



West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission

February/March 2020

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Asset Management Readiness Scale

WMSRDC, in partnership with the Michigan Infrastructure Council (MIC) and the Michigan Association of Regions (MAR), is in the process of debuting an asset management readiness assessment scale tool.

The tool is designed for use by entities such as local communities, water authorities, road commissions, public or private utilities, and communication companies. Through the new tool recently released by the MIC, infrastructure owners across platforms of water (drinking, waste, and storm), transportation, utilities, and communications will be aided to understand, measure, and advance their asset management proficiencies.



The tool embraces five asset management competencies: people and leadership; data and information; planning and prioritization; policy and governance; and external communication and knowledge sharing. Using the tool, infrastructure owners can rank their asset management strengths and improvement areas through “readiness levels.”

The tool was adapted from a method that has been used in Canada over the past decade to manage assets, from planning and construction to operations and maintenance, and ultimately to the next generation rebuild.

Building on the experience of Canadian neighbors, the MIC hopes the Asset Management Readiness Scale will help shift Michigan’s infrastructure focus from reactive response toward strategic long-term asset management. Communities that piloted the tool supported this objective, quickly



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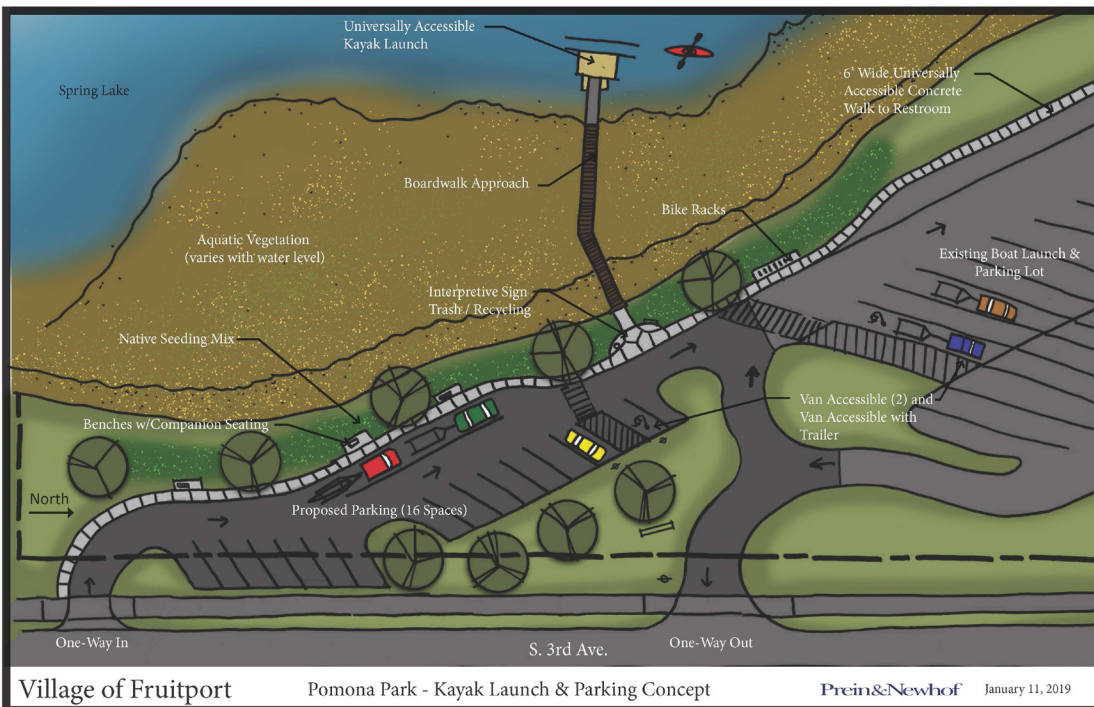
SPOTLIGHT PROJECT:

I'm Just a Plan. Yes, I'm only a Plan (until...)

We've all seen the famous School House Rock animation where the Bill hopes and prays to become a law, haven't we? Well, planning documents go through a similar process in the hopes of one day becoming an implemented project.

On that note, WMSRDC completed the Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan, Phase I: Inventory and Assessment in 2014. The plan was developed to assist communities in seeking grants to improve non-motorized paddling experiences, including access site amenities, wayfinding signage, ADA accessibility, environmental conditions, and many other features for kayakers and other non-motorized paddlers.

