

West Michigan Watershed Partners  
Meeting Summary  
January 30, 2020  
1:30 – 3:30 PM  
West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission  
316 Morris Ave., Muskegon, MI 49440

Participants (13): Thomas Tissue, White River Watershed Partnership; Jeff Henry, Pere Marquette Watershed Council; Tom Hillstrom, Mona Lake Watershed Council; Rich Pugsley, Pentwater Lake Association; Joe Primozich, Pentwater Lake Association; Wayne Groesbeck, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, Greg Mund, Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership; Emily Neuman, GVSU AWRI; Gale Nobes, Vicki Luthy, Erin Kuhn, Amanda Snyder and Kathy Evans, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

The meeting began with a welcome by WMSRDC staff and introductions by watershed group participants.

An update on the current effort to establish a “statewide” Sustainable Watershed Funding Initiative (SWFI) was provided by WMSRDC and others who have participated in the effort. The need for enabling legislation to establish a voluntary funding program through a partnership of watershed stakeholders, counties and regional planning organizations was discussed.

A regional planning and networking framework for watershed improvement projects was discussed. Participants supported the idea of planning for water resources improvements on a regional, Lake Michigan watershed scale in support of local watershed groups and plans. Participants noted the benefits from networking, connections and regular information sharing among the Region’s watershed groups. Participants provided support for WMSRDC to provide staff support for regular planning meetings and to assist with partner coordination for grant proposals.

The makeup of a WMSRDC Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) was discussed. The WAG would advise and oversee the SWFI, should the Michigan legislature adopt enabling legislation to support the program. Several West Michigan watershed stakeholders and watershed project partners were identified. Participants identified the need for each Watershed Group (WG) to identify two representatives (one representing technical interest and one representing policy/governance interests). Participants also identified the need to include “non-voting” members from several state and federal agencies.

WMSRDC will provide an example of a WAG decision-making process for a West Michigan SWFI, for evaluation at the next West Michigan Watershed Partners meeting. The process will include criteria for watershed funding/project selection.

Current grant opportunities were discussed, including the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust, and the need for the development of a regional planning process that would begin with the collection and assessment of existing watershed plans and natural resources improvement plans, and the identification of gaps and needs. WMSRDC will further evaluate the need for this and the potential for a proposal. The EGLE NPS 319 Watershed Planning and Implementation Grants Program was discussed. It was noted that WMSRDC and the Little Flower Creek Watershed Partnership will submit a grant proposal for a LFC Watershed Management Plan.

Updates on current and proposed West Michigan watershed improvement projects included the proposed NOAA/WMSRDC Great Lakes Regional Partnership for: the White River/Fish Passage, In-Stream Habitat, Wetland Restoration; Little Cedar Creek/Muskegon River Fish Passage, In Stream Habitat, Wetland Restoration; and Pere Marquette River/Fish Passage, In Stream Habitat, Coastal Wetland Restoration; and the Pentwater River and Maple River/Muskegon River proposals which may be considered in future years.

WMSRDC discussed the NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve System and an initiative that is underway for a potential designation of a Lake Michigan Drowned River Mouth System NERR for watersheds that discharge to Lake Michigan along Michigan’s western shoreline.

The meeting adjourned, following round table watershed updates. Networking among participants continued.