



WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Susie Hughes, Chairperson  
Muskegon County Commissioner

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

“add  
value”

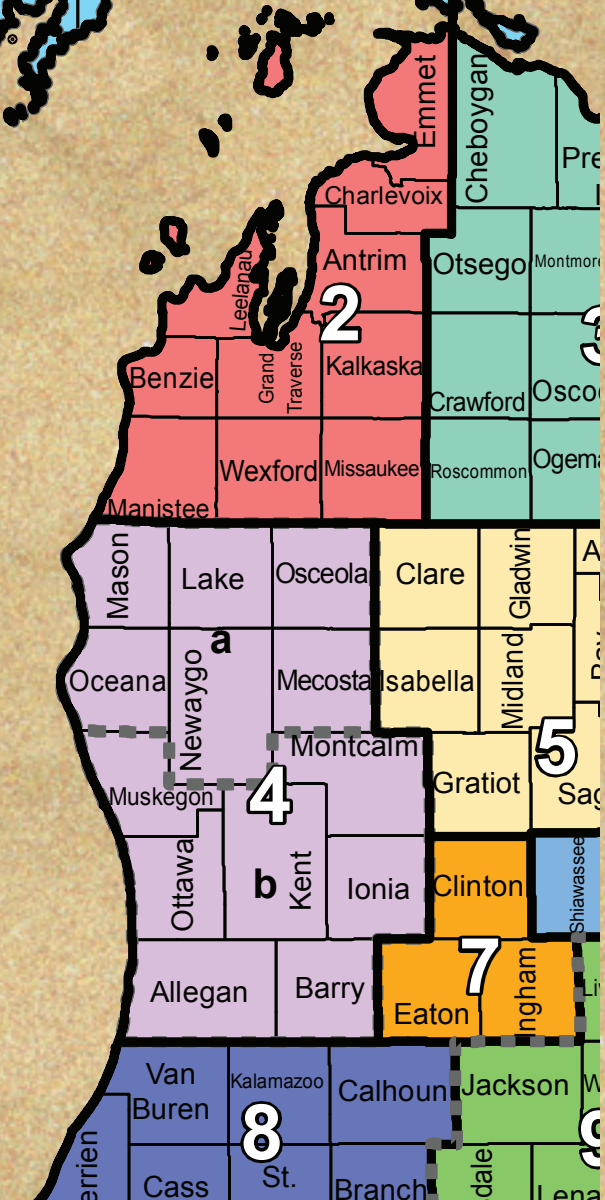
## Leadership Message

2016 was another strong year for the Commission. The goal of the WMSRDC staff and board this year was to “add value” to our member counties through the Commission’s existing programs. Due to the expertise and dedication of the staff and strong support of the board, the organization was able to accomplish this goal. As you read the 2016 Annual Report, please take notice of the many ways WMSRDC adds value to our region.

During the year, WMSRDC continued to seek opportunities to expand and enhance our regional partnerships. Some examples include partnering with the counties of Mason, Lake, Newaygo, and Oceana as they forged their newly formed partnership under the USDA Rural Development LEAD program; continuing work with the West Michigan Region Planning Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation in the Governor’s Transit Mobility Study; and collaborating with the Michigan Beach Towns Organization and the Michigan Department of Transportation on the newly designated West Michigan Pike.

2016 also brought the loss of WMSRDC’s longest standing board member and Oceana County Commissioner, Evelyn Kolbe. Before her passing, Evelyn was serving as the WMSRDC Board Vice-Chairperson, and had served on the WMSRDC board on and off for more than 40 years. She was an amazing community servant representing Oceana County and the West Michigan region in numerous capacities, and will be greatly missed.

Thank you to the talented staff for making WMSRDC a strong and valued organization, as well as the dedicated WMSRDC Board for their tremendous support. Thank you also to our many local, state, and federal partners for their continued support. We at WMSRDC are excited as we move into a new year and new opportunities to serve West Michigan.