In April 2019, the Village of Fruitport (Muskegon County) took full advantage of the Lake Michigan Water Trail Plan and applied to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for a recreation grant to construct an ADA accessible kayak launch on the shore of Spring Lake in Pomona Park. The Village of Fruitport achieved additional points on the grant application because the Pomona Park site was identified in the Water Trail Plan as an access point on the Spring Lake Trail segment of the Lake Michigan Trail.



In December 2019, the Village of Fruitport was notified by the MDNR that their grant request was approved for funding through the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund. The ADA accessible kayak launch (which includes a boardwalk and small parking lot) is expected to be constructed within the next two years. Congratulations to the Village of Fruitport in turning a plan into a project.

The Lower Muskegon River Wetland Restoration and Hydrologic Reconnection Project

Muskegon Lake was designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) in 1985, which included the identification of beneficial use impairments (BUI) that impacted the lake in a negative way. Many BUIs were identified and plans were developed by local, state, and federal partners with the goal of removing BUIs, improving the lake, and delisting it as an AOC. This project will address two of those BUIs: loss of fish and wildlife habitat, and degraded fish and wildlife habitat.

In 2015, Muskegon County purchased 57+ acres of celery farm from the Bosma Family through a NOAA land acquisition grant with the purpose of restoring it to a natural wetland. This would be accomplished by breaching a dike to allow the Muskegon River to once again flow through the celery fields. The process will return 49 acres of emergent wetland to the Muskegon Lake AOC.

WMSRDC, through a grant from the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) with funding through NOAA GLRI, began work in earnest following the land acquisition. Surveys, soil and nutrient sampling, monitoring, engineering, design, and permitting all needed to be completed. A contractor was selected in 2019.

Along the way, there were various stops and starts, including delays to allow road work, completion of remediation work on the adjacent Zephyr property, and the high water levels of Lake Michigan, which affect Muskegon Lake and the Muskegon River. Now that the planning is complete, construction is slated to begin in spring of 2020.

The project will include breaching and stabilizing of the dike, re-contouring and landscaping areas of the celery fields to create improved wildlife habitat, installation of wildlife structures, treating invasive species, and re-vegetating the site with native plant species. Additional project targets include softening of 2,825 feet of shoreline and removal of 38,722 metric tons of fill.

Shoreline Habitat Management

WMSRDC and the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP) hosted a Natural Shoreline Landscape Workshop at Muskegon Community College on March 7th.

The goal of the workshop was to educate shoreline landowners, parks maintenance staff, teachers, and volunteers on shoreline best management practices. The workshop was part of a larger effort to engage citizens in the long-term management of restored Muskegon Lake shoreline habitat. Support for the project is through a grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the NOAA/ Great Lakes Commission Regional Partnership.

As part of the project, a web-based habitat plan with a tool box of resources is being developed. The MLWP has also initiated a Muskegon Lake Shoreline Stewards program. Volunteers and sponsors are needed to adopt and care for restored shoreline habitat at several locations around the lake. Teachers and students are needed to monitor restored habitat and to use the shoreline as an outdoor classroom to gain more understanding about the dynamics of Great Lakes ecosystems. Landowners are needed to restore and maintain native plantings for the benefit of their own property and for the social, economic and environmental benefits that natural shorelines provide to communities. For more information about the Shoreline Steward Program, please send an e-mail to kathy@muskegonlake.org.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration

WMSRDC submitted a proposal to NOAA for engineering and design for the restoration of fish and wildlife habitat in the Pere Marquette River, White River and Little Cedar Creek (a tributary of the Muskegon River). After a review of the proposal and follow up site visits during February by NOAA, WMSRDC was invited to re-submit the proposal with a revised, three-year time line and a funding request for Little Cedar Creek during the first year. It is anticipated that funding for the Pere Marquette and White River projects may be available during the second or third year of the program, depending on federal funding for the NOAA fisheries habitat restoration program.

Economic Development Update

When it comes to bringing an economic development project to fruition, it is often best to invite potential partners and funding organizations to the discussion table early in the planning process.

WMSRDC is currently coordinating with three different entities in the counties of Lake and Muskegon to vet potential projects and prepare applications for economic development assistance from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

Be sure to contact WMSRDC for assistance identifying potential sources of assistance to further economic development initiatives, especially those that include components of public infrastructure or public ownership. The earlier in the planning process, the better!

CEDS Strategy Committee Update

The CEDS Strategy Committee convenes every few months over lunch 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 first CEDS Strategy Committee meeting of 2020 will take place on March 20. The meeting will be hosted by Newaygo County in the City of Fremont. Two other committee meetings in 2020 are tentatively scheduled for June 19 in Muskegon County and September 18 in Oceana County.

