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Successful Port Meeting on Muskegon Lake

Thursday, August 15, 2019 was a big day for the Port of Muskegon as WMSRDC hosted a joint meeting between the State Port Advisory Committee and the Michigan Logistics and Supply Chain Commission in Muskegon. The groups consisted of leaders from across the state

including representatives from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). WMSRDC Executive Director, Erin Kuhn, is a governor appointee to the State Port Advisory Committee. The meeting was held at the Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute on the southern shore of Muskegon Lake.

Adding to the excitement of the day, Muskegon had a port of call from the Pearl Mist, a great lakes cruise ship that regularly docks at Muskegon County's Heritage Landing. Also, a group of representatives from the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes (MOGL) were in town to learn about the logistics of cruise ships. It was a busy day for the Port of Muskegon.

The MOGL group joined the joint port meeting for a presentation regarding the Port of Muskegon. Between the three groups, there were more than 50 attendees including Representative Terry Sabo, Senator Jon Bumstead, and representatives from State Representative Huizenga's office and Governor Witmer's office.

The attendees engaged in presentations from Erin Kuhn and Kathy Evans, WMSRDC Program Manager, regarding the environmental cleanup of





SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

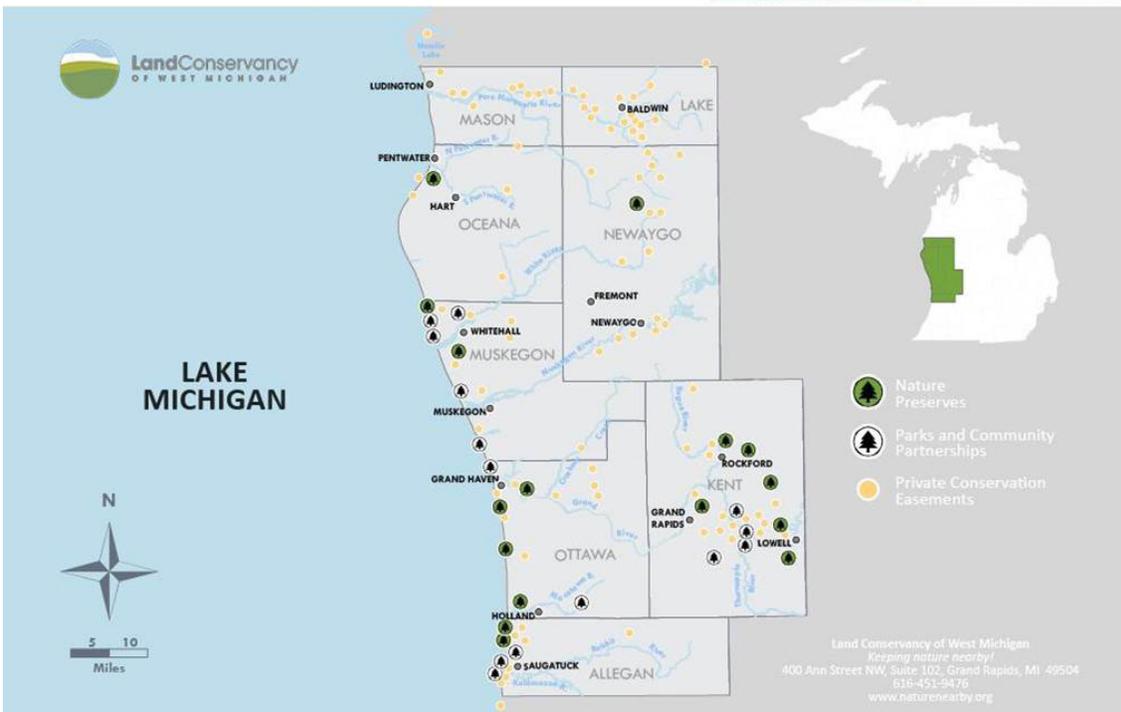
Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council

The Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council (MCECC) was originally formed in 1991 to promote cooperation between government, community groups, regulators, and local business throughout Muskegon County. With assistance from the Community Foundation for Muskegon County and a number of other interested organizations, the MCECC achieved 501C(3) status in 1998.

