



# West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

August/September 2015

## Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant Complete

July 31, 2015 marked the end of a major effort to conduct five-year updates of the hazard mitigation plans for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. The project began in 2010 when WMSRDC coordinated with the five counties and the Michigan State Police to apply for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). After a successful application, the project kicked off in late 2011 and hit full-stride in 2012.

Thanks to this planning grant, all five counties in the region now have a current and locally adopted hazard mitigation plan. As of July 2015, three of the five plans have been approved by FEMA, with the remaining two plans awaiting FEMA review. A hazard mitigation plan that is approved by FEMA and locally adopted ensures continued availability of the full complement of Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grants through FEMA.

WMSRDC acknowledges the participation of the broad network of local and state

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## Workshop to Discuss Statewide Regional Transit Needs

A series of regional workshops will take place across the state and WMSRDC is co-hosting the workshop in Muskegon on September 16 from 9 a.m. to noon at the GVSU MAREC.

The primary focus of the workshop will be discussion of potential strategies, projects, and services to improve regional mobility at regional and statewide levels. The workshops will also provide opportunities to obtain input from regional stakeholders on any services or resources that have not been documented in the 211 call center database and to identify strategies that would improve ease of use. There will also be discussion to gain consensus on the process for prioritization of identified strategies.

Potential stakeholders for this workshop include public transportation providers, 211 call centers, rideshare services, vanpool providers, area transportation planning agencies, local governments, school districts, human service agencies, representatives from disability agencies, etc.

Potential stakeholders can look for a formal invitation from the Michigan Department of Transportation that will contain more information about the workshop in the coming weeks.

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WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



## SPOTLIGHT PROJECT: West Michigan Green Infrastructure Conference

The West Michigan Green Infrastructure Conference was held on August 4 and 5, with 140 participants in attendance. WMSRDC partnered with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, the Grand Valley Metro Council, and the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council to host this event.

In addition to the very informative conference sessions, three regional field trips highlighted West Michigan green infrastructure projects, including wetlands for regional flood control, shoreline greenway habitat, rain gardens, green roofs, and low impact development for urban stormwater management. Field trips were held in Grand Rapids, Holland and Muskegon.

The Muskegon field trip, hosted by WMSRDC, featured a bicycle tour that began in downtown Muskegon and culminated in a beach trolley tour of the Lake Michigan shoreline and the downtown Muskegon historic district.

The Bicycle Rack provided bicycles and the tour included green infrastructure at the Muskegon Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute, Lafarge, the City of Muskegon's Lakeshore Trail, native shoreline habitat along a 2.5 mile stretch of Muskegon Lake and a rain garden at the Grand Trunk municipal launch ramp.

As a final highlight, participants ended the tour in downtown Muskegon at the Pigeon Hill

Brewery to view tables and décor made from repurposed historic, lumber-era white pine wood that was removed during a Muskegon Lake fish and wildlife habitat restoration project.



## Muskegon Lake Mill Debris Project in Investigation and Design Phase

The Muskegon Lake “Mill Debris” Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project is a \$3 million National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/Great Lakes Restoration Initiative fish and wildlife habitat restoration project, being managed by WMSRDC.

The project is in the investigation and design phase. The project’s ecological monitoring component is being carried out by GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute (AWRI). The project will develop a protocol that can be transferred to other Great Lakes communities to determine whether the presence of “mill debris” is harming native fish and wildlife habitat. Mill debris is a form of marine debris. In certain densities and conditions, it can severely degrade habitat and reduce native fish and wildlife populations.

In Muskegon Lake, approximately 11 acres of open water and emergent wetlands that contains more than 122,673 metric tons of mill debris is being studied for potential restoration. If investigation and monitoring determine that benthic organisms and related lake bottom habitat is severely degraded, the restoration project will be fully engineered and the material will be removed. Previous restoration projects have included repurposing of dredged material. However, wood that has been exposed to oxygen over the decades is generally too degraded for repurposing. But, beneficial re-use options such as brownfield redevelopment may be an option. The project team includes WMSRDC, GVSU AWRI, NOAA Restoration Center, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory, Great Lakes Commission, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Great Lakes Dock and Materials, Verplank, Progressive AE, GEI Consultants and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership.

## Invasive Species Control Underway

Late summer and early fall mark the seasonal transition from preparation to treatment when it comes to controlling Phragmites in Muskegon and Bear Lake coastal wetlands. WMSRDC, through a grant from the USEPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, has hired an environmental engineering firm to identify, prioritize, and treat Phragmites and four additional invasive species in a minimum of 50 acres of valuable local wetlands.

WMSRDC has hosted workshops to inform and train landowners to recognize these plants and understand the impacts to the Muskegon Lake watershed. The workshops have also provided training in monitoring for the presence and severity of these pests so that future maintenance and habitat remediation efforts will be enhanced. Landowners have positively embraced this project and realize that what’s good for the environment will also be good for their property and quality of life. Residents are benefiting by participating and allowing treatments on their property. Treatments are scheduled to begin mid-September. WMSRDC will continue to contact landowners for permission to treat prioritized

acres, provide training in treatment methods, maintenance, and monitoring, and coordinate with local partners in an effort to improve our wetland habitats.

