



Ludington Area Shoreline Land Use Resiliency Plan

In 2019, the City of Ludington wished to develop a vision for future land uses along Pere Marquette Lake, a deep water port on Lake Michigan. At the same time, the Great Lakes were approaching record-high water levels and causing disruptions along the Lake Michigan shoreline. Thanks to an agreement with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), WMSRDC was able to leverage a Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) technical assistance grant to study these closely related issues. In addition, Pere Marquette Township, which was facing similar issues regarding high water and shared a mutual interest in land use around Pere Marquette Lake, partnered with the City of Ludington to commission the study. The result was a unique multi-jurisdictional study known as the Ludington Area Shoreline Land Use and Resiliency Plan (SLURP).

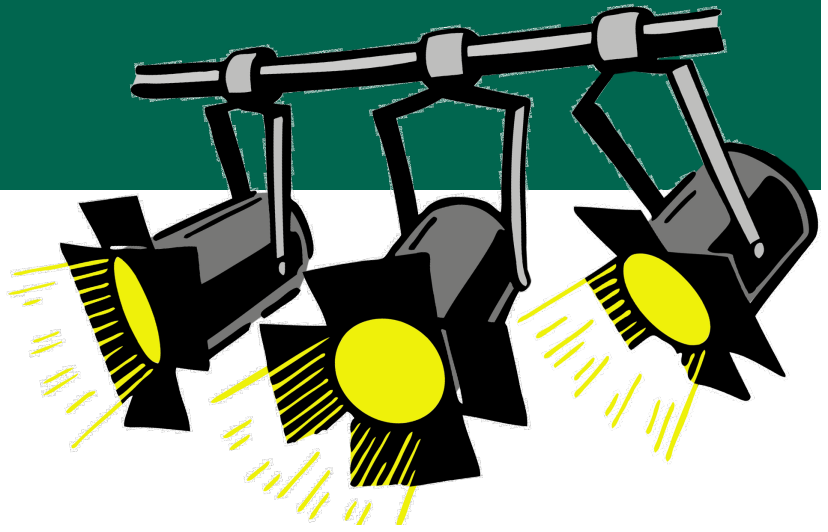
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Completed in April 2021, the final SLURP report contains information and resources such as shoreline hazard profiles, shoreline stakeholder survey results, land use analyses, and general recommendations for governance, land use, and shoreline resilience. It is intended to support informed shoreline decision making in the communities of Ludington and Pere Marquette Township to recover from and withstand water-level disruptions, mitigate future risk and damage, and develop an achievable and shared vision for land use around Pere Marquette Lake. The study was presented to the participating communities in May and is now available on the WMSRDC website (www.wmsrdc.org) in the Local Government Services section.

The SLURP planning process was successful in bringing together a diverse set of shoreline

SPOTLIGHT STORY

Road Ratings to Begin Again Soon



Four staff members recently attended virtual training for the Commission's annual Asset Management program. The data collection process will begin in May. In a typical year, WMSRDC staff, along with a Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) employee, and a county road commission employee, collect condition information for approximately half of all the federal aid roads within the region.

In 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, data was not collected on any of the federal aid roads. Fortunately, the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council (TAMC) is allowing FY2020 funding to be carried over into FY2021. Due to ongoing concerns related to COVID-19, MDOT employees will not be participating in data collection for FY2021. However, the Asset Management Council is allowing a crew of two people to rate roads this year, rather than the usual three members. In addition, it is likely that MDOT will allow region staff to use vehicles with appropriate safety equipment when rating roads. WMSRDC staff will be contacting road agencies to ensure that statistics on 100 percent of all federal aid roads are collected in 2021.

According to Michigan's Act 51 (P.A. 499 in 2002 and P.A. 199 in 2007), local road agencies must report the condition of the road system under their jurisdiction to TAMC annually. To meet the requirements of this Act, the TAMC sets policies each year for road condition data collection. The TAMC has adopted the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system for measuring conditions of paved roads in Michigan. The PASER system is a visual survey method that provides a simple, efficient, and consistent method for evaluating the condition of paved roads. This data collection effort requires the collection of three items: PASER rating, surface type, and the number of lanes. The PASER data collection process is part of an ongoing statewide program to evaluate the condition of the state's road system.

Once rating is completed, WMSRDC staff will convert the data into a format that can be used with RoadSoft. RoadSoft is a management system for collecting, storing and analyzing data. RoadSoft is funded through MDOT and developed, supported, and distributed by Michigan Technological University's Center for Technology & Training. After the data has been converted into RoadSoft, it is sent back to each local road agency as well as the State of Michigan. It is the intent of this program that the local units of government would use this information to better plan for needed infrastructure improvements.



