



## West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

June/July 2019

### Infrastructure Asset Management Summits a Success

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from the Brink

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WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



On May 16, the West Michigan Prosperity Alliance hosted the first set of 20 state-wide Communication and Coordination Summits focused on integrated infrastructure asset management. The West Michigan summits brought together nearly

90 stakeholders at Muskegon Community College. Erin Kuhn, WMSRDC Executive Director, and John Weiss, Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC) Executive Director facilitated the summits which included a mixture of presentations, interactive problem-solving, and facilitated discussion regarding the subject of Michigan's infrastructure.

The event was designed to bring together stakeholders who use and manage Michigan's infrastructure, remove barriers that hinder asset management, and align standards across transportation, water, utilities and communications assets.

The summits sought three main objectives: 1) begin the journey down the path of collaboration and coordination; 2) provide opportunity for peer-to-peer engagement; and 3) hear from attendees including feedback on opportunities and challenges.

The summit started with a brief presentation regarding Michigan's infrastructure assets, the basics of asset management, and updates of the Michigan Infrastructure Council, Transportation Asset Management Council, and the Water Asset Management Council. The second half of the summit included an interactive group activity asking participants to answer two main



## SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

### Muskegon Lake - Back from the Brink!



Top to Bottom: Fraunthal Center marquee, Kathy Evans welcomes guests, Back from the Brink panelists.

Fifty years ago this summer the Cuyahoga River caught fire in downtown Cleveland. It was a landmark incident that has been credited with spurring passage of the Clean Water Act in the 1970s. The environmental condition of Muskegon Lake was no different during the mid-1900's. Heavy industries lined the south shoreline and pollution was discharged directly into the lake. In fact, just like the Cuyahoga River, fires along the Muskegon Lake shoreline were not uncommon during those years. This resulted in a call for action and Muskegon Lake became one of the Great Lakes's 43 Areas of Concern (AOC).

Since 1993, the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP) has been a guiding force for its cleanup and restoration. Along with WMSRDC and other local, state and regional partners, the MLWP organized a highly successful community event at the Fraunthal Center in Muskegon. On May 15, 2019, 600 people viewed a documentary short-film about the cleanup and restoration of Muskegon Lake. The film expounded upon the significant environmental degradation that occurred over a 75 year period when Muskegon Lake suffered poor water quality and degraded fish and wildlife habitat. The film highlighted examples of the large-scale Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects that have cleaned up contaminated sediments and restored fish and wildlife over the past 15 years. This work restored water resources, fish and wildlife habitat, shoreline aesthetics, quality of life for residents and the economic vitality of the City of Muskegon. Because of this work, Muskegon Lake will soon be removed from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC).

Following the documentary film, a panel of community stakeholders, educators, scientists, volunteers, biologists, landowners, business owners, and elected officials spoke about their role in the cleanup and what the community can do to ensure the protection of Muskegon Lake and its natural resources into the future. A wealth of information was shared and audience members suggested additional discussion topics. The most widely applauded topic was about the need to ensure meaningful public access to Muskegon Lake, its restored shoreline and public outdoor recreational amenities.

## Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Wrap Up

WMSRDC has begun finishing up the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) invasive species grant which began in the winter of 2017. The HWA is a tiny invasive pest that is attacking our native hemlock trees and can cause devastating damage and decline of this crucial tree.

Hemlocks not only make up a large part of our Michigan forests, but provide habitat and food for wildlife, and shade to cool the forest floor, rivers and fisheries. If left untreated, the HWA can weaken and kill a large hemlock tree in a matter of a few years. The purpose of this grant is to find the northern and eastern most extents of the HWA's infestation and begin treating infected trees and surrounding hemlocks and slow the spread of the bug.

Starting with known locations of reported HWA, the Ottawa Conservation District's HWA Task Force and GEI Consultants Inc. secured landowner permission in Oceana County to survey and record the locations of hemlock trees to find the outer most extents. In total, 267 acres of land and 170 properties were surveyed and a total of 27,328 hemlock trees and seedlings were tagged, inspected for evidence of HWA, and recorded using GPS locating. A total of 4,623 infested hemlock trees and 3,360 hemlock seedlings were treated to kill the HWA and prevent further spread of the insect to neighboring uninfested trees.