This project will provide improvements to wildlife habitat, property values, recreational uses and assist

with the delisting of Muskegon Lake as an Area of Concern. With an eye to maintaining the work that is now underway, WMSRDC is looking at developing a long term solution to invasive species impacts by working with educators to provide experiential learning opportunities for students, organizing citizen volunteers and partner groups, and creating a vehicle to sustain future habitat maintenance needs. The project will continue into 2016, so there is still time to get involved.



## Economic Development District Update

As an Economic Development District (EDD), a designation from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), WMSRDC is active in promoting economic development on a regional scale across the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. The following update is an account of recent activities and other items of interest related to the EDD.

- WMSRDC is planning to revamp the EDD's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy over the next two years. The CEDS is designed to be an economic roadmap to diversify and strengthen regional economies. It analyzes the regional economy and serves as a guide for establishing regional goals and objectives, developing and implementing a regional plan of action, and identifying investment priorities and funding sources.
- In July, the CEDS Committee held its quarterly meeting in the City of Hart in Oceana County. This committee oversees and assists with development of the CEDS.
- Three projects identified in the 2015 CEDS have been proposed to EDA for funding: Muskegon Community College Technology Center; West Michigan Port Development Study; and Deconstruction Economic Cluster Feasibility Study. Grant awards are expected to be announced sometime this summer.

## Great Lakes Port Association Annual Meeting Held in Muskegon

The American Great Lakes Port Association (AGLPA) held its Annual Meeting on July 22 and 23 in Muskegon. The AGLPA is an organization representing the interests of the public port authorities on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes. The Association's mission is to work to inform and influence public policies, primarily at the federal level, that fosters maritime commerce and related employment in the Great Lakes region.

The meeting in Muskegon provided an opportunity to network with Great Lakes port managers, staff, terminal operators and key leaders in the Great Lakes maritime industry. The Muskegon Port Advisory Committee worked for several months to organize an excellent schedule of activities showcasing the port and community. The meeting was held at the Grand Valley State University's Michigan Alternative & Renewable Energy Center (MAREC) and included a land trolley tour of the port, as well as a water tour/dinner cruise on the Port City Princess.

Steve Fisher, Executive Director of the AGLPA, noted that the meeting in Muskegon was the most successful AGLPA meeting that the organization has ever had.

## Lake County Applies to USDA

Congratulations to Lake County on the recent formation of the Lake County Economic Development Alliance. The Alliance is the first ever county-wide economic development organization established in the county. The newly formed organization has also applied for 501(c)3 status, established an initial board, and adopted by-laws.

In addition to the development of the Alliance, Lake County has applied to the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) for a grant under the Regional Community Development Initiative program. If awarded, grant funds will be used for capacity building for the newly formed Economic Development Alliance including the hiring of lead staff to assist in the implementation of the Lake County Economic Development Strategic Plan completed in 2014. WMSRDC, along with The Right Place, assisted community leaders from Lake County in the development of the Plan.

## Progress of Rural Task Force Oversight Board

WMSRDC continues to participate in the Rural Task Force (RTF) Oversight Board. The group was organized by the Michigan Department of Transportation and includes representatives from MDOT – Bureau of Transportation Planning, MDOT – Bureau of Highway Development, MDOT – Office of Passenger Transportation, the County Road Association, Michigan Municipal League, and local transit representatives. WMSRDC is participating as a non-voting member representing the Michigan Association of Regions.

The Committee is in the process of establishing the general direction and goals of the RTF Program and ensuring consistency in the program's implementation and administration. Once the RTF procedures have been revised and updated, the RTF Oversight Board will begin the process of communicating and educating those affected by the new process.

## New MATS Transit Facility

The Muskegon Area Transit System (MATS) held a soft opening for their new Herman Ivory Passenger Terminal on August 1, 2015. The \$2.8 million project included renovations to the original facility and more efficient access for passengers and busses.

The facility, which is located on Morris Avenue in downtown Muskegon, is used as a transfer center and terminal for the MATS service, as well as a terminal for Greyhound service. The project was originally submitted by WMSRDC as one of seven High Priority projects through Congressman Hoekstra's Office. The projects were submitted as part of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was signed by President Bush in 2005. Once the bill was signed, the project was added to the MPO short and long range plans, and after several modifications, construction began in 2015. MPO staff has worked closely with MATS and MDOT throughout the years to ensure that the project continued to move forward.



## New Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) in Development

The Muskegon and Northern Ottawa County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which WMSRDC administers, has started the process of developing a new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) document that will cover the fiscal years 2017-2020. Currently the MPO is working under the FY2014-2017 TIP.

The new TIP is expected to be completed in FY2016. The first phase of the process will include working with all of the local road and transit agencies to develop a prioritized project list for FY2018-2020. FY2017 has already been developed and is currently programmed, and will be carried over to the new TIP. The project selection process starts with target estimates that come from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). From there, the MPO committees work together to determine the highest priority projects to be funded with the target estimates. Throughout the process, the public is encouraged to participate, and a public comment period is scheduled at all meetings.