Over the years, the MCECC has played, and continues to play, an important role in the promotion of environmental health education and pollution prevention throughout West Michigan. Highlights of past MCECC activities and projects include the origination of a countywide tire recycling project and computer recycling project in conjunction with Muskegon County; the creation of the Environmental Excellence Awards banquet at which superior environmental efforts are recognized; development of a comprehensive recycling directory for Muskegon County residents; and the successful completion of an Environmental Protection Agency Community Action for a Renewed Environment Demonstration Site Grant.

The goal of the MCECC is to be an information exchange body as well as include the coordination, facilitation and information dissemination regarding environmental activity in Muskegon County without passing judgement on either individual projects or the endeavor as a whole.

NATURAL AREAS PROTECTED BY THE LAND CONSERVANCY



Amy Haack, WMSRDC Program Manager, was elected chairperson of the MCECC in December 2017. As an outgrowth of that partnership, WMSRDC hosts the MCECC website, social media outlets, and is serving as the venue for quarterly meetings.

The MCECC meets the second Tuesday at noon in the months of February, May, August, and November. Meetings are posted as events on Facebook and typically include either a guest speaker or an on-site visit regarding a pertinent environmental topic or project. At the August meeting, Nick Sanchez from the Land Conservancy of West Michigan spoke about the importance of preserving land in West Michigan to sustain natural areas. The map on the left is an excerpt from his presentation.

Muskegon Lake Habitat Restoration and Long Term Management

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) / Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership for Great Lakes Habitat Restoration provided WMSRDC with a \$120,590 grant to develop a Long Term Habitat Management Project for Muskegon Lake. The plan will provide community members with more tools to protect the natural resources restored through past NOAA grants.

Over the past decade, more than 4.7 miles of shoreline and 114 acres of open water and native wetland habitat have been restored along the shoreline and tributaries in the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern (AOC). This work is leading to the 2021 removal of Muskegon Lake from the list of Great Lakes AOCs. The work was achieved with the support of public and private landowners who participated in the restoration projects. The landowners committed to maintaining the restored natural resources through permanent conservation easements, long term landowner agreements and letters of federal interest. Public landowner partners include Michigan Department of Natural Resources, County of Muskegon, and City of Muskegon. Private landowner partners include the owners of two former celery farms, a former steel foundry, a boat storage business, and a private marina.

To further engage landowners and volunteers in the long-term maintenance of the restored shoreline habitats, a web-based habitat management plan is being developed. It will include resources to inform landowners, volunteers, educators, and students and feature a stewardship calendar to engage more people in hands-on restoration activities. The plan will be available on the WMSRDC and Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership websites in 2020.

Field trainings are currently being offered for those wishing to learn about Great Lakes coastal wetlands, how to maintain native shoreline plantings, and the techniques that can be used to control non-native invasive plants. Sign-ups for the field trainings are offered through the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partner-

ship Shoreline Stewards Facebook page. A follow-up classroom workshop will be held in late winter of 2020 once the web-based plan is ready to go live.

WMSRDC is also collaborating with community partners to establish a long term funding strategy for future maintenance of the restored shoreline habitats and native plantings. If you are interested in learning more about this project or to participate in the development of the funding strategy, please contact Kathy Evans, Program Manager at kevans@wmsrdc.org or (231) 722-7878 x 17.



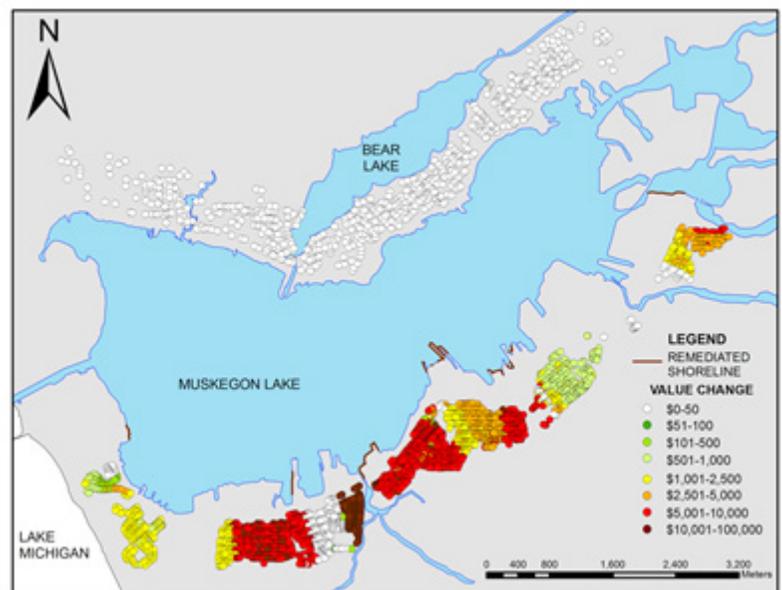
Economic Impact on Environmental Restoration