Public outreach and education meetings were held in Muskegon, Ottawa, Oceana, and Mason Counties to inform landowners of the HWA and how to identify both hemlock trees and the presence of HWA. Students from Ottawa ISD, Grand Haven High School, Newaygo Middle School, and GVSU Forestry Studies were also educated on hemlock trees and HWA detection and reporting. The HWA Task Force has also created the website [SaveMIHemlocks.org](http://SaveMIHemlocks.org) to further educate the public and allow for easy reporting on suspected HWA presence. A final HWA grant meeting will take place at the end of this summer to report out to partners from the US Forest Service, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, local governments, educators, nurseries and community members.

## Clean Air Action Program Update



For over twenty years, WMSRDC has been an active member and funder of the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC). The WMCAC is a partnership of businesses, academic institutions, government agencies, industry, and non-profit organizations in Kent, Ottawa, Muskegon, and Kalamazoo counties working together to achieve cleaner air in the region through the education and promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities.

So far the summer of 2019 has been a busy one:

- WMSRDC spearheaded the production and placement of a new public service announcement focussing on the air quality benefits of biking instead of driving geared toward younger audiences to be shown on social media and streaming TV.
- WMSRDC continued the on-air television campaign using a PSA focussing on the health benefits of clean air activities on susceptible population.
- WMSRDC staff was interviewed on WZZM's My West Michigan show helping to further educate the public about ways to keep the air clean
- WMSRDC was a key player in the Muskegon Area Smart Commute Week which took place during the week of June 10th.
- Air quality education materials were distributed at several community events throughout Muskegon and Northern Ottawa counties.



## CEDS Strategy Committee Update

The summer CEDS Strategy Committee meeting took place on June 21 at the Ludington Bay Brewing Company in the Mason County community of Ludington. Economic development representatives from across the WMSRDC region were in attendance.

The meeting featured a presentation regarding the Oriole Work Based Learning Academy, which is a Ludington Area Schools program intended to provide students with a unique online and work-based learning experience that promotes 21st century skills needed to be successful in today's workforce.

The CEDS Strategy Committee convenes quarterly to discuss the region's

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document, discuss the latest economic news and events throughout the region, and network over a meal at a local restaurant.

The next CEDS Strategy Committee meeting will be scheduled for October and will be held in Lake County. WMSRDC is responsible for recruiting members to the committee and organizing meetings in concert with local community representatives.

The committee is currently composed of twenty individuals representing local and regional interests in local government, higher education, workforce development, business development, and utilities.

## Industrial & Business Park Inventory Update

WMSRDC recently updated the Industrial & Business Park Inventory for the WMSRDC region. The inventory identifies 23 industrial parks and business parks in the counties of Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana. Lake County does not have any designated industrial or business parks at this time. Information for the inventory is gathered through communication with industrial park owners and managers, and includes millage rates and incentives; utilities and other infrastructure; and acreage, current tenants and contact information. The inventory, which is available on the WMSRDC website, is a companion to the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is required for the region to maintain its status as an Economic Development District, a designation of the Economic Development Administration (EDA), which enables local units of government to apply for economic development assistance offered through various EDA programs.

## New Transportation Improvement Program

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) Technical and Policy Committees approved the draft FY2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at their June 2019 meetings. Transportation staff worked closely over the past year with committee member agencies to complete the document. The committees worked on project selection and several detailed analysis' like Environmental Justice, Air Quality Analysis, and Performance Based Planning.

The TIP is a short range planning document that covers a four-year span of project programming for the WestPlan area. The TIP includes federally funded transportation projects that will be completed in Muskegon County and Northern Ottawa County. Projects identified in the TIP are generally either road or transit related projects. Types of projects in the TIP include bus purchases, signal work, resurface and reconstruct projects, safety, economic development related, non-motorized projects, and projects that

will reduce air quality emissions under the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) category.

TIP funding estimates are generated through the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), and it is expected that the WestPlan MPO will fund approximately \$82 million in transportation projects in FY2020-2023. This funding will be distributed over approximately 165 projects in the MPO area.

The document now waits for official approval from MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to ensure compliance with state and federal laws.

Public participation was encouraged throughout the process, and all MPO meeting information was listed on the WMSRDC website. A public review period was also held for 30 days including a public open house that was held on May 7, 2019. The document in its entirety can be viewed on the WMSRDC website.

## Rural Task Force and Small Urban Transportation Programs

WMSRDC continues to administer the Rural Transportation Task Force program for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. The committee met on June 17th and approved changes to projects for fiscal year 2019. The Task Force previously met in 2018 and had chosen road and transit projects for fiscal years 2020-2023.

