

West Michigan Watershed Collaborative

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WMSRDC is an active partner of the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative. The West Michigan Watershed Collaborative is a West Michigan Regional Prosperity Alliance Project that will assess potential funding mechanisms to support the best management practice implementation efforts of West Michigan watershed groups. In 2014, the state recognized that Michigan needed a comprehensive strategy to address challenges in the Great Lakes, and the Office of the Great Lakes drafted Michigan's Water Strategy. State Planning and Development Regions provided input for the strategy and an expansion of regional collaboration has occurred across West Michigan Watersheds.



Virtually all West Michigan watersheds have state and federally approved water quality plans in place, and high priority natural resource improvement projects have been identified by local watershed groups, with support from state and federal agencies. Implementation of watershed projects currently depends on competitive grant awards, local governments' abilities to provide in-kind services and private stakeholder contributions.

WMSRDC is working with the West Michigan Regional Planning Commis-

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SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

2016 Regional Prosperity Initiative

The West Michigan Prosperity Alliance (WMPA) Region 4, of which WMSRDC is a partner, was recently awarded \$235,000 for fiscal year 2016 funding as part of the governor’s Regional Prosperity Initiative (RPI).

During 2015, the WMPA provided financial and resource support for five priority projects including the Port of Muskegon, West Michigan Watershed Collaborative, Connect Michigan, Emerge Regional Website Portal, and Michigan Work Ready Communities.

The 35 member committee has outlined several tasks to be completed by September 30, 2016 as part of the grant. Below is a list of these tasks:

Look for additional news regarding the WMPA in this newsletter throughout 2016.

- Development of a regional dashboard for measuring prosperity in Region 4.
- Refinement of the West Michigan Regional Prosperity Plan developed in 2014.
- Continued support for regional priority projects.
- Continued communication and collaboration efforts.
- Support for a statewide RPI inventory of processes, products, and impact.

The WMPA was formed in late 2013 and includes representatives from a variety of sectors including regional planning agencies and metropolitan planning organizations. Other representatives are from adult education, workforce development, economic development, transportation, higher education, and philanthropic organizations.

During 2014, the committee concentrated their efforts on developing a prosperity plan, regional goals and objectives, as well as identifying priority projects.

State of Michigan Prosperity Regions



Muskegon Lake Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration

Large-scale fish and wildlife habitat restoration projects will be in full swing during the summer and fall of 2016 under a WMSRDC grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and Great Lakes Commission. The funds originate from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Construction of the 33-acre Bear Creek Hydrologic Reconnection and Habitat Restoration Project will begin in March. Muskegon County acquired the property for the purpose of fish and wildlife habitat restoration. Restoration along Muskegon River at Veterans Memorial Park will begin once engineering is complete and permits are received.

The Muskegon Lake “Mill Debris” habitat restoration project will remove lumber-era material that is smothering lake-bottom habitat near the Lake

Express Cross Lake Ferry Terminal. The beneficial re-use of the dredged material is an important component of the project. Continuing investigations are underway and will result in removal of mill debris in areas where it significantly degrades aquatic habitat.

Meanwhile, investigation, engineering, and design will begin on a 53-acre parcel in the Lower Muskegon River where there is a need to restore wetland habitat and reconnect the Muskegon River to its former, natural floodplain.

These represent the final, four major habitat restoration projects needed to remove Muskegon Lake as a Great Lakes Area of Concern. Projects are scheduled for completion in 2018.

Coastal Resiliency Grant Project

WMSRDC and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership will partner with Laketon Township, City of North Muskegon, City of Muskegon, Muskegon County, and the Delta Institute to develop a coastal resiliency, multi-jurisdictional sub-area plan for Muskegon Lake.

Muskegon Lake’s natural shoreline and its recreational and port infrastructure are vulnerable to more frequent, high energy storms with sustained winds, larger waves, storm surges and increased scouring from winter ice. Within the last two years, high intensity storms have damaged coastal infrastructure and shoreline restoration work. The subarea plan will guide local governments in the adoption of resiliency strategies to ensure these principles are integrated with future shoreline restoration, port and recreational developments.

