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Regional Prosperity Initiative Call for Projects

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) is once again soliciting projects from throughout the 13-county Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI) Region 4. The WMPA Steering Committee has budgeted approximately \$213,000 for this project call. Projects are to be submitted no later than July 15, 2016. The project submittal form can be found on the WMSRDC website at wmsrdc.org/program/rpi.

A review committee will evaluate each project based on the following criteria:

- Long-term impact and sustainability of project.
- Regional impact – proportion of the region potentially impacted by the project.
- Employment opportunities provided to people with a variety of skill levels in a variety of employment sectors.
- Recognizes the region's strengths and challenges.
- The project promotes and supports public and private partnerships.

Once the review committee has vetted the submitted projects, the WMPA Steering Committee will review the list of recommended finalists at its regularly scheduled August meeting.

Project sponsors from the list of finalists will be invited to present their project at a community forum to be held in September. Attendees of the community forum will have the opportunity to vote on and prioritize the finalists.

The WMPA will announce funding decisions by September 30, 2016. Funding for the projects will be available immediately.

The WMPA conducted a similar call for projects in 2014. The following is



SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

Ashland Township Cemetery GIS Project

This summer, WMSRDC's GIS technician has been working with Ashland Township in Newaygo County to map the township's three cemeteries. The three cemeteries in Ashland Township are Shippy Cemetery on 136th Street, Danish Cemetery on 128th Street, and the main Ashland Cemetery on 120th Street.

Currently, the township is using old, photo copied paper plans of the cemetery layout as a visual reference of the lots and individual graves within the cemeteries. Cross referenced with paper records and an excel database, locations of individual and family grave plots can be identified.

Marv Geers, the Township Supervisor, and Margaret Goodmonson, the Township Clerk, provided the layout of the cemeteries and the excel data for each plot. Using GIS, the lots and gravesites will be mapped by WMSRDC and the specific details for each plot integrated to the geospatial locations. When finished, the digitized map will be interactive and searchable therefore making it much easier for the public and township officials to locate individuals and families located in each of the cemeteries.

The map will eventually be made accessible online so searches can be made by the public without having to

visit the township hall. The data for each grave plot will include the deceased's name, date of birth and death, cause of death, veteran status, and the name of the individual plot in which they can be located. The data listed above may not be complete for all records, but all possible information will be included in the database. The data will also include a photo of each grave's headstone, if one is present. Some of the grave site records include comments such as, family relations if more than one person is in one plot, does the grave contain cremains, military service, and so on. The layout of each cemetery will be geo-referenced over the township's aerial photography so the map user will be able to better locate a grave when visiting the cemetery. This project is scheduled to be completed by the end of this summer.



Taking Control and Looking to the Future for Non Native Invasive Species

Non native invasive species control in the Muskegon Lake and Bear Lake watersheds is a daunting task. WMSRDC has entered its second year of a two year project designed to reduce invasive species such as phragmites (common reed), spotted knapweed, purple loosestrife, black locust, and tartarian honeysuckle in the Muskegon Lake watersheds.

Reducing these plants and restoring native vegetation will improve local fish and wildlife habitat and help remove Muskegon Lake as an Area of Concern (AOC) in the Great Lakes. In 2015 the project began by WMSRDC informing and engaging landowners, stakeholders, educators, land managers, and partners of the project's purpose. Landowner engagement included education in identification, management, and control (or early detection and rapid response) as well as granting permission to treat the targeted invasive species on both private and public lands.

The success WMSRDC had in 2015, with over 196 landowners participating and over 77 acres treated, will be enhanced this year with an additional 40 plus property owners taking advantage of the project. 2016 treatments will begin in the fall so there is still time for landowners to become involved by contacting WMSRDC to provide treatment permission or attend the upcoming training sessions.

WMSRDC's non-native invasive species removal project is also looking to the future management of

invasive species in the watershed. Providing hands on experiences and awareness training for participating elementary and high school students alerts future landowners to the problem of invasive species. Coordinating with area and regional partners, such as the Muskegon Conservation District, West Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, Bear Lake Board, and other stakeholder groups, allows sharing information and opportunities for addressing invasive species locally and regionally into the future.

Cooperation with county, city, and township governments has been beneficial and supportive. Working with the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP) to assist in its ongoing effort at delisting Muskegon Lake as an AOC is another element of the project. As an outcome of the project, the MLWP has established a sub-committee to deal specifically with ongoing invasive species concerns and to rally volunteers.

An updated Muskegon Lake Habitat Management Plan will be another product of the project that will direct the MLWP and WMSRDC in future management efforts. This in turn provides the mechanism for sustainability that is a goal of all participants and the EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative which funded this effort. At the project's end, we will have climbed one more rung in the ladder to a healthy and sustainable community and natural resource.