The task force receives approximately \$2.9 million of federal funding as well as a little over \$340,000 in state funding per year. Typical projects include road construction, road maintenance, and transit bus purchases. Projects are chosen at the individual county level prior to approval at the five-county task force.

In addition to the Rural Transportation program, WMSRDC also assists the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) in the administration of the Small Urban programs for the Whitehall area and the Ludington area. As with the Rural Task Force program, WMSRDC is responsible for scheduling meetings, administering the public involvement process, documenting meeting activities, and submitting information to MDOT.

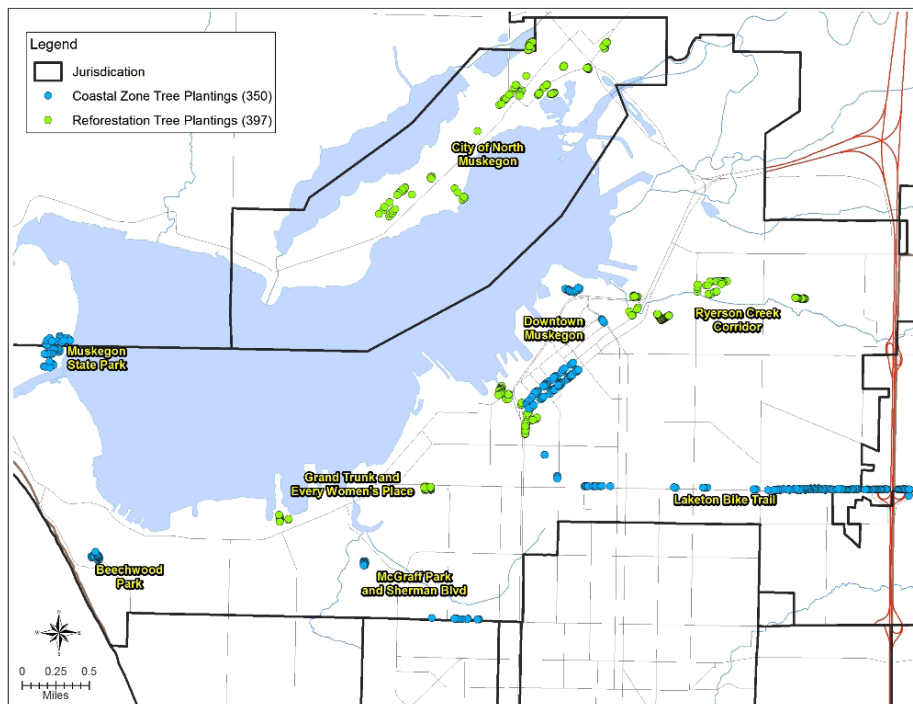
For FY 2020, MDOT has approved two projects for the Ludington Small Urban Area as well as two projects for the Whitehall Small Urban Area. The Ludington area projects are Hansen Road from Meyers to Dennis and Loomis Road from Rath to Delia. The Whitehall area projects for FY 2020 are Automobile Road from Lakewood Road to White Lake Drive and Fruitvale Road from US-31 to Walsh Road.

## Tracking a Green Future

WMSRDC uses Geographic Information Systems to identify, track, and maintain trees as a sustainable component of a resilient green future in West Michigan. WMSRDC overseeing and partnering on numerous grants for establishing trees will enhance West Michigan's ability to benefit from the many ecological services which trees provide. Those services are both seen and unseen and include the obvious aesthetic and scenic values, wildlife habitat, and urban cooling, as well as carbon sequestration and storm water retention.

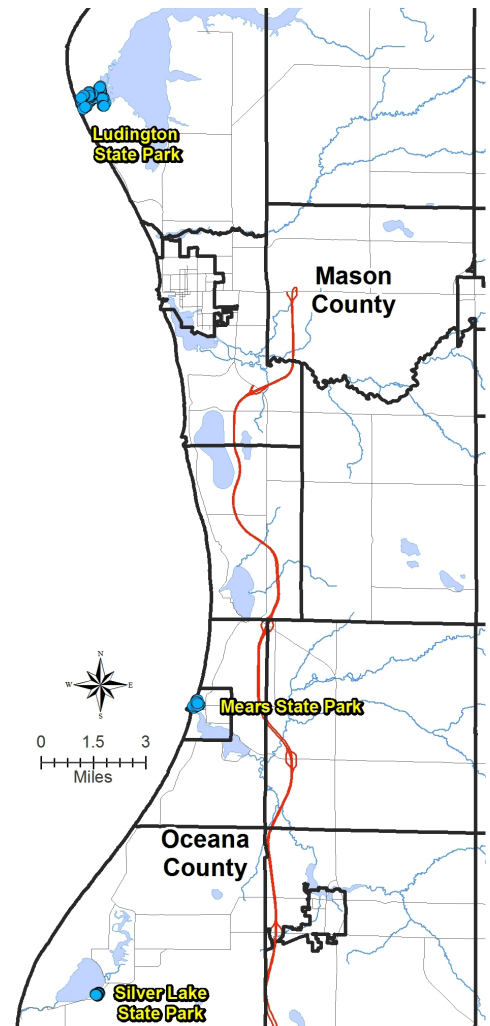
To date, these grants have planted over 1,000 trees and will add another 4,488 seedlings before the current grants are completed. In storm water retention alone, over 138,380 gallons of runoff will be intercepted annually, preventing sediment erosion and nutrient loading in local water courses.

