

What's Inside:

WMSRDC Launches New Website

Update of Muskegon Lake Habitat Restoration Projects

West Michigan Watersheds Collaborative

RPI Applies for FY16 Funding

WMSRDC Invited to Innovation Challenge

M-231 Bypass Bridge Complete

Mass Fatality Exercise Held at Muskegon County Airport/Mona Lake

Lake Michigan Water Trail Network

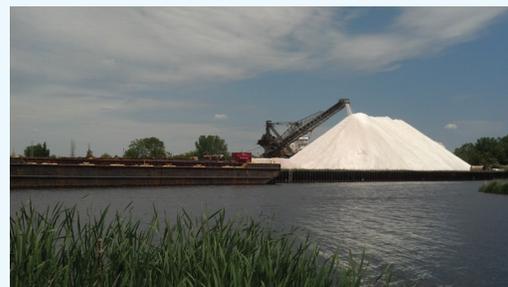
Three Economic Development Grants Awarded by EDA to the WMSRDC Region

During the last week of September, the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) announced three grants to the West Michigan region totaling more than \$2.6 million.

Muskegon Community College received \$2,514,000 for the renovation of the new Muskegon Applied Technology Center. The Applied Technology Center will be located in the former Muskegon Chronicle building situated in the heart of downtown Muskegon. The total project is expected to cost \$8,980,000.

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission and Michigan State University jointly received \$111,706 for the Muskegon County Deconstruction Cluster Feasibility Study. The purpose of the study is to determine the feasibility of developing an industry cluster to repurpose deconstruction materials from demolished properties within the West Michigan region. The total cost of the study is estimated to be \$223,412.

Finally, WMSRDC received \$62,500 to conduct the Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis. The purpose of this study is to analyze the current and future capacity of transportation infrastructure around the port including water, roads, rail, and air



Pictured from top to bottom: Former Muskegon Chronicle Building, a house undergoing deconstruction, and activity related to the Port of Muskegon.

See EDA Grants on page 8



SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

WMSRDC Launches New Website

WMSRDC is proud to announce the launch of our redesigned website. wmsrdc.org provides instant access, expanded capabilities, and increased connection to all users.

The new and improved website has been crafted to reflect what local, state, and federal officials; important stakeholders; and the public need right now, but also builds upon technology capable of addressing future needs.

Users will immediately notice streamlined menus, simple navigation, interactive project related mapping, and access to the information they need, any time of day.

Some of the features readers will love about the new WMSRDC website:

- Homepage – See upcoming events, featured projects, recent topics, and easy to navigate drop down menus to get to where you want to go fast.
- Expanded program and project areas – Click on a program area from the programs drop down menu and it will bring you to an overview of that program plus an information driven inventory of all current projects related to that program area.

- Interactive Maps – Preview mapping for many projects. Click on the components of a map to learn more about project specific

wmsrdc.org

Immediately the user will notice streamlined menus, simple navigation, interactive project related mapping, and access to the information they need, any time of day.

locations, funding levels, where to get more information, and to give immediate feedback, etc.

- Calendar - An icon driven calendar of all upcoming WMSRDC related meetings and events.

WMSRDC will continually be expanding and keeping up to date our online content (especially the interactive maps) to bring you the most up to date and relevant information. We encourage you to bookmark it, check back often and connect with us on Facebook.

Update on Muskegon Lake Habitat Restoration Projects

Three Muskegon Lake fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects were selected for a \$12 million restoration investment from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative through a regional partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Great Lakes Commission and WMSRDC.

Combined, the three projects will restore 52 acres of shallow water and emergent wetland habitat along 4,272 feet of shoreline within the lower Muskegon River and lower Bear Creek portions of the Muskegon Lake Watershed. The project will remove 308,000 metric tons of harmful sediment and historic saw mill debris.

