

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Zach Bishton, Christopher B. Burke Engineering (317-266-8000)
Sarah Brichford, Wildcat Guardians (765-883-8319)
Christian Chauret, Indiana University Kokomo (765-455-9290)

Local Groups Join Forces to hold Water Quality Workshop

Kokomo, IN (September 4, 2006) – On Wednesday September 27, 2006 at 7:30 pm the Wildcat Creek Watershed Alliance (WCWA), Wildcat Guardians, and Indiana University Kokomo will be conducting a water quality workshop. The workshop will be held in the Kresge Auditorium (near the library) on the Campus of IU Kokomo. The workshop is a public forum offered by the Wildcat Guardians in cooperation with the WCWA and the IU Kokomo Department of Sciences. The Guardians are a group of citizen volunteers dedicated to improving the health and beauty of the Wildcat Creek, and the forums are intended to educate local residents on the natural and cultural value of Wildcat Creek.

Since early 2005, the WCWA has been working on a Watershed Management Plan for the Wildcat Creek Kitty Run-Stahl Ditch Watershed. The watershed drains approximately 29,000 acres of land in central Howard County and includes the majority of the City of Kokomo's municipal jurisdiction and extends as far east as State Road 19 and as far west as County Road 700 West (See Exhibit). The purpose of the plan, is to identify water quality and natural resource problems in the watershed and to identify efficient and effective solutions to manage and correct identified problems. The project is being funded by a U.S. EPA grant awarded to the WCWA and administered by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management.

The Water Quality Workshop will present the results of the preliminary watershed planning work. Among the problems identified in the planning process to date are elevated concentrations of *E. coli*, nutrients, and total suspended solids. Numerous potential sources have been identified as contributing to the pollution including inadequately functioning septic systems, combined sewer overflows (CSO), illicit connections to storm sewers, urban development, and agricultural runoff. While much work has been completed to date, the plan will not be effective without receiving adequate support from local stakeholders who live, work, and recreate within the watershed. The workshop will provide members of the public with an opportunity to learn about preliminary study results, raise questions, and voice support for solutions to identified problems.

The forum will also feature Dr. Christian Chauret, Associate Professor of Microbiology and his student Laura Fincher, both from IU Kokomo. Dr. Chauret and Ms. Fincher will discuss the research they have been conducting related to *E. coli* bacteria in the Wildcat Creek Watershed and the relative risks associated with the presence of *E. coli* in recreational water bodies.

At the conclusion of the workshop, a question and answer session will be conducted in order to ensure that all those in attendance have an opportunity to ask questions and provide input in the development of the Watershed Management Plan.

The Indiana-American Water Company will provide coffee, juice, and cookies, which will be served to guests in the lobby of the Kresge Auditorium.

For more information, please contact Zach Bishton at 317-266-8000 or zbishton@cbbel-in.com.