# Regional Collaborative Efforts

WMSRDC remained an active partner in the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA). During 2016, the WMPA conducted the second annual call for projects with the aim to improve prosperity in West Michigan. The top five projects are: 1) Grand River Revitalization to restore a 2.5 mile stretch of the Grand River through downtown Grand Rapids; 2) Regional Force Main which is the construction of a 20-mile long Muskegon Wastewater System to Coopersville force main; 3) College Degree Credit Alignment allowing the four community colleges in Region 4 to work together to provide cohesive skills trade curriculum and alignment with national certification; 4) Hardy Pond Trail which is the creation of a 47-mile long loop mountain bike trail around the Hardy Pond in Mecosta and Newaygo counties; and 5) West Michigan Water System Plan which is to conduct an inventory of water and wastewater systems within Region 4 including GIS mapping layers, a decision support system, and development of regional water systems goals and objectives.

During 2016, WMSRDC, along with numerous local and regional partners, completed the Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis. The study, prepared by Martin Associates, was funded by an Economic Development Administration grant with local matching funds from WMPA, Consumers Energy, local port operators, Muskegon County, City of Muskegon, Muskegon Area First, and the Mecosta County Development Corporation. In addition, work on phase one of the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative was also completed. Both the Port of Muskegon and Watershed Collaborative projects continue to receive support through the WMPA.

In 2016, WMSRDC collaborated with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission and the Michigan Department of Transportation to assist in gathering and disseminating information for the Governor's Transit Mobility Study. The study was compiled with significant input from local transit providers from the 13-county WMPA.



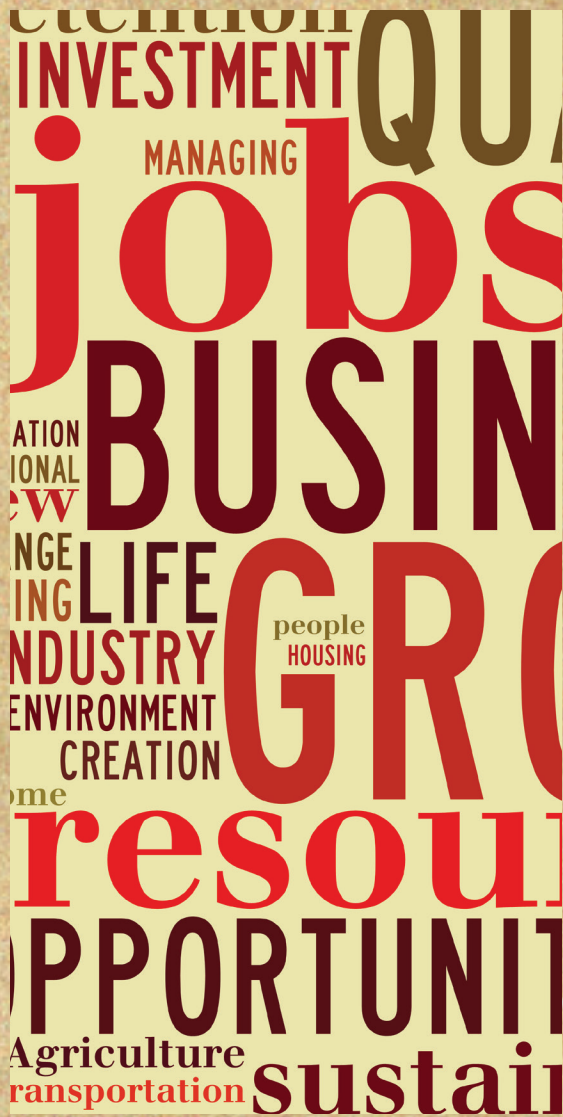
# Celebrating the Muskegon Port

On July 26, 2016, WMSRDC with several partners hosted the Port of Muskegon's Port Day. The purpose of the event was to promote the assets of the port and the fact that the Muskegon area has one of the best multi-modal transportation fundamentals in Michigan outside of Detroit. The event showcased the efforts of the community as it strives to build a strong foundation for the future development of the Port of Muskegon as a regional logistics hub.