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Rural Task Force Update

The Region 14 Rural Transportation Task Force met virtually during the month of April to determine how COVID relief funding would be allocated to various agencies. Prior to the full five county task force meeting on April 14, all county task forces met individually during the week of March 22-26. The task force received just over \$1.1 million in COVID relief funding. This is in addition to the approximately \$3.5 million of federal and state funding that the committee receives each year. Typical projects include road construction, road maintenance, and transit capital purchases. WMSRDC assists in the administration of the Rural Transportation Task Force for the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana.

Air Quality Conformity Training

On April 14 and 15, staff participated in the Michigan Project-Level Conformity & NEPA Air Quality Workshop. The virtual workshop, held over two afternoons, consisted of refreshers regarding transportation conformity including a Clean Air Act and National Ambient Air Quality Standards overview. Staff learned more about transportation project level air quality conformity and how to decide what projects are exempt. Staff gathered more information on air quality area designations and guidelines related to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Trainings like this prepare the MPO for upcoming project selections as part of the transportation planning process.

MPO Update

Staff worked with the West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) members to formulate and process FY2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment 15 in March. The amendment was later approved by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Staff continues to work with local and state partners to address administrative modifications to TIP projects in JobNet, the statewide project database portal.

FY2023-2026 TIP development will begin this fall, and a call for projects will be issued for FY2024, 2025, and 2026. Staff will work with MDOT to develop program estimates and updated travel demand data to aid in developing future projects. WMSRDC will continue to follow the public involvement plan throughout the process.

The WestPlan MPO received Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Covid Relief funding through the recent federal transportation bill. The MPO will program \$1,093,118 to projects within the MPO area based on guidance from the technical and policy committees. A call for projects was issued and MPO agencies are required to submit potential projects in May. Submitted projects will then be discussed at the committees and a decision will be made on how to move forward.

MPO meetings continue to be held virtually until further notice. Links to meetings can be found on the WMSRDC website, and are open to the public.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Broadband Update

Broadband has been a known issue and a regional priority for many years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced this issue to the forefront. Unfortunately there is no “one size fits all” solution as individual communities face unique broadband needs and challenges. To help address this issue, WMSRDC has committed to facilitate information sharing, coordination, and project implementation of broadband initiatives across communities and sectors throughout the region. These efforts are supported by federal CARES Act funds awarded through the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

WMSRDC recently led the charge in establishing a broadband task force for Muskegon County. So far this has involved identifying and contacting stakeholders and holding meetings to lay the groundwork for cooperatively improving access to broadband infrastructure, increasing the rate of adoption, and eliminating barriers to broadband use. In the coming months, WMSRDC will continue to host monthly task force meetings to connect stakeholders, gather information, and develop strategies for action.

County-level broadband groups are already well established in the counties of Lake, Mason, Newaygo, and Oceana. Additional information regarding local broadband efforts within the region, including points of contact, are listed on the WMSRDC website at <https://wmsrdc.org/project/wmsrdc-broadband-support/>.

Spring CEDS Committee Meeting

WMSRDC hosted the Spring CEDS Strategy Committee meeting on April 28. Topics covered during the discussion included the anticipation of American Rescue Plan funding opportunities, recently updated EDA investment priorities, the state of Michigan’s new infrastructure Project Portal, as well as a variety of other news and notes. The CEDS Strategy Committee meets quarterly to discuss the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document, discuss the latest economic development efforts throughout the region, and network with peers and counterparts.

The CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development and is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area. The WMSRDC CEDS enables eligible applicants in the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana to apply for assistance and funding through the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). Eligible applicants must be a state, a political subdivision of a state, district organization, Indian tribe, institution of higher education, or a non-profit acting in coordination with a political subdivision of a state. The WMSRDC CEDS is available to view at <https://wmsrdc.org/project/ceds-2018/>.

EDA Investment Priorities Updated in April

- Equity
- Recovery & Resilience
- Workforce Development
- Manufacturing
- Technology-Based Economic Development
- Environmentally-Sustainable Development
- Exports & Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

More information is available at <https://www.eda.gov/about/investment-priorities>



Green Infrastructure Project Complete

The Muskegon Lake Urban Green Infrastructure Project was completed late, last winter. It will capture 47.9 million gallons of urban, stormwater runoff and treat it before discharging to Muskegon Lake at Heritage Landing and the Lakeshore Fitness Center/Boys and Girls Club. The project's annual, non-point source load reductions are 4.8 tons of total suspended solids, 98.5 pounds of nitrogen, and 23 pounds of phosphorous. Heavy metal pollutants will also be reduced. The property, owned by the County of Muskegon, was deeded to the City of Muskegon for ease of future maintenance of the green stormwater infrastructure. The \$499,999 project was funded through a WMSRDC/EPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant to improve urban waters. Community engagement included hands-on, experiential education activities with Muskegon Public Schools students. A watershed walking tour was held with forty Nelson School 5th and 6th graders. The students learned about non-point source pollution, the history of Beidler's Creek, and how human behaviors and land use practices affect the quality of water in Muskegon Lake.