The economic impact of Great Lakes restoration has been well-documented by several economic studies over the past decade. In the City of Muskegon alone, a 2009-2013, \$10 million dollar shoreline restoration project is yielding a 7-to-1 return on the investment over a 15 year period. Funding for the project was provided by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant.

According to a Grand Valley State University study, the project's social and economic benefits include a \$12 million dollar increase in property values in neighborhoods near the shoreline (not including those within a half mile of the shoreline). Restoration was completed at several shoreline locations on both public and private properties. In addition to property value increases, the project is yielding up to \$600,000 in new tax revenue annually; an additional 65,000 additional visitors and over \$1 million in new recreational spending annually within the City of Muskegon.

Following the project's completion in 2013, the City of Muskegon has logged \$47 million in completed waterfront developments, with more than \$300 million in waterfront developments planned or proposed. Interest in water-based recreation has surged, with the customer count at Hartshorn Municipal Marina

increasing by 19 percent just since 2013. Water-based recreation and new waterfront festivals have driven a major increase in tourist activity, and revenue from Muskegon County's tax on hotel rooms has increased 45 percent since 2010. More information about the economic impact of Great Lakes Restoration is available in "Assessing the Investment: The Economic Impact of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative" (September 2018), at the Great Lakes Commission, <https://www.glc.org/work/blue-economy/GLRI-economic-impact>.



Economic Development Update

On August 28, 2019 WMSRDC staff attended the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee meeting of the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC). Like WMSRDC, WMRPC is an Economic Development District, designated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). The meeting was a great opportunity to share experiences and approaches to developing a CEDS document and maintaining a CEDS advisory committee. Two other counterpart economic development districts were in attendance as well; Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and Southwest Michigan Planning Commission.

WMSRDC also maintains a CEDS Strategy Committee, which meets at least three times per year at locations around the region. The committee oversees the development of the WMSRDC CEDS document, which was most recently released in 2018 and will be updated again in 2023. The committee also meets to network with economic development peers and stakeholders from throughout the region. The next CEDS Strategy Committee meeting is expected to be held in Lake County in late September.

2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Under Development

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) continues work on developing the 2045 Long Range Plan for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area. Staff has been working with the MPO Technical and Policy Committees, as well as Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to develop base and future socio-economic data for modeling purposes. The next step will be to develop a project list and look at potential impacts of those projects. The updated plan will be complete in 2020.

The 2045 Long Range Plan is a federally mandated document that provides for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-year look at the Muskegon and Northern Ottawa area future transportation network. The Northern Ottawa area includes the Ottawa County Road Commission, Grand Haven, Ferrysburg, and the Village of Spring Lake. The plan is used

as a guide for investment of public funds that include capital improvements to the highway and transit transportation system within the MPO area. Technical modeling and analysis of the current system provides a guide to plan for future deficiencies of the network. One of the goals of the plan is to address these deficiencies with projects that will allow the network to run more efficiently. The plan also includes local, state, and federal transportation goals and objectives to guide transportation plans and projects. The plan must be financially constrained, and must adhere to other federal requirements such as Performance Based Planning, Air Quality Conformity, Environmental Mitigation, Environmental Justice, and Public Involvement.

Throughout the process, input will be gathered from the residents of Muskegon and Northern Ottawa County, as well as from local elected officials, municipal and road agency staff, and state and federal officials.