There were approximately 160 attendees at the event which was held on the historic USS LST 393 World War II veterans museum located at the Mart Dock facility on Muskegon Lake. Attendees included representatives from the business community, statewide associations, economic development agencies, and elected/appointed officials. The program highlighted a variety of speakers including: Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC; Ed Garner, Muskegon Area First; John Weiss, Grand Valley Metro Council; Chuck Hadden, Michigan Manufacturers Association; Steve Fisher, American Great Lakes Port Association; Holly Hughes, State Representative; and Terry Sabo, Muskegon County Board Chair.

Highlights of the event included a one-hour boat tour on the Port City Princess, a fly over by two World War II fighter jets, and a reception on the upper deck of the USS LST 393.





## Economic Development Efforts

The WMSRDC Economic Development District, designated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the US Department of Commerce, was active in 2016. Staff provided valuable technical assistance to local communities and coordinated with a range of stakeholders to increase awareness of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document, and identify potential economic development projects. Staff updated the WMSRDC Industrial and Business Park Inventory, participated in local and regional economic development meetings, and remained involved with the Michigan Economic Developers Association. The CEDS Committee, which oversees the development of the CEDS document, met quarterly and initiated efforts to update the document, which is due in 2018.

WMSRDC continued its partnership with Michigan State University (MSU) Center for Community and Economic Development and Muskegon County to determine the feasibility of developing an industry cluster to repurpose deconstructed materials from demolished properties within the West Michigan region. The Port of Muskegon may also play a role in this concept, with the potential to transport incoming or outgoing deconstructed materials. The EDA funded study is expected to be complete in 2017.

In 2016, WMSRDC was invited by the counties of Lake, Mason, Newaygo, and Oceana to take part in a Leaders in Economic Alliance Development (LEAD) planning opportunity granted by USDA Rural Development and MSU Extension. The LEAD program focuses on building and strengthening leadership skills, concentrates on opportunities to enhance the local economy, and fosters the development of new partnerships. WMSRDC was pleased to participate in the program because of its regional scope and its many correlations with the long-standing CEDS. Results of the LEAD project will be highlighted and integrated into the WMSRDC District CEDS document. This will not only help to ensure success of the LEAD effort, but it will also demonstrate cooperation and coordination amongst a number of local, regional, state, and federal programs and entities.



# Metropolitan Transportation Planning

In 2016, WMSRDC continued to act as staff to the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Muskegon and Northern Ottawa County area. The MPO program addresses a multitude of transportation projects such as resurfacing and reconstructing existing roads, safety and bridge repair projects, air quality related projects, and non-motorized projects. Details about specific projects are found in the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The MPO program also assists in transit planning for the Muskegon Area Transit System and Harbor Transit in northern Ottawa County. There are also several other local transit providers such as Pioneer Resources, the American Red Cross, and Goodwill Industries that participate in the program. Planning activities include assisting with applications and collaborating on services related to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Fiscal Year 2016 was a busy year for the MPO, with much of the focus being on producing the FY2017-2020 TIP. The FY2017-2020 TIP was adopted by the MPO Policy Committee in May 2016 and approved at the federal and state levels in October 2016. Throughout the process of developing the TIP, there were many opportunities for public comment and public involvement, including a public open house that was held on May 9, 2016. All MPO meetings are also announced on the WMSRDC website and various other places and are open to the public.

The FY2017-2020 TIP includes approximately 100 new projects, and it is expected that more will be added as funding becomes available. Approximately \$90,260,348 in federal, state, and local funding is allocated to be spent on projects programmed in the new TIP. The TIP is considered a living document, and it is expected that there will be several amendments and changes to the document.



# Regional Transportation Planning

WMSRDC assisted the Rural Transportation Task Force as they met multiple times in 2016. The five-county task force receives approximately \$2.4 million of federal funding per year. Typical projects include road construction, road maintenance, and transit bus purchases. Projects were chosen at the individual county level prior to approval at the five-county task force. Task Force members added new projects and adjusted existing transportation projects in 2016.