The project was constructed in an area where the historic Beidler's Creek once flowed toward Muskegon Lake. Beidler's Creek was the first City of Muskegon public water supply, before the Lake Michigan water filtration plant was built in the 1920s. Over time, its waters and wetlands were filled, and its watershed drainage became part of an extensive underground storm drain system. As part of the watershed tour, students planted native wetland plants in a remnant of the creek right on Nelson School property. At the green infrastructure site, contouring and native plantings now mimic the appearance of a meandering Beidler's Creek flowing to Muskegon Lake. The project was completed in partnership with the County of Muskegon, City of Muskegon Public Works, Muskegon Public Schools, Nelson Neighborhood Association, Watch Us Go Youth Boating, Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership, and the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. WMSRDC made educational visits to the 5th and 6th grade classrooms to prepare the teachers and students for the experiential watershed walk and hands on activities. The City of Muskegon public works director opened manholes and showed students how stormwater runoff flows from the land into underground pipes to the lake. A Nelson Neighborhood Association leader with the youth program, Watch Us Go Boating, demonstrated safe kayaking practices once the students arrived at the Heritage Landing shoreline. The project also improved the view at a gateway to the City of Muskegon's downtown shoreline area from Business 31 at Shoreline Drive.



Above: Students from Nelson School enjoying a walking tour of their neighborhood watershed.

Right: An aerial showing tree plantings in the watershed.



