendations to extend sanitary sewer lines or to set up a regional on-site treatment facility. The conflicting feedback could suggest that participants are supportive of measures that will make development difficult if not impossible or it could have been due to the wording of the recommendations or the fact that a neighboring township has a wastewater treatment facility that could expand. Regardless, while the recommendation to set up an on-site wastewater district was rejected by 56% and the recommendation to extend Muncie Sanitary District's sewer lines was rejected by 64%, the recommendation that large scale residential development should not occur without sewer and water utilities was supported by 86% of the participants.