West Michigan Watershed Collaborative

In 2015, the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance provided grant funds to support a study of funding options that West Michigan watershed groups will use to develop sustainable funding strategies for the implementation of watershed plans. Partners include West Michigan watershed groups, Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, Grand Valley Metro Council and WMSRDC. Public Sector Consultants (PSC) was selected to complete the funding study. Project partners met to discuss interim results of the study and to give input to PSC early this summer. The final results of the study will be presented at a fall meeting of the watershed groups.

MEDA Conference

WMSRDC staff attended the Spring Economic Development Toolbox on June 9 in Lansing, Michigan. The one-day event was organized by the Michigan Economic Developers Association (MEDA). Several concurrent breakout sessions were offered, which allowed attendees the freedom to choose programs relevant to their interests and responsibilities.

One common theme of the day revolved around the importance of current data for economic development purposes. Numerous data sources were shared, along with strategies to effectively communicate that information to stakeholders and clients. WMSRDC maintains a MEDA membership for economic development staff. The mission of MEDA is to undertake education, networking, and advocacy on economic development for and in support of its members, partners, and stakeholders.

Dutch Students Visit Muskegon for Summer

Two post-graduate students from the Netherlands are spending the summer in Muskegon thanks to support from the Michigan Corn Marketing Program and the Netherlands Consulate General in Chicago.

Chris-Jan Weijzen and Sjoerd Raijmans are nearing completion of their studies in the Master of Science in Maritime Economics and Logistics Planning program at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Netherlands. They are tasked with assisting the development of a strategic business and marketing plan for the Port of Muskegon. They will also be invited to lend their expertise and global perspectives to the plethora of local initiatives, including the Deconstruction Cluster Feasibility Analysis and the Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis. WMSRDC is heavily involved with those studies, both of which are expected to be completed in 2016. The Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee was instrumental in arranging the unique summer internship. Since being organized in 2012, the Port Advisory Committee has been exploring ways to better utilize the Port of Muskegon for economic development in Muskegon and West Michigan.

Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis

The Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis is currently underway. WMSRDC, in collaboration with the Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee, has hired Martin Associates to complete the study. The study was funded through a federal grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration with local matching funds from the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) and local contributions.

The purpose of the Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis is to look at the current infrastructure around the Port of Muskegon including water, roads, rail, and air to assess the current capacity, and identify improvements necessary for expanded services through the port. In addition, the study will analyze various organizational structures that could be implemented to market and manage expanded port activities at the Port of Muskegon. The study will be completed this summer and presented at the upcoming Port of Muskegon Port Day scheduled for Tuesday, July 26.

New TIP Locally Approved

The Transportation Technical and Policy Committees approved the draft FY2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at their May 2016 meetings. Commission staff worked closely for the past year with committee member agencies to complete the document. The committees worked on project selection and several detailed analyses like Environmental Justice and Traffic Modeling.

The TIP is a short range planning document that covers a four-year span of project programming for the Muskegon and northern Ottawa County area. The TIP includes federally funded transportation projects that will be completed in the area. Projects identified in the TIP are primarily road construction projects, which are generally either reconstruction or resurface projects. There are also transit and marketing projects, as well as non-motorized and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) projects that include signal projects, bus purchases, and trail projects. The TIP will generate approximately \$82 million in transportation projects in FY2017-2020.

The document now waits for official approval from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure compliance with state and federal laws. Public participation was encouraged throughout the process.

Road Ratings are Underway

WMSRDC recently began the process of collecting data for its annual Asset Management program. Each year, WMSRDC staff, along with a representative from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and a county road commission employee, collects this data for approximately half of all the federal aid roads within Region 14.

Ratings and data for Muskegon County were completed in May and Oceana County was completed in June. Newaygo County, Lake County, and Mason County are all scheduled to be rated in July. The data collection effort requires the collection of three items: PASER rating, surface type, and the number of lanes. PASER is a visual rating assessment system that rates the road surface condition for a given segment on a scale of 1-10.

In addition to the normal federal aid collection, WMSRDC is coordinating with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission to assist in data collection for three northern Ottawa County Townships which are not part of any metropolitan planning organization. WMSRDC will collect the data for Chester, Polkton, and Wright townships and coordinate with other planning agencies to submit the data to MDOT. This data collection process is part of an ongoing statewide program to evaluate the condition of the state's road system. Approximately 50% of the federal aid eligible roads are rated every year.

MDOT 2040 State Long Range Transportation Plan Meetings

WMSRDC worked with the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to put together two State Transportation Long Range Plan public meetings. The meetings were held to gather feedback on the 2040 SLRP, otherwise known as the "MI Transportation Plan: Moving Michigan Forward."