WMSRDC also completed the process of collecting data for its annual Asset Management program. Asset Management is a ranking based on an inventory of each local road network within the region. It provides data that allows transportation officials to monitor, plan, and strategically improve the road network. Each year, WMSRDC staff, along with MDOT and a county road commission employee, collects this data for approximately half of all the federal aid roads within the region. The data collection effort required the collection of three items: road condition rating, surface type, and the number of lanes. In addition to rating the federal aid roads, WMSRDC staff will also rate a municipality's local roads upon request. During the summer of 2016, staff rated local roads for the City of Muskegon, the City of Roosevelt Park, the City of Grand Haven, and Mason County.

The West Michigan Pike was designated in 2016 as Michigan's newest scenic byway. This route follows US-31 from the State's southern border to US-10 near Ludington. The main goals of the designation are to promote tourism and the history of the area. In 2016, WMSRDC began working with the Muskegon County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and other west Michigan CVB's to select a consultant to complete a Corridor Management Plan. WMSRDC will also provide coordination services for public and committee meetings and will act as a fiduciary agency for the committee.





## Regional Transportation Planning (continued)

WMSRDC purchased four traffic counters, along with traffic count software, for the Oceana County Road Commission in March 2016 through the Regional Transportation Program funded by MDOT. Four counters were also purchased for the Newaygo County Road Commission in July 2016. While it makes financial sense to hire a consultant to conduct traffic counts in urban areas, the same approach is not always feasible in rural and relatively smaller geographic areas. Traffic counter purchases benefit not only road commissions, but MDOT and WMSRDC as well. Traffic counts are used by the road commission and other local road agencies when planning for improvements and construction, in addition MDOT and WMSRDC use these counts for planning purposes. MDOT also requires up to date traffic counts when agencies submit applications for funding or requests for changes in road classification. In the previous fiscal year WMSRDC purchased traffic counters for the Mason County Road Commission and other counties within the region have expressed interest in this program for future years.

In November, WMSRDC hosted a kick-off meeting for MDOT's Regional Safety Plan. This was the first of several interactive meetings, allowing individuals from the community with an interest in traffic safety to come together and provide input during the development of the plan. MDOT, in partnership with WMSRDC, is beginning development of a Local Road Safety Plan for the region. When complete, this plan will include safety emphasis areas that need the most improvement in our region, with goals and recommendations to reduce crashes.

WMSRDC continues to cooperate with Newaygo County's The Edge Pathway committee. The Commission provides GIS mapping services and also has offered to assist with grant writing when the next phase is identified.



# Homeland Security



## Homeland Security

WMSRDC continued serving as the designated fiduciary for the Region 6 Homeland Security Planning Board to aid in administration of exercises, training, and in the purchase of equipment designed to prepare and protect the citizens of West Michigan from potential terrorist incidents.

In 2016, WMSRDC and Region 6 successfully completed the 2014 Homeland Security Planning Grant and continued work on the 2015 Grant. Priorities for the Region 6 Homeland Security Planning Board through these grants include Interoperable Communications, Thermal Imaging, Target Hardening and Active Shooter Exercises.

As part of the WMSRDC fiduciary responsibilities, staff is required to conduct a physical inventory of equipment purchased with homeland security funds every two years. During the months of August and September, WMSRDC staff toured all thirteen counties and two cities in Region 6 to conduct the site audit. The final inventory report was submitted to the Michigan State Police in October 2016.

Also in 2016, WMSRDC received the grant agreement for the 2016 Homeland Security Grant. WMSRDC signed the grant agreement and will continue to serve Region 6 as their designated fiduciary. The 2016 grant will run through September 2019.

WMSRDC is responsible for the management and administration of the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) for the counties of Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.



# Local Government Services

WMSRDC actively assisted local governments with developing local plans, providing technical support, and providing mapping and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) services. Local government projects do not typically comprise a significant part of the Commission's work program. However, WMSRDC is committed to providing these valuable services, as very few local governments in the region have adequate resources to maintain professional planning staff or hire private consultants.