The plan will identify vulnerabilities and thresholds for failure, evaluate risks and costs, create climate adaptation options, and adopt a decision-support framework to ensure long-term implementation and monitoring. Support for the \$23,893 project is from the Michigan Association of Planning through a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Coastal Zone Management Grant. The Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership contributed \$10,000 in matching funds.

Deconstruction Study Update

An advisory committee for the Muskegon County Deconstruction Cluster Feasibility Analysis met for the first time in January. The purpose of the analysis is 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. WMSRDC is partnering with Michigan State University Center for Community and Economic Development and Muskegon County to complete the study.

The advisory committee is expected to hold monthly meetings through the fall of 2016 to contribute guidance and local expertise to the study. The effort has been made possible thanks to a technical assistance grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for \$111,706. Muskegon County contributed \$7,500 in local match to help secure the grant.

CEDS Industrial Parks Inventory Updated

WMSRDC recently updated the industrial parks inventory for the region. There are 23 industrial parks or business parks identified in the inventory in the counties of Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana. Lake County does not have any designated industrial or business parks at this time.

Information listed in the inventory for each park includes millage rates and local incentives; available utilities, infrastructure and acreage; and current tenants and contact information. The inventory is included within the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is required for the region to maintain its status as an Economic Development District designated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The industrial parks inventory update is the first significant step towards the full revision of the CEDS, which is due by January 1, 2018.

Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organization Analysis

WMSRDC, along with the Port of Muskegon Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis Steering Committee, issued a request for proposals (RFP) in January to solicit a consultant to assist in the development of the project. A total of eight proposals were submitted. Upon thorough review of the proposals, the steering committee and WMSRDC have selected Martin Associates. Martin Associates is highly familiar with the Great Lakes maritime industry, having conducted numerous economic and strategic planning studies involving the Great Lakes/Saint Lawrence Seaway Transportation System, as well as the inland waterways of the United States. The project is expected to be underway during the month of March.

The project will provide a review of the existing infrastructure capacity in the region including road, air, rail, and water; analyze maintenance issues related to the existing infrastructure; identify additional users of the port; develop strategies to increase usage of the port; develop a marketing strategy; review potential organizational/governance structures; recommend a governance structure; recommend a funding structure; and provide guidance towards the development of an organization.

The Infrastructure and Organizational Analysis project is expected to be completed during the summer of 2016 and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

New TIP Under Development

Transportation staff, with direction from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Technical and Policy committees, have begun the process of developing the Fiscal Years 2017-2020 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). MPO staff initiated a Call for Projects in November of 2015, and in January a final draft list was completed.

The MPO committees acted in February of 2016 to approve the project lists for the new TIP. The approved lists include local, state, transit, and air quality related projects for FY 2017-2020. The estimated federal allocation for all funding categories in the FY 2017-2020 TIP is \$25,005,179. Most of these projects will also include local match. MPO staff will continue to work on the new TIP for the next several months and plans to have final approval in May 2016.

The TIP's primary purpose is to identify programs and projects to be funded with federal aid in accordance with federal law and the regulations of the Federal Highway Administration during a four year period (FY 2017-2020). MPO staff work with the Technical and Policy committees to develop and maintain the TIP, which includes amending existing and new projects into the document. All MPO meetings are open to the public, and participation is encouraged.

Rural Transportation Task Force Approves Projects

The five-county Rural Transportation Task Force met on January 15th to approve projects for Fiscal Years 2017-2020. The five-county task force receives approximately \$2.2 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.

WMSRDC assists in the administration of the Rural Transportation Task Force for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. WMSRDC is responsible for scheduling meetings, administering the public involvement process, documenting meeting activities, and submitting information to the Michigan Department of Transportation. Task Force members added new projects and adjusted existing transportation projects for FY 2017.

Successful Road Safety Forum Held

On Saturday, February 6th, a community forum was held at the Fillmore Complex in Ottawa County to educate pedestrians and cyclists alike about the rules of the road. The forum highlighted laws, crossways, increasing visibility and more; from the perspective of both the pedestrian or bicyclist and the driver.

WMSRDC assisted on the promotion and planning of the event with the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council and the Ottawa County Sheriff's office. Representatives from City Hub Cyclery, Lakeshore Cycling Coalition, and more were present to answer questions and address concerns.