In addition to the direct water quality and fish and wildlife benefits, the local economy will profit by the beneficial re-use of dredge material for shoreline brownfield redevelopment and by the re-purposing of logging-era sawmill wood for furniture and artwork. The Muskegon Center for the Arts is also contributing a percentage of the sales from the Third Annual Muskegon Lake Project to the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership for continued restoration and protection of Muskegon Lake's natural resources.

Invasive Species Control Project Update

Eagerly anticipated control treatments of phragmites and four other invasive plant species got underway in late September thanks to a grant from the EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program and with the cooperation of four local units of government, interested community groups, and over 180 impacted landowners. These treatment efforts will be complete for 2015 by the time you read this and emphasis will move to another phase of the effort to control these invasive plants. This will include evaluating success, updating the current Biodiversity Protection and Phragmites Management Plan, engaging the public, and continued training to address control issues. Landowner and volunteer training has already been initiated and will continue through 2016. Training will also include experiential learning experiences for students and volunteers to boost long term awareness as well as monitoring and treatment methodology. Reducing the negative impacts of invasive species in the Muskegon and Bear Lake watersheds will provide habitat, property value, and quality of life benefits into the future.

West Michigan Watershed Collaborative Update

The West Michigan Watershed Collaborative is a West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance Project that has convened West Michigan watershed groups and is developing a framework plan of high priority water quality projects with a feasibility study to assess a variety of potential funding opportunities.

As the West Michigan Region's designated water quality planning agency under Section 208 of the Clean Water Act, WMSRDC's work builds upon the West Michigan Watershed Partners Inventory (WMSRDC, 2008).

Working in partnership with Grand Valley Metro Council and the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, the collaborative has brought together watershed groups and received their input to help identify priority water quality projects from plans that have received state and federal approval. Once completed, the regional water quality framework plan will be used to complete the funding feasibility study to implement water quality improvements throughout West Michigan.



RPI Applying for FY16 Grant

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (Region 4) is about to enter its third year of regional collaboration as part of Governor Snyder's Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI).

WMSRDC has been an active partner in the alliance since it was initiated in the fall of 2013. This fall, the alliance voted to apply once again for funding through the RPI under the leadership of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC). The Alliance is in the process of developing a scope of work for the upcoming year and preparing the grant application which is due to the State by December 1, 2015.

Projects funded last year through the RPI, include the Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub, West Michigan Regional Watershed Collaborative, and Connect Michigan.

Innovation Challenge

WMSRDC is part of a local team from Muskegon County selected to participate in a national "Innovation Challenge" to assist coal-reliant communities. The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation are hosting the Innovation Challenge in collaboration with the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).

The April 2016 closure of the coal fired power plant on Muskegon Lake and local work to position the Port of Muskegon as a multimodal regional logistics hub will be the focus on Muskegon's participation in the initiative. Each team will benefit from individual assistance before and after the event to help implement strategies related to economic diversification, asset-based development, cluster development, workforce training, broadband services, recreation and tourism, and entrepreneurship.

Connect Michigan Update

Recently, WMSRDC began partnering with Muskegon County on a project related to expanding broadband services within the underserved areas of the county. WMSRDC is working with local representatives as well as employees of Connect Michigan on this initiative. Connect Michigan is a non-profit subsidiary of Connected Nation in the state of Michigan. Connect Michigan is partnering with the Michigan Public Service Commission to comprehensively plan for broadband mapping and expansion of access to broadband.

The Muskegon County Broadband team has now held two meetings, with the next scheduled for November 10, 2015. The team has reviewed new residential and business surveys from Connect Michigan and a plan is now being worked to distribute or make these surveys available across the county to support the broadband assessment.

WMSRDC staff has also been assisting on similar projects in other counties within the region. The ultimate goal of this project is to increase technological transformation through innovation, job creation, and entrepreneurship through the expansion of broadband technology and increased usage by Michigan residents.