## Northern Exposure 15 - Nuclear Device Detonation – What are the Odds?

On June 23-27, 2015 a 10-kiloton nuclear device detonation exercise called Northern Exposure 15 was conducted. The event focused on the State, Regional, and Federal response to a scenario based complex catastrophic nuclear device detonation event centered in Northeast Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Initial estimates listed 30,000 Northeast Grand Rapids residents (in the “Ground Zero” Zone) as being killed immediately and another 35,000 missing or unaccounted for in the wake of the attack. The radiation plume would spread from Northeast Grand Rapids eastward to just north of the Saginaw Bay area and cause additional deaths in the aftermath.

You might be wondering how devastating the same scenario would be on a larger city such as New York City? According to Matthew Bunn, an associate professor at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and an expert on nuclear

proliferation and terrorism, “a 10-kiloton nuclear bomb (equivalent explosive power to 10,000 tons of TNT and modestly smaller than the Hiroshima Bomb) detonated in midtown Manhattan in the middle of the workday would kill half of a million people and cause \$1 trillion in direct economic damage.”

So what are the odds of this actually happening within the United States during our lifetime? Various experts estimate the chances of a nuclear bomb detonation in the next 5-10 years at somewhere between 10 and 30 percent. Martin Hellman, professor emeritus of electrical engineering at Stanford and co-inventor of public key cryptography, who has been focusing on nuclear deterrence for the past 25 years, said that a baby born today, with a life expectancy of 80 years faces a greater than 50-50 chance that a nuclear weapon attack will occur in his or her lifetime unless the number of weapons and available weapons-grade material is radically reduced.

In a 2005 survey of 85 national security experts, 60 percent of the respondents assessed the odds of a nuclear attack within 10 years at between 10 and 50 percent, with an average of 29.2 percent. Nearly 80 percent of respondents expected the attack to originate with a terrorist group.

WMSRDC is responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.



## Michigan Association of Regions Annual Meeting

Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC Executive Director, attended the Michigan Association of Regions (MAR) Annual Meeting held in Grand Rapids on August 13 and 14. MAR is a voluntary membership organization consisting of policy board members and executive level staff representing the state's multi-county, regional planning agencies.

The meeting was held at the Michigan State University (MSU) Secchia Center – College of Human Medicine in downtown Grand Rapids. The meeting consisted of presentations from Grand Rapids leaders, representatives from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development, the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes. Attendees of the meeting also participated in a trolley tour of the areas in and around the downtown Grand Rapids area.

## GIS Assistance to Benona Township

Recently, WMSRDC utilized its GIS (Geographic Information System) capabilities to help Benona Township in Oceana County convert its paper-based zoning maps to a digital format. WMSRDC was also able to make a few minor corrections to the map during the conversion process. As a result, Benona Township has a more legible and more accurate zoning map, which can be easily amended in the future.

## MAR Provides Comments to Michigan Water Strategy

On June 29, seven environmental program managers and staff from Michigan's fourteen state planning and development regions met in Lansing to jointly review the draft Michigan Water Strategy.

A summary of the review and recommendations were provided to the Michigan Association of Regions. Consolidated comments were provided as input to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Office of the Great Lakes. Specific comments were provided on the Water Strategy Implementation Plan, noting where regions could provide support as lead actors.

In addition, it was noted where other entities such as conservation districts and health departments may have a role. Broad recommendations and examples of existing regional projects were also provided.

## Clean Air Action Summer Season Wrapping Up

As of the date of writing this article, three Clean Air Action Days have been called for West Michigan this summer. Those dates were July 18, August 16, and August 17. A Clean Air Action Day is called when the air quality is expected to reach unhealthy levels. On those days, the public is asked to take voluntary actions to reduce emissions and protect their health.

Throughout the summer season, WMSRDC has participated in various community events to educate about the program and has planned and implemented a television radio and advertising campaign in partnership with the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition.

Although the summer season is nearly complete, please note the Clean Air Action Program is now a year long program monitoring particulate matter levels. Particulate matter can be higher in the colder months which could trigger a Clean Air Action Day to be called in the winter season.

Also, the EPA is expected to announce a lower ozone standard in October. This lower standard may lead to an increase of Clean Air Action Days next summer.



## Hazard Mitigation continued from page 1

stakeholders who collectively made this project a success. Regretfully, there are too many agencies, organizations and individuals to mention by name. However, expressed gratitude goes to the Emergency Manager, Local Emergency Planning Committee/Team, and County Board of each county, as well as the Michigan State Police – Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, for their diligent efforts and cooperation throughout this project.

For additional information about hazard mitigation, or to access the updated hazard mitigation plans, go to the Hazard Mitigation program page at [wmsrdc.org](http://wmsrdc.org).

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is a federal and state designated regional planning and development agency serving 120 local governments in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana Counties. WMSRDC is also responsible for the management and administration of the homeland security program for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa. WMSRDC is also the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and Northern Ottawa Counties.

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