Julie Miller from City Hub Cyclery in Muskegon demonstrates safety gear best practices.

The event was free and open to the public. Lunch was served and door prizes were also given away during the successful event.

Fiscal Year 2014 Homeland Security Grant Program Update

Region 6 Homeland Security and WMSRDC continued to make progress towards the completion of the Fiscal Year 2014 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), which is required to be completed by May 31, 2016.

A total of 73 Region 6 HSGP projects have been approved by the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division. WMSRDC is now in the process of assisting counties with the implementation of the approved projects.



Region 6 Approves Budget for Fiscal Year 2015 Homeland Security Grant

The Region 6 Planning Board approved a budget for the Fiscal Year 2015 Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) at their meeting in Big Rapids on December 14, 2015. Region 6 was awarded \$1,295,669 under the Fiscal Year 2015 HSGP. The 2015 Homeland Security Program Grant Agreement was signed by WMSRDC on October 7, 2015. All work on the grant is required to be completed by May 31, 2018.



WMSRDC completed and submitted the required Fiscal Year 2015 Project Workbook to the Michigan State Police Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division on January 8, 2016. The purpose of the Fiscal Year 2015 Project Workbook is to better establish a link between the Region's investment projects, investment descriptions, and the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and State Preparedness Report (SPR).

A THIRA is the process of identifying risks, assessing the impact of those risks, and estimating the resources required to achieve pre-established capability targets or desired outcomes. The SPR is a self-assessment of existing capability levels in relation to capability targets and resource estimations identified for each core capability.

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 Findings Unveiled

WMSRDC, in partnership with the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership and the Muskegon County Port Advisory Committee, recently unveiled the findings of the Muskegon Lake Vision 2020. The purpose of this was to gather broad input from a diverse group of interested parties to uncover the perceived quality of Muskegon Lake's economic, environmental, residential and recreational assets. The information in the document provides a platform for a unified vision that will guide sustainable development and utilization of Muskegon Lake and its shoreline into the future.

Common themes and perceptions compiled from the forums include the following:

- Increased promotion of recreational opportunities
- Additional recreational activities
- More public access
- Improve signage and wayfinding
- Protect/improve scenic beauty and lake views
- Cleanup of blighted properties
- Continued habitat restoration, softening of shoreline, and environmental stewardship
- Increase housing options
- Better communication
- Increased cooperation and collaboration

To view the completed Muskegon Lake Vision 2020, visit the WMSRDC website at www.wmsrdc.org.

Oceana County Master Plan Public Review

Since fall of 2014, WMSRDC has worked with the Oceana County Planning Commission to update the county's master plan. Efforts to-date have culminated in the proposed draft Oceana County Master Plan.

The document is available for public review through April 6. On April 7, the Oceana County Planning Commission will host a public hearing to receive public comments at 1:30 p.m. at the Oceana County Building in Hart.

The document is available for public review on the Oceana County website at <http://oceana.mi.us/oceana-county-master-plan/>. A printed copy of the plan has also been made available for public review

at the County Administrator's Office and at public libraries located in Hart, Hesperia, Pentwater, Shelby and Walkerville.

As a policy, WMSRDC does not respond to requests for proposals issued by local governments, and only provides this service where local communities cannot afford the cost of services from the private sector, or choose not to.

These projects are not a significant part of WMSRDC's work program. However, WMSRDC does provide this local government service as very few local governments in the region have their own professional planning staff, and many communities have limited resources to hire private consultants.



Watershed Collaborative continued from page 1

sion, Macatawa Area Coordinating Council, Grand Valley Metro Council, and West Michigan watershed groups to develop the West Michigan Watershed Sustainable Funding Strategy. The funding strategy will explore the potential for funding mechanisms beyond grants, including the potential for flat fee assessments, environmental impact bonds, an assessment based on watershed impairment and an evaluation of public/private partnerships. Progress to date includes the convening of watershed groups as the West Michigan Watershed Collaborative, a summary of the status of West Michigan water quality plans and priorities, and the competitive selection of a consultant who will carry out the funding study.

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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