Non-motorized Traffic Counters

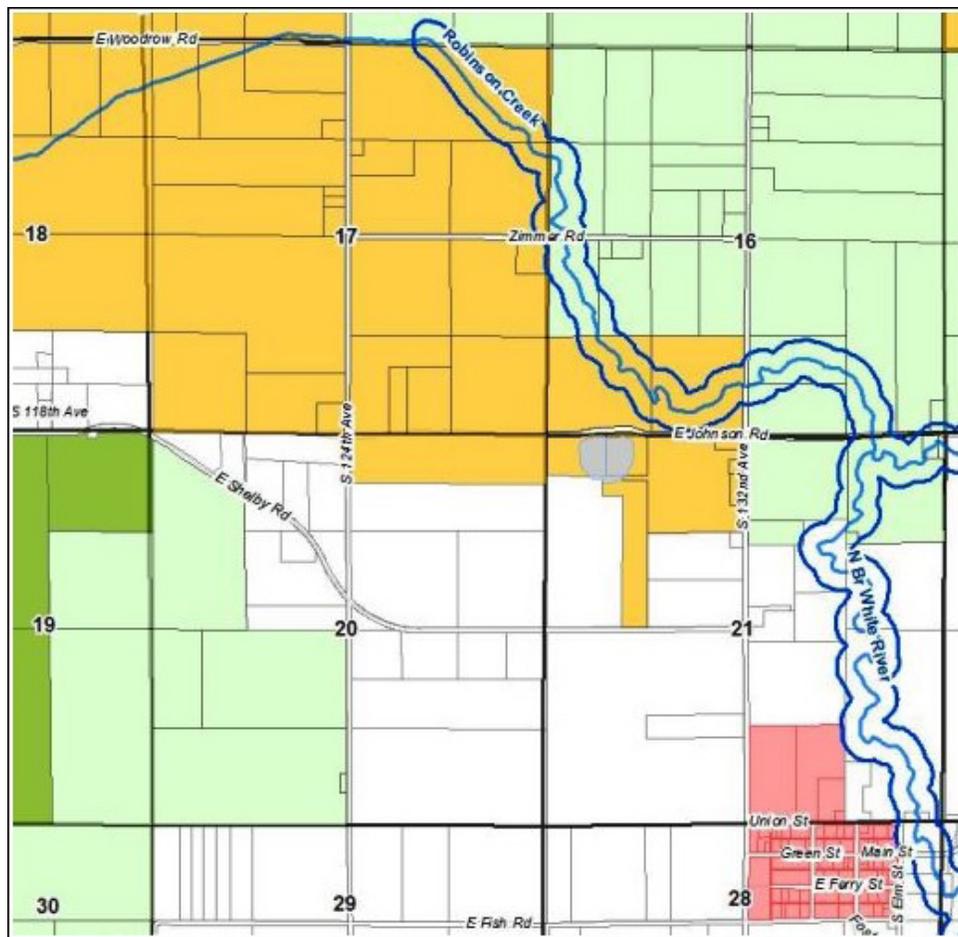
WMSRDC recently began placing non-motorized trail counters along the Fred Meijer Berry Junction Trail in Muskegon County. These TrafX brand infrared trail counters will be used to count general traffic on trails and could also be used to tally hikers, bicyclists, and snowmobiles in the winter.

The traffic counters were purchased through the Regional Transportation program, which receives its funding through the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).

These counters are available for the members of the Regional Commission to borrow for use on their trail systems. In addition, WMSRDC will be using the counters to collect data on additional existing trails to better measure trail usage. The collected data will be useful when planning for future expansion of the trail system in the region.

Ferry Township Zoning Map Update

Ferry Township in Oceana County is working on updating their zoning ordinance and contacted WMSRDC for assistance with updating the Ferry Township zoning map. WMSRDC has worked with Ferry Township on past zoning maps and was able to use the Township's previous zoning map as a template. WMSRDC also updated the parcel information using the most current GIS parcel data available from Oceana County. The new updated map was created and inserted into the new version of Ferry Township's updated zoning ordinance document in time for review by their zoning board. WMSRDC offers this service to other municipalities. For more information, please contact Jamie Way at jway@wmsrdc.org or at (231) 722-7878 x 15.



- "R 1" - Village Residential - 20,000 sq. ft. minimum
- "R 2" - Rural Residential - 10 acres minimum
- "R P" - Resource Production - 20 acres minimum
- "B" - Business - 1 acre minimum
- "E S" - Environmentally Sensitive - 20 acres minimum
- "N R" - Natural Rivers - 5 acres minimum



Local Governments to Benefit from Tree Planting Grant

WMSRDC will soon begin working with Delta Institute to provide assistance in planting trees along the Hart-Montague Trail and to build capacity in forest management for municipal staff and residents. WMSRDC will coordinate with Delta, local governments, trail managers, residents, and stakeholders to provide training, collect data and information, assist in planting and maintenance activities, and work to develop 5 or 10 year management plans that meet the core standards of the Tree City USA Program.