WMSRDC is overseeing or partnering on grant projects with the US Forest Service through Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program funding. Partners and recipients include the City of Muskegon, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, the State of Michigan (5 State Parks), the City of North Muskegon, the Muskegon Conservation District, the Delta Institute, the City of Fremont, and Newaygo County Parks. See maps below.



Additional grant opportunities are being explored to include communities within areas of the Muskegon Lake and River watersheds, in the Hart Montague Bike Trail, and in the White River Watershed in Oceana County.

Funders require accountability of numbers and field managers require maintenance information and species locations to be tracked. Management of such a large number of trees established over a wide area with such a varied range of partners would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, without the benefits of WMSRDC's Geographic Information System (GIS) capabilities.



### Master Plan Drafts Available for Public Review

Two WMSRDC-assisted local government projects are in the public review phase and are nearing completion. The proposed draft of the Blue Lake Comprehensive Development Plan update was approved for public review by the Blue Lake Township Board at its April 29, 2019 meeting. The proposed plan is available for review through the Blue Lake Township website, as well as at the Blue Lake Township Hall during normal business hours. A public meeting to receive comments will be held on July 10, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Blue Lake Township Hall.

Similarly, the proposed draft of the Golden Township Master Plan update was approved for public review by the Golden Township Board at its June 11, 2019 meeting. The proposed plan is available for review through the Golden Township website, as well as at the Golden Township Hall during business hours. A public meeting to receive comments is expected to be held on August 27, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. at the Golden Township Hall.

Following the public meetings for these two proposed master plans, the planning commissions for Blue Lake and Golden townships will consider comments brought forth by the public and then decide whether or not to recommend adoption of the plans to their township boards.

### New Planning Projects Underway

This spring, WMSRDC contracted with two communities to provide planning assistance. First, the Village of New Era requested assistance updating the New Era Future Land Use Plan and the New Era Recreation Plan. To date, WMSRDC staff has toured the community and held the first public visioning session to involve the public in the planning process. The other community, the Village of Fruitport, requested assistance updating its recreation plan. A public visioning session is expected to be held on July 15 to begin the project.

In a nutshell, a master plan outlines a community's vision for the next 5 to 20 years and supports decisions and ordinances made at the local level. A recreation plan is required for a community to apply for certain types of recreation grants offered through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Each year, WMSRDC agrees to assist a small number of communities with creating or updating local plans. The mission of the WMSRDC Local Government Services program is to support local communities by providing technical assistance to communities that do not have planning expertise in-house, or the resources necessary to hire a private consultant.

### WMSRDC Welcomes New Finance Manager

Welcome aboard to WMSRDC's new Finance Manager, Amanda Snyder. Amanda will be responsible for the financial management of the Commission's programs, preparation and maintenance of the budget, and administration of the benefits program. Amanda is currently undergoing training of WMSRDC finances and programs by Susan Stine-Johnson, Interim Finance Manager. Amanda brings years of experience in financial management and accounting from both the private and non-profit sectors. Welcome aboard, Amanda!



## Summits continued from page 1

questions:

- How can Michigan improve the culture of infrastructure asset management?  
*What are we doing that fails?*  
*What are we doing that works?*
- Do you have suggestions for increasing cross – asset project coordination?  
*What are the barriers to project coordination today?*  
*Where are there opportunities for improvement?*

The West Michigan summit generated a list of challenges and opportunities that will be compiled along with feedback from across the state to develop new collaborative technologies and drive a second series of regional summits scheduled for late fall 2019.

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  
Marcia Hovey-Wright, Muskegon County Commissioner  
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  
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