The meetings were hosted by MDOT and allowed for public comment on the draft documents. MDOT hosted similar meetings throughout the State of Michigan, with local meetings held in Ludington, Michigan on May 10, 2016, and at the WMSRDC office on May 18, 2016. At the meetings, MDOT staff gave presentations to the audience and answered questions from the public.

FY 2016 Homeland Security Grant Program Allocation Update

On February 16, 2016, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary, Jeh Johnson, announced the release of Fiscal Year 2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity allocations for ten DHS preparedness grant programs totaling more than \$1.6 billion including the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP).

Under the FY 2016 HSGP, DHS will provide \$1,037,000,000 nationally for states and urban areas to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism and other threats. The grant performance period would most likely begin in September 2016. Specific FY-16 HSGP allocation information details for Michigan and Region 6 are expected to be announced this fall.

Oceana County Names New Emergency Management Coordinator

Jim Duram, retired Whitehall Police Department Officer, formally replaced Tom Osborn as the Oceana County Emergency Management Coordinator on May 2, 2016. Osborn announced his retirement earlier this year.



Emergency Management & Homeland Security Division Biannual Strategy Implementation Reports



The Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division (EMHSD) Biannual Strategy Implementation Reports (BSIR) template modifications will remain in place to accommodate the new reporting requirements implemented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which began last year on June 30, 2015.

Beginning with the Fiscal Year 2014 grant cycle, all related data must continue to be collected and reported to FEMA on a project-level basis, rather than by investment. The Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division enters all project level data into the federal reporting system during the first reporting period following receipt of the federal grant award.

In each subsequent reporting period, sub-recipients must report on the status and expenditures of each project. A separate EMHSD BSIR template must be used for each grant year and grant program. Up to 12 projects from the same grant year and grant program may be included in each template.

Lake Michigan Water Trail Update

WMSRDC is collaborating with the Southwest Regional Planning Council to organize a National Park Service proposal for a National Recreation Trail designation for Michigan's portion of the Lake Michigan Water Trail from Benton Harbor to Ludington.

West Michigan communities will receive information and sample letters of support for the designation over the summer of 2016. The Lake Michigan Water Trail is a 1,600 mile continuous loop non-motorized paddling trail. The Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan is available on the WMSRDC website. Local governments are encouraged to implement the plan to enhance and create paddling-friendly amenities along the water trail.

The Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan, Phase I: Inventory and Assessment was completed in 2014 by WMSRDC. It is available for communities to seek grants to improve non-motorized paddling experiences for kayakers and other non-motorized paddlers.

Oceana County Master Plan Complete

On April 28, 2016, the Oceana County Board of Commissioners voted to adopt the latest incarnation of the Oceana County Master Plan. The document was drafted by the Oceana County Planning Commission, with assistance from WMSRDC. To quote the plan, "the foremost purpose of the Oceana County Master Plan is to provide a vision for future land use and development decisions within Oceana County over the next twenty to twenty-five years. The conclusions contained within are based upon analyses of past trends, observations of current conditions, and input from the public. Although this is primarily a land use planning document, it also addresses areas of quality of life, environment, infrastructure, and economic development. This comprehensive view is intended to make the plan a coordinating tool for governments, agencies, businesses, and citizens within the county."

It is no small task to create a countywide plan of any kind, and WMSRDC would like to congratulate Oceana County for successfully updating its master plan.

Mason County Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

On June 15, a community stakeholder meeting was held at the Custer Fire Department regarding the Mason County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Local stakeholders in attendance included representatives from local units of government, local fire departments, Mason County Road Commission, and Mason County Planning and Zoning Department. WMSRDC staff gave a presentation to describe the purpose of a CWPP, discuss preliminary results of the plan, and answer questions about the plan.

The Mason County CWPP is being developed by an advisory committee, along with assistance from WMSRDC. The advisory committee is composed of representatives from fire departments in Mason County, Mason County Emergency Management, Michigan DNR Forest Resources Division, and the U.S. Forest Service. The Mason County CWPP is expected to be complete in July 2016 and will include a detailed assessment of wildfire risks and a prioritized action agenda for mitigating the effects of wildfire in Mason County.



RPI Call for Projects continued from page 1

the 2014 list of top projects listed in order of priority/ importance.

1. Port of Muskegon Regional Logistics Hub.
2. Protecting Lake Michigan Water Quality through Establishment of a Dedicated Revenue.
3. Connected Community Engagement Program, Technology Action Planning.
4. Michigan Work Ready Communities.
5. Emerge West Michigan Website Portal/Mentor Connect.

To learn more about the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance, please visit <http://gvmc.org/wmrpa.shtml>.

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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