The project will allow for the planting of 700 trees along a five mile stretch of the Hart-Montague Trail within five participating communities. Additionally the trees will intercept up to 24,900 gallons of storm water runoff annually contributing to cleaner water, reduced erosion, healthier residents, and enhanced viewsapes. This \$99,994.49 grant project will begin in 2019 and run through December 2020 with the majority of the effort taking place in 2020. An additional result of this project will be membership in the Tree City USA Program for the Oceana County municipalities of Hart, Shelby, New Era, Rothbury, and Golden Township.

WMSRDC is eager to work with project partners to provide these services to local governments and assist in meeting the broader goals of the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) program, which includes reduction of stormwater runoff and the impacts to water quality caused by the excessive runoff. Delta Institute funding has been awarded through a grant from the USFS and GLRI.

Blue Lake Twp. Plan Complete

In 2016, Blue Lake Township contracted with WMSRDC to concurrently assist in the update of the 2011 Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan and the Blue Lake Township Recreation Plan 2006-2011. While the recreation plan was completed and adopted by the Blue Lake Township Board in November 2017, the comprehensive development plan took a little longer to complete. After a series of minor setbacks, the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission was able to develop an updated Comprehensive Development Plan. This proposed draft was made available for public review from early May through July 10, 2019, when the Planning Commission held a public hearing to receive comments from the public. The Township Board voted to adopt the Blue Lake Township Comprehensive Development Plan on August 12, 2019. WMSRDC would like to congratulate the Blue Lake Township for completing these two plans and for taking a proactive approach in planning for the community's future.

Recreation Planning Update

In writing, the "rule of three" is a principle suggesting that a trio of events or characters is more humorous, satisfying, or effective than other numbers. If that's the case in local government planning, WMSRDC has found a sweet spot in recreation planning: three different communities, in three different counties, updating three different recreation plans.

WMSRDC is currently engaged with the Village of Fruitport (Muskegon County), Village of New Era (Oceana County), and Big Prairie Township (Newaygo County) to assist with updating recreation plans. It is rather unusual for WMSRDC to take on so many plans at one time; however, exceptions were made in order to serve communities in need of planning assistance. All three plans are expected to be completed prior to February 1, 2020 in order for the communities to be eligible to apply for recreation grants through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in 2020.

Port continued from page 1

Muskegon Lake, and watched the “Back from the Brink” video regarding the environmental recovery of Muskegon Lake. In addition, the group learned about the current and future commercial port activity from the West Michigan Port Operators including Chuck Canestraight, Ron Matthews, and Capitan Ed Hogan, as well as waterfront community development initiatives from LeighAnn Mikesell representing the City of Muskegon.

The meeting concluded with an afternoon cruise of Muskegon Lake on the newly renovated Aquastar sponsored by the West Michigan Port Operators.

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.

- James Rynberg, Chairperson Mayor, City of Fremont
- Bonnie McGlothlin, Vice-Chairperson, Councilperson, City of Muskegon Heights
- Dale Nesbary, Secretary, Muskegon Community College
- Kay Beecham, Councilperson, City of Norton Shores
- James Brown, Oceana County Commissioner
- Burt Cooper, Newaygo County Board of Commissioners
- Dean Gustafson, Oceana County Board of Commissioners
- Jennifer Hernandez, Supervisor, Muskegon Township
- Rich Houtteman, WMSRDC Appointee
- Marcia Hovey-Wright, Muskegon County Commissioner
- James Kelly, WMSRDC Appointee
- Nick Krieger, Mason County Commissioner
- Charles Lange, Mason County Commissioner
- Andrea Large, WMSRDC Appointee
- Joseph Lenius, Councilperson, City of Ludington
- Howard Lodholtz, Lake County Commissioner
- James Maike, Newaygo County Commissioner
- Bob Scolnik, Muskegon County Commissioner
- Byron Turnquist, Commissioner, City of Muskegon
- Rillastine Wilkins, Muskegon County Commissioner
- Crystal Young, West Shore Community College

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

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