RIDGE POINT
CHURCH WETLANDS
PROJECT

A TRUE PARTNERSHIP FOR
A GREENER EARTH
A COMMON GOAL

THE RIDGE POINT PROJECT IS A TRUE EXAMPLE OF A COLLABORATION BETWEEN A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION, GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES, INDIVIDUALS, AND LOCAL PROFIT AND NON PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ALL WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE COMMON GOAL OF A GREENER EARTH
CONTRIBUTORS

- RIDGE POINT CHURCH
- MACATAWA GREENWAY
- US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
- DUCKS UNLIMITED
- MACATAWA BAYWATERFOWLERS ASSOCIATION
- GRAND VALLEY PHEASANTS FOREVER
- CONNAN CONSTRUCTION
- ARTEC FABRICATION
- WEST MICHIGAN WETLANDS ASSOCIATION
IN 2002 THE PROPERTY WAS STILL FARM LAND USED TO FARM SOY BEANS.

IN 2003 DAN BROERSMA, A MEMBER OF RIDDGEPOINT CHURCH, WAS WALKING THE LARGE CHURCH PROPERTY AND HAD AN IDEA TO CREATE A TRAIL AND A NATURE PRESERVE IN ORDER TO MAKE GOOD USE OF GOD’S CREATION.
A SMALL BEGINNING

- Dan composed a proposal and brought it to pastor Jim Liske and then to the staff and leaders of the church.
- He was granted approval for the project and got to work right away.
- Dan Broersma and Jim Liske spoke with Chuck Yonker the Zeeland High School Women’s Cross Country coach about the trail.
A NEW TRAIL

• Zeeland’s team had no where to practice on a regular basis. With Chuck Yonker’s input, a trail was designed to fit everyone’s needs.

• Dan also contacted Ken Freestone of Macatawa Greenway about connecting to their existing trail system.
A NEW TRAIL

- In 2004 a trail was laid out around the property and by the end of the year it was completed.
- The Zeeland team now has a place to practice with an official 5k course.
- The trail is also used by many other high schools and by Hope College for training and meets.
RUN THE RIDGE 5K

- In 2004 the first “Run the Ridge” 5K race was run.
- 2008 will celebrate 4 years of tradition.
In 2005, after completion of the trail, Dan decided it was time for phase 2, the wetland area. Gib King, wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), stepped in to help with the “Partners for Fish and Wildlife” program.

The USFWS Partnership program is a “voluntary stewardship program.” Gib was instrumental in:

- Helping design the wetlands area.
- Determining the goals of the project.
- Getting funding from a variety of organizations.
- Working with the MDEQ to obtain permits.
GOALS OF THE PROJECT

The primary goals of the project were:

- To connect the existing Macatawa Greenway system in a way that would maximize the human\wildlife interface.
- Encourage migratory bird population.
- Improve water quality.
- Enhance the natural aesthetics of the area.
FINANCIAL PARTNERS

The financial partners who signed on were:

• Ducks Unlimited
• Macatawa Greenway
• Macatawa Bay Water Fowlers Association
• West Michigan Wetlands Association
• Grand Valley Pheasants Forever
• U.S. Fish and Wildlife Macatawa watershed
• Artec Fabrication
NEXT STEPS

Once the funding was in place:

- USFWS worked with Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to obtain the necessary permits required for manipulation of the floodplain

- Then the project was put up for construction bid.
  - Connan Construction, a local contractor, was awarded the bid due to the willingness to donate time and labor.
CONSTRUCTION
PROJECT COMPLETE

- The project was completed in September of 2006
- By the Spring of 2007 the wetlands had filled in
SPRING 2008
When the project was done, the following had been added to the property:

- Trail system connecting to Macatawa Greenway’s existing system was completed.
- 1000 feet of dike was built to restore and enhance more than 10 acres of flood plain wetland.
- 6 – 1/2 acre shallow open water wetland areas were made totaling more than 2.5 acres.
- Underground drainage tiles were broken or plugged to restore subsurface hydrology.
- A 1.5 acre mound of previously deposited spoil dirt was leveled and seeded to mimic natural topography.
- More than 30 acres of native warm season grasses and wildflowers were established in fallow fields adjacent to the wetlands.
- Bird houses were built and placed on the property.
CURRENT LAND USES

- Cross country training and race trail for Holland High School, Zeeland East, and Zeeland West High Schools, and Hope College.
- Run the Ridge – Annual 5k run now in its 4th year.
- Bike races
- Walking and running trail for the community.
- Educational programs for the community
- 2 pre existing catch and release fishing ponds
- Large organic garden – with produce donated to local charities.
COMMUNITY
GOALS ACHIEVED?

• To maximize the human/wildlife interface
  – Property now has a wide variety of uses

• To encourage migratory bird population
  – Many birds are attracted to watershed areas and birdhouses

• To enhance the natural aesthetics of the area.
  – The trail system and wetlands are much more attractive than the empty farmland

• To improve water quality.
  – The run off from the highway and storm water now has a place to be filtered before ending up in the water table
A BIG THANKS TO ALL

- US Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Gib King Wildlife Biologist
- Macatawa Greenway
  - Ken Freestone
  - Derk Walkotten

Thanks to the USFWS and Macatawa Greenway for making this whole project possible. This would never have been accomplished without their help!
OTHER CONTRIBUTORS

- Ducks Unlimited
  - Russ Terry
    - Monetary contribution

- Macatawa Bay Water Fowlers Association
  - Brad Spooner
    - Monetary contribution

- Grand Valley Pheasants Forever
  - Monetary contribution
  - Use of seeding drill

- West Michigan Wetlands Association
  - Monetary contribution

- Connan Construction
  - Brian Slagh
    - Donation of time and labor for project

- Artec Fabrication
  - Karl Kotecki
    - Construction of bridges
    - Labor
    - Monetary contribution

- Zeeland High School Women’s Cross Country Coach
  - Chuck Yonker
    - 5k track layout
    - Help with ideas
RIDGE POINT GREEN TEAM

- Dan Broersma
  - Without his vision this would not have ever happened!
- Jason DeWitt
  - Helped get Connan Construction Bid
  - Helped in many other ways
- Randy Brower
- David Borr
- David Marckini
- Scott Gavin
- Beth Lawson
- Many others

- The Ridge Point Green Team has worked hard
  - seeding the grasses and wildflowers
  - Cleaning the property of all the trash before project started
  - Maintaining the trail
  - Mowing
  - Constructing and placing birdhouses on the property

Many others
GREEN TEAM AT WORK
GREEN TEAM SEEDING
A COMMON GOAL

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RIDGE POINT SIGN

RIDGE POINT CHURCH
HABITAT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

This project restored 10 acres of emergent and seasonal wetlands and established 30 acres of associated native prairies. Collectively, these areas provide quality habitat for waterfowl, shore and wading birds, pheasants, and a diversity of other wildlife species, protect water quality in the Macatawa River and enhance public recreational opportunities.

This project was completed in 2006 as a cooperative effort among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, Michigan Duck Hunters Association - Macatawa Bay Waterfowlers, West Michigan Wetlands Foundation, Pheasants Forever, Macatawa Greenway Partnership, Ridge Point Church and Ducks Unlimited.