EDA Investment Priorities

EDA's investment priorities are designed to provide an overarching framework to guide the agency's investment portfolio to ensure its investments contribute the strongest positive impact on sustainable regional economic growth and diversification. Visit the EDA website at eda.gov to get more information. EDA's investment priorities are listed below:

- **Recovery & Resilience:** Projects that assist with economic resilience (including business continuity and preparedness) and long-term recovery from natural disasters and economic shocks to ensure U.S. communities are globally competitive.
- **Critical Infrastructure:** Projects that establish the fundamental building blocks of a prosperous and innovation-centric economy and a secure platform for American business, including physical (e.g., broadband, energy, roads, water, sewer) and other economic infrastructure.
- **Workforce Development & Manufacturing:** Projects that support the planning and implementation of infrastructure for skills-training centers and related facilities that address the hiring needs of the business community -- particularly in the manufacturing sector -- with a specific emphasis on the expansion of apprenticeships and work-and-learn training models. Also includes projects that encourage job creation and business expansion in manufacturing, including infrastructure-related efforts that focus on advanced manufacturing of innovative, high-value products and enhancing manufacturing supply chains.
- **Exports & Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Primarily infrastructure projects that enhance community assets (e.g., port facilities) to support growth in U.S. exports and increased FDI—and ultimately the return of jobs to the United States.
- **Opportunity Zones:** Planning and implementation projects aimed at attracting private investment – including from Opportunity Funds – to grow businesses and create jobs in Census tracts that have been designated as Opportunity Zones.

MPO Update

WestPlan Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff has been busy working on amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the update to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). In February, the WestPlan MPO Technical and Policy committees took action on the FY2020-2023 TIP to amend the document. Amendment (7) was approved and is currently under review by the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This amendment included the addition of two bridge projects in the MPO area and several modifications to the Harbor Transit Multi-Modal Transportation System project list. The TIP is amended on a regular basis as projects move forward and adjustments are made. MPO staff works closely with state and local agencies to address these changes and present them at the MPO meetings.

WestPlan staff continue work on developing the new LRTP for the MPO area. For the past several months, staff has been working with the MPO Technical and Policy committees and MDOT to develop base and future socio-economic data for modeling purposes. The committees have been reviewing the environmental justice, environmental mitigation, and performance measure chapters of the plan, as well as the updated financial chapter. A draft version of the plan will be presented to the committees in March, with final approval anticipated in April.

The 2045 LRTP is a federally mandated document that provides for a multi-jurisdictional, multi-year look at the Muskegon and northern Ottawa area's future transportation network. The plan is used as a guide for investment of public funds that includes 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 on 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 the use of 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 based requirements such as performance based planning, air quality conformity, environmental mitigation, environmental justice, and public involvement.

Traffic Counts

WMSRDC recently began the process of selecting locations for spring 2020 traffic counts. Every year, WestPlan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Muskegon and northern Ottawa urbanized area, contracts with an engineering consulting firm for traffic counting services. The chosen consultant will conduct traffic counts at approximately 100 locations within the MPO boundaries.

In order to ensure the most accurate traffic counts available, the consultant will follow traffic counting guidelines prepared by the MDOT. These include: avoiding times of increased tourism, avoiding holidays and festivals, avoiding areas affected by road closures, and performing counts when local schools are in session to avoid changes in traffic patterns.

Once WMSRDC staff has received the count data from the consultant the counts will be entered into the Region's online traffic count data base system. WMSRDC maintains approximately 400 count locations in the database with counts collected on a rotating basis over a four year cycle. This system is integrated with Google Maps to assist users in retrieving and presenting data and information. Users of the system can search for data points on the map, or search directly in the database.