In the spring of 2016, WMSRDC completed its effort to assist the Oceana County Planning Commission in conducting the 5-year review and subsequent update of the Oceana County Master Plan. The planning process began in October 2014 with a series of public meetings and culminated with the April 2016 adoption of the plan by the Oceana County Board of Commissioners.

Early in 2016, WMSRDC revealed the results of the Muskegon Lake Vision 2020, a public visioning process to guide the future use, development, and stewardship of Muskegon Lake. The planning process, which entailed a series of public input and visionary forums held in 2015, was developed in partnership with the Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership. The effort was well-received and hailed for bringing together a spectrum of stakeholders and jurisdictions to identify perceptions and help develop consensus for the future use and character of Muskegon Lake.

WMSRDC assisted Ashland Township in Newaygo County with mapping the township's three cemeteries. This process created digital maps with the ability to display the specific locations of plots on local aerial photos. The plots in each cemetery are now searchable by name or visually with records maintained by the township clerk. A searchable online database has been produced from this data and is being used by township staff.





# Resilience Planning

WMSRDC developed the Muskegon Lake Coastal Resiliency Plan to ensure resiliency for Muskegon Lake assets that were identified during the Muskegon Lake Vision 2020 public input process. The plan addresses natural resources, port infrastructure, residential, and recreational amenities. It was completed with support from the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership and a WMSRDC/Michigan Association of Planners/MDEQ Coastal Zone Management Plan grant. WMSRDC and the Delta Institute facilitated four public input sessions. Technical input was received from the project steering committee, including representatives of GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute, City of Muskegon, City of North Muskegon, Laketon Township, Muskegon County, and other public and private stakeholders.

WMSRDC completed the Mason County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in July 2016. Similar to a hazard mitigation plan, a CWPP includes a risk assessment and prioritized list of action items tailored to specifically address wildfire hazards in a community. WMSRDC worked closely with stakeholders such as the United States Forest Service, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Mason County Emergency Management, local firefighters, and landowners. Connections forged between stakeholders during the planning process will help facilitate the protection of lives, properties, infrastructure, and natural resources long into the future. The Mason County CWPP will help bring awareness to wildfire risks and vulnerabilities in the county, as well as help qualify communities and fire districts for grants to help achieve the goals and objectives of the CWPP.



# Protecting Natural Resources in West Michigan

The West Michigan Watershed Collaborative worked in 2016 to advance restoration of water resources within the 13-county West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) region. WMSRDC, the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, and the Grand Valley Metro Council, with support from the WMPA, convened watershed leaders and selected Public Sector Consultants to study several potential funding methods to implement priorities contained in the region's existing watershed plans. Virtually every West Michigan watershed group has a watershed plan approved under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. WMSRDC will continue to work with the collaborative in 2017 to develop implementation strategies based on the funding study.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) identified Muskegon Lake as a national Habitat Focus Area (HFA) in 2016. The HFA designation has allowed NOAA to increase collaboration with local partners to perform research, education, and restoration activities. Building upon the success of large-scale Great Lakes Legacy Act cleanup, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and NOAA habitat restoration, the HFA will help ensure that the progress made to delist the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern will be sustained and monitored into the future.

2016 proved to be another successful year for the WMSRDC management of the Non-Native Invasive Species Removal Grant project. The grant is funded through the EPA's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. In 2015, over 77 acres of Muskegon and Bear Lake shorelines were treated, and 2016 saw the treatment acres rise to a total of 125 acres. Those treated acres also showed a very high percentage of Phragmites reduction. WMSRDC and its contractor were also able to carry on the training of landowners, students, and volunteers in the identification, management and treatment of the non-native invaders threatening local watersheds. 2016 efforts will allow the update of the Muskegon Lake Biodiversity and Phragmites Management plan, development of a sustainable structure for local management into the future, public and partner engagement, and finally assistance with the delisting of Muskegon Lake as a Great Lakes Area of Concern.