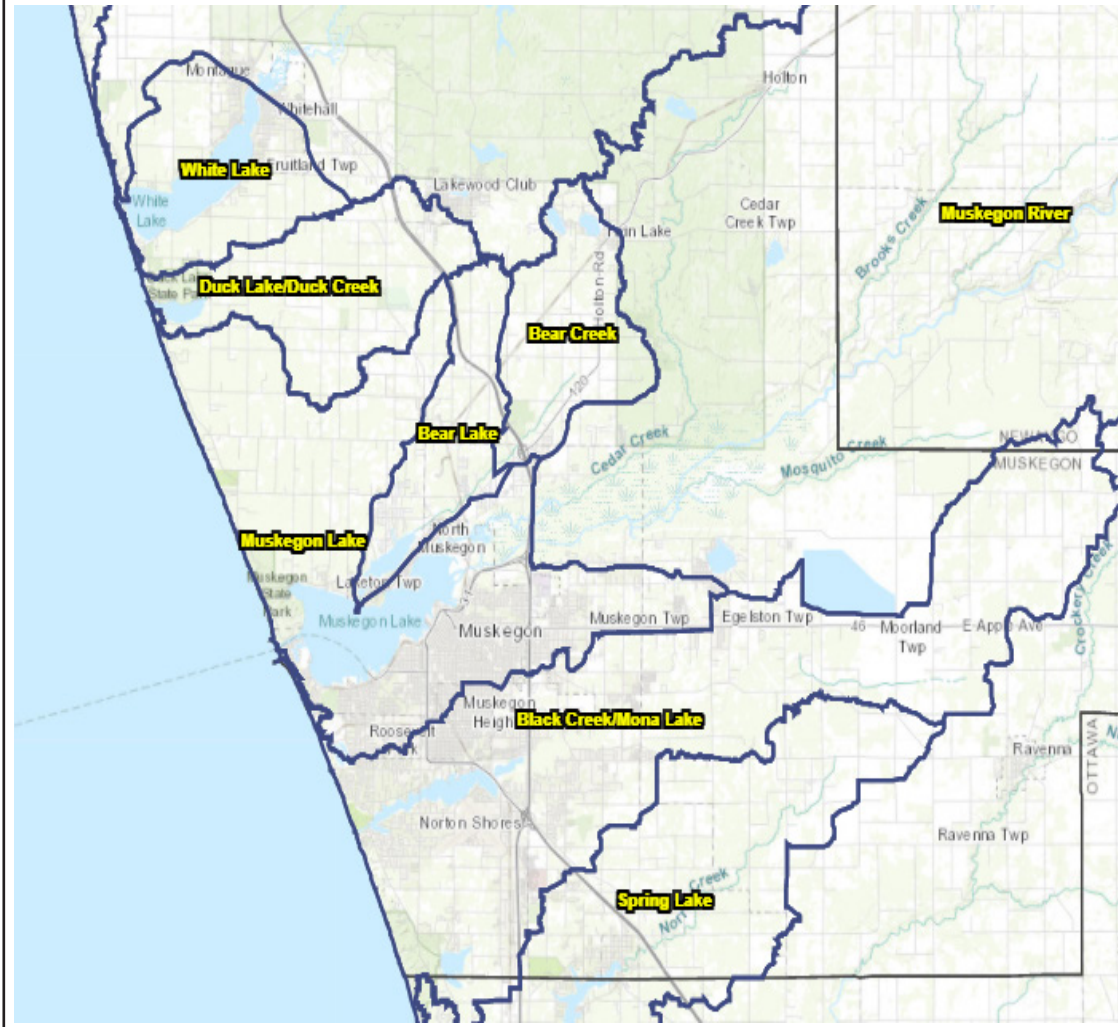
West Michigan Watershed Partners

It is a beautiful thing when communities and groups can come together for the benefit of our natural resources. It is even more beautiful when the combined knowledge and information from those groups can be organized and shared between the partners and the public.

The West Michigan Watershed Partnership (WMWP) is a coalition of the region's watershed groups who work together to share natural resource information with participants and receive input for the WMSRDC area-wide water quality planning program. Each watershed group in this partnership brings their own expertise, challenges, solutions, and unique needs to the collective, and while each group has its own leaders and champions, it takes a larger community working together as a whole to maintain and improve the vital water resources in the West Michigan area. To solve the complex task of maintaining and disseminating the information for each partnership for the various watersheds and sub-watershed, WMSRDC has turned to GIS and online mapping to serve as the partnership's one stop shop for the watershed groups and the public.

The West Michigan Watershed Partnership Map

The interactive version is available on the WMSRDC website



Hosted on the WMSRDC website at www.wmsrdc.org, the WMWP webmap highlights 24 watersheds and sub-watersheds within the partnership and provides contact information, links to partner websites, water quality plans and studies, details of specific watersheds and a visual representation of the boundaries of each one. Information is provided by the partners and gathered by the GIS technician, as the map is updated regularly as content becomes available or roles change. Please visit the WMWP webmap on the environmental page of the WMSRDC website at www.wmsrdc.org/environmental-planning.



Clean Air Action Season is Here

Beginning in the month of May, the weather warms, the days become even longer, and the Clean Air Action season is upon us.

The West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (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. For over twenty years and counting, WMSRDC is proud to be an active and financial supporting member of the WMCAC.

The WMCAC is hosting the annual luncheon to kick off the ozone forecasting season in

early May. This luncheon is typically a well-attended in-person event, but for the first time the luncheon will be held virtually this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual luncheon will feature an overview of last year's air quality and a presentation on the environmental impacts of the growing cannabis industry in Michigan.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the WMCAC continues to encourage everyone to follow current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) orders and guidance when participating in a voluntary emission reduction activity and above all, to stay safe. There are plenty of ways to make a positive difference in our air quality this summer while practicing social distancing,

such as walking, riding a bike, telecommuting, or waiting until after 6:00 pm to mow your lawn or refuel your car. Together, our voluntary efforts all add up to cleaner air.



**WEST MICHIGAN
CLEAN AIR
ACTION!**

American Rescue Plan Act Update

On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was signed into law. The \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief and economic stimulus bill includes \$350 billion for state and local governments, \$4 billion of which will go to local governments in the state of Michigan. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) received an allocation of \$3 billion, double the amount received as part of the CARES Act in 2020.

It is important to note that federal guidance for the use of these funds has not yet been released and is expected sometime during the month of May. Once the guidance has been released, WMSRDC plans to organize a forum to help interpret the guidance and provide assistance to local governments when needed. More information regarding the forum will be made available once the federal guidance has been released.



Ludington Land Use Study continued from page 1

stakeholders to inform and guide development of the study. However, the COVID-19 pandemic altered the course of the study. WMSRDC was fortunate to facilitate two meetings of the advisory committee prior to the suspension of in-person meetings due to the pandemic. Post-pandemic onset, communications with the advisory group were conducted via email. And rather than holding open houses to engage with the public, WMSRDC collaborated with the committee to develop and distribute an online survey to gauge public opinions regarding shoreline hazards and land use.

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 the planning agency for the metropolitan transportation planning (MPO) program for Muskegon and northern Ottawa counties.

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Kim Cyr, Muskegon County Commissioner
Jennifer Hodges, Supervisor, Muskegon Township
Rich Houtteman, WMSRDC Appointee
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Ken Johnson, Commissioner, City of Muskegon
James Kelly, WMSRDC Appointee
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Rillastine Wilkins, Muskegon County Commissioner
Kathy Winczewski, Councilperson, City of Ludington
Crystal Young, West Shore Community College

Erin Kuhn, Executive Director

WMSRDC

316 Morris Ave. Suite 340 Muskegon, MI 49440

(231) 722-7878 wmsrdc.org