Mason County is engaged in launching social media workshops for local businesses and cyber security seminars. West Shore Community College is investigating the Digital Works/Community College Job Training program. The Newaygo County broadband assessment is complete and was submitted with a final score of 104/120, which qualifies them as a certified community. In addition, the staff of the Stream is investigating the possibility of adopting the Digital Works Jobs Training program. The Lake County Broadband team has finished with the data collection process of their second broadband survey and is compiling the data in order to map the results. Casair has activated its new fiber optic cable in Chase Twp. At this time Oceana County is not actively involved in the Connect Michigan process.

New MPO Leadership

The West Michigan Metropolitan Planning Program (WestPlan) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), staffed by WMSRDC, elected a new chairperson at its recent September meeting. Roger Bergman, Ottawa County Commissioner, will serve as chairperson of the MPO for the next two year period.

Mayor Pro Tem, Edd Whalen of the City of Whitehall will continue to serve as vice-chairperson of the MPO for the next two year term.

WMSRDC expresses much gratitude to Tom Anderson, Councilperson for the City of North Muskegon, for his dedication and leadership of the MPO over a many year period.

The MPO program addresses a multitude of transportation projects, such as safety projects like widening lanes, bridge repairs and improvements, air quality projects like traffic signal synchronization, and enhancement projects like bike paths. Two important planning documents that are produced through this process are the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program.

M-231 Bypass Bridge Complete

The huge piece of the long awaited M-231 Bypass around The City of Grand Haven, in Ottawa County, has finally been completed. The Michigan Department of Transportation has officially opened the new bridge that was constructed as part of the M-231 Bypass project. The entire project is approximately 7 miles long and will provide an alternate route from M-45 to the M-104/I-96 Interchange. The new crossing was officially opened to traffic on October 30, 2015. Prior to the construction of this bridge, the nearest crossing (other than US-31) was approximately 16 miles to the east, at 68th Avenue in Eastmanville.

Planning for this project began over 20 years ago, and in 2005 it was submitted by WMSRDC as a regional high priority project, to be included in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). WMSRDC staff worked with Congressman Hoekstra's office to get the project added to the new federal transportation bill, which was signed that year by President Bush. This allowed federal appropriation to be allocated towards this project.

Because of the size of the project (Estimated at \$200 Million), it was separated into several phases, including bridge work, property acquisition, environmental and historical assessments and extensive engineering. Working closely with MDOT, MPO staff addressed the many phases and changes that occurred throughout the process, and added them to the short and long range plans.



Rural Task Force Update

The five-county Rural Transportation Task Force met on October 15th to approve changes to projects and discuss other rural transportation issues. WMSRDC assists in the administration of the Rural Transportation Task Force for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. Task Force members added new projects and adjusted existing transportation projects for FY16. In addition, the committee was informed about Rural Task Force funding issues and was updated on the Rural Task Force Oversight Board. At the next meeting of the Rural Task Force Committee in January, members will be choosing projects for FY17 through 2020.

Mass Fatality Exercise Held at Muskegon Airport / Mona Lake



Muskegon County Emergency Services, local dive teams, emergency first responders and other agencies conducted a full-scale Mass Fatality Operational Response Exercise on September 24, 2015 at the Muskegon County Airport and nearby Mona Lake.

The exercise featured a scenario where an inbound passenger jet airplane, carrying approximately 50 passengers, begins to experience and reports engine trouble only minutes before crash landing near a runway at the Muskegon County Airport. Impact wreckage is scattered along a one-quarter mile stretch of airport property, and a portion of the aircraft's fuselage is submerged in the adjacent Mona Lake. Major critical tasks tested during the exercise

LEGEND

- 1 - Muskegon Co. Emergency Services vehicle hanger**
(North Airport Road across the road from the Norton Cemetery)
- 2 - Airplane crash site/casualty search grid site**
(Inside the airport perimeter fence near the Muskegon Co. vehicle hanger)
- 3 - Temporary morgue**
(Airport maintenance facility located at the Intersection of Sinclair and Starlha Drives)
- 4 - Red Cross, Friends and Family Reunification Center**
(Western Michigan Christian High School, 455 E Ellis Rd, Norton Shores)
- 5 - Submerged underwater fuselage - Dive team recovery site**
(Wellesley Dr. and Mona Lake at end of runway #32)



Left Photo: Muskegon County Mass Fatality Exercise Sites.
Right Photo: Exercise divers recovering the submerged fuselage.

included: (1) Crash site grid searching/dive team water (casualty) recovery operations; (2) Recovering bodies; (3) Establishing and operating a temporary morgue; (4) Establishing a location to provide grief/crisis counseling; and (5) Facilitation of victim/remains reunification (e.g. establishing a Red Cross friends and family reception center).