# WEST MICHIGAN CLEAN AIR ACTION!



## Information & Communications

WMSRDC continued to be an active partner of the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC). Formed over twenty years ago, the WMCAC remains a strong partnership of business, academic institutions, government agencies, industry, and non-profit organizations in Muskegon, Kent, and Ottawa counties. These partners continue working together to achieve cleaner air in the region through the education and promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities. Among other outreach activities, an extensive television public education campaign continued in 2016 highlighting voluntary actions people can take on Clean Air Action Days.

WMSRDC also continued to fulfill its duties as a U.S. Census Bureau Affiliate by striving to keep the WMSRDC website up to date with the latest links and most recently released data from the Census Bureau and other data products.

Through the Federal Project Review System, WMSRDC continued to review federal/state grant assistance applications to coincide with local and regional goals and policies. WMSRDC's newsletter continues to be published bimonthly and includes updates and information on WMSRDC's projects and programs. Individuals and groups also have the option of following WMSRDC on Facebook.

WMSRDC also continues to maintain an informative and up-to-date website where meetings are posted, documents can be downloaded, and various maps can be interacted with. The goals of the WMSRDC website is to be informative, easy to navigate, and timely.

## WMSRDC Board

Susie Hughes, Chairperson, Muskegon County Commissioner  
Evelyn Kolbe, Vice-Chairperson, Oceana County Commissioner  
James Rynberg, Mayor, City of Fremont  
Kay Beecham, Councilperson, City of Norton Shores  
James Brown, Oceana County Commissioner  
Bill Carpenter, Mason County Commissioner  
David Kieft, Jr., Supervisor, Muskegon Township  
Michael Krauch, Councilperson, City of Ludington  
Joseph Lenius, WMSRDC  
James Maike, Newaygo County Commissioner  
Bonnie McGlothin, Mayor Pro-Tem, City of Muskegon Heights  
Chris McGuigan, WMSRDC  
Dr. Dale Nesbary, Muskegon Community College  
Chris Ortwein, Newaygo County Commissioner  
Terry Sabo, Muskegon County Commissioner  
Ron Steiner, WMSRDC  
Barb Stenger, Lake County Commissioner  
Wally Taranko, Mason County Commissioner  
Byron Turnquist, Councilperson, City of Muskegon  
Rillastine Wilkins, Muskegon County Commissioner  
Crystal Young, West Shore Community College

## WMSRDC Staff

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director  
  
Stephen Carlson, Program Manager  
Syndi Copeland, Executive Assistant  
Kathy Evans, Program Manager  
Joel Fitzpatrick, Program Manager  
Amy Haack, Program Manager  
Cliff Johnson, Program Manager  
Brian Mulnix, Program Manager  
Gale Nobes, Environmental Planning Technician  
Susan Stine-Johnson, Finance Manager  
Jamie Way, GIS Specialist



## Audited Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance for the Years Ended September 30, 2016 and 2015

2016		2015	
REVENUES		REVENUES	
Intergovernmental Revenues		Intergovernmental Revenues	
Federal	6,712,766	Federal	2,176,183
State	202,596	State	95,597
Local	250,117	Local	311,413
Total Revenues	7,165,479	Total Revenues	2,583,193
EXPENDITURES		EXPENDITURES	
Current		Current	
Land Use Planning	27,533	Land Use Planning	17,634
Economic Development	294,657	Economic Development	103,454
Transportation Planning	657,817	Transportation Planning	613,773
Local Planning	7,541	Local Planning	9,701
Environmental Clean-up	4,997,616	Environmental Clean-up	1,374,408
Homeland Security	1,199,570	Homeland Security	484,176
Total Expenditures	7,184,734	Total Expenditures	2,603,146
Net Change in Fund Bal.	(19,255)	Net Change in Fund Bal.	(19,953)
Fund Bal. at 10/1/15	296,853	Fund Bal. at 10/1/14	316,806 as restated
Fund Bal. at 9/30/16	277,598	Fund Bal. at 9/30/15	296,853

# **West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission**

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