Objectives of the exercise were to demonstrate the ability of emergency response, public health officials (including the medical examiner) and airport operations officials to effectively establish a mechanism or system designed to facilitate casualty/fatality body recovery, morgue operations (including biohazard containment and victim identification).

WMSRDC Signs FY15 Homeland Security Program Grant Agreement

WMSRDC, the designated fiduciary agent on behalf of the Region 6 Homeland Security Planning Board, was awarded \$1,295,669 under the Fiscal Year 2015 Homeland Security Grant Program. The grant agreement was signed in October and all work on the grant is required to be completed by May 31, 2018.

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.

Muskegon Lake Vision 2020

WMSRDC has been busy preparing the Muskegon Lake Vision 2020 document, which is expected to be available for public review in November. The Vision 2020 aims to provide a collective community consensus for how Muskegon Lake and its shoreline can sustain and nurture a wide variety of assets and uses. The plan will be made available to local governments and other stakeholders to guide community decisions impacting Muskegon Lake and its shoreline.

The Vision 2020 is organized into four “asset” areas that coexist on and around Muskegon Lake: natural resources & environment, outdoor recreation, commerce & port activities, and residential uses. Preliminary analyses of public comments gathered through a series of forums held in June 2015 show a clear preference for ensuring the continued coexistence and viability of these assets well into the future.



Lake Michigan Water Trail and the Lake Michigan Trail Network

WMSRDC completed work on the Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan in 2014. The plan includes the Lake Michigan shoreline, harbors, and the lower portions of their connecting rivers.

Communities are encouraged to use the plan when seeking grant funds to improve non-motorized public access amenities, accessibility, natural resources, way-finding signage, and more.

In addition, the Lake Michigan Trail Network, a four state consortium of multimodal trail stakeholders, is asking communities to provide resolutions of support for the Lake Michigan Trail Network, which encompasses water trails as well as bike paths, snowmobile trails, equestrian trails and more. Several West Michigan communities have already provided resolutions.

For more information about the resolution, please go to wmsrdc.org or contact Kathy Evans, Program Manager at (231) 722-7878 ext. 17

Hazard Mitigation Planning Update

All five counties in the WMSRDC region now have a Hazard Mitigation Plan in effect that has been approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and adopted at the county level. The documents are effective through 2020, at which point they will need to undergo a 5-year review and update process.

It is recommended by FEMA and the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division that cities, villages, and townships also adopt their county's approved Hazard Mitigation Plan to encourage consistent implementation of the plan's recommendations and to help ensure each municipality's eligibility for Hazard Mitigation Assistance.

Local communities within the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana should keep an eye out for correspondence from their county emergency manager requesting local adoption of their county's plan.

Hazard Mitigation Plans for all five counties can now be accessed through the Hazard Mitigation program page at wmsrdc.org.



EDA Grants continued from page 1

for the future development of a regional multimodal logistics hub centered around the Port of Muskegon. The second phase of the study will conduct an analysis of various organizational structures to market and manage the port and regional logistics hub. The total cost of the study is \$125,000.

Check back often to WMSRDC’s new website and watch for future issues of this newsletter for more information on these important projects in the West Michigan region.

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.

Susie Hughes, Chairperson
Evelyn Kolbe, Vice-Chairperson
James Rynberg, Secretary

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

Amy Haack, Editor

WMSRDC
316 Morris Ave. Suite 340 Muskegon, MI 49440
(231) 722-7878 Fax (231) 722-9362
wmsrdc.org