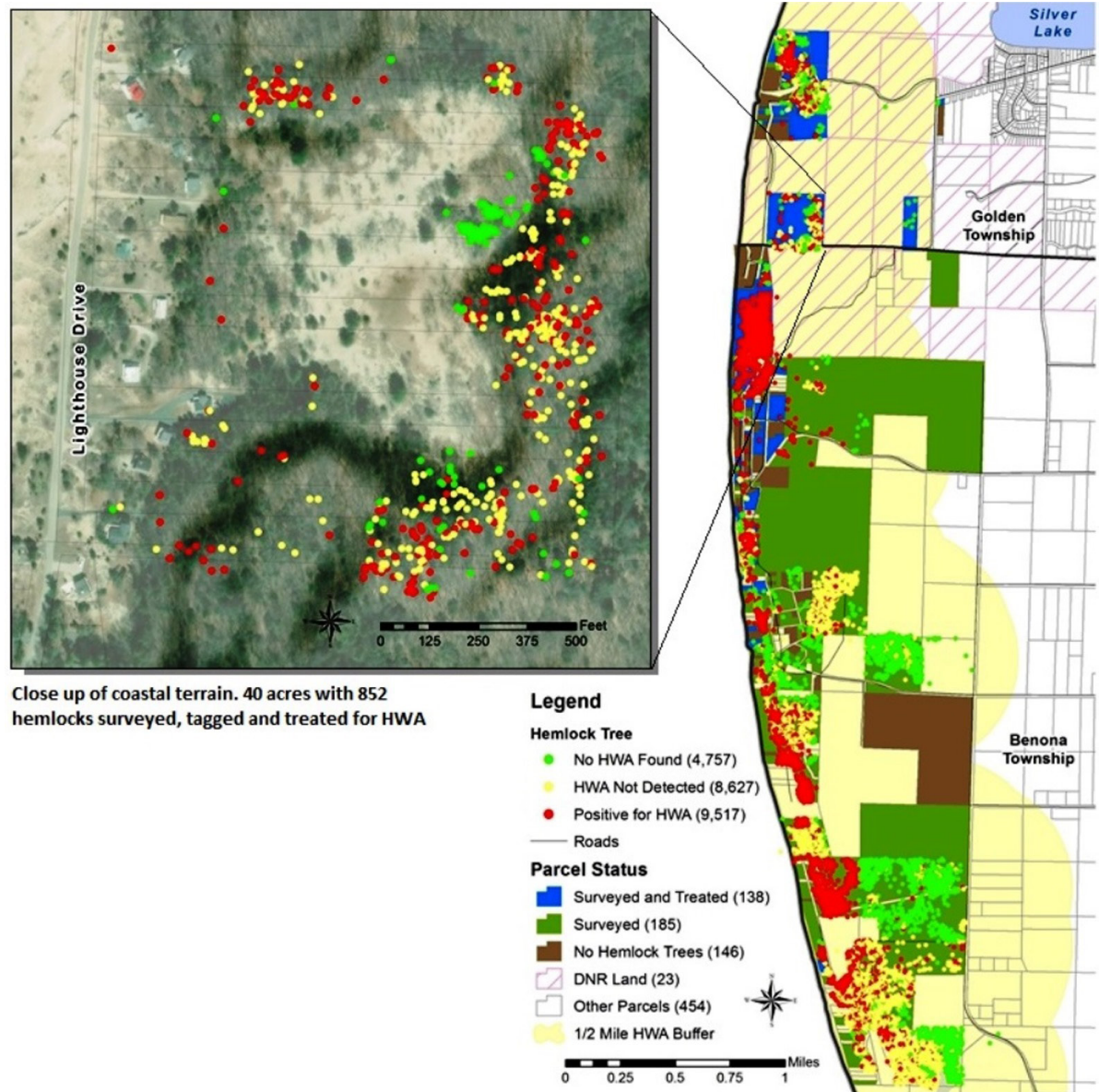
Mapping Hemlock Woolly Adelgid

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) is a microscopic invasive pest that attacks hemlock trees and, if left untreated, can destroy a large tree in four to ten years. Jamie Way, WMSRDC's GIS technician, began working with grant partners in the spring of 2018 to identify HWA.

The HWA survey crew focused on the northern most extent of the known HWA sightings in northern Golden Township, Oceana County near Silver Lake. The goal was to survey the area to locate as many hemlock trees as possible. Once located, the trees were tagged and surveyed for signs of HWA. Then GPS location data, HWA status, tree size, property ownership, and general health were recorded. Once this data was provided to the GIS technician, the data was loaded into WMSRDC's mapping system and detailed maps were created showing the exact location of trees. This meant a plan for treatment could begin. Using parcel data provided by Oceana County, property owners were contacted, and permission was granted to survey their property and possibly treat the hemlock trees if HWA was found, or prophylactically treat them if they were yet uninfested.

The overall goal of the grant was to find the farthest extent of infested HWA hemlocks and treat them back towards the south, thereby creating a buffer of uninfested, treated, or prophylactically treated hemlocks to slow the spread northward into the more heavily forested Northern Michigan and Upper Peninsula.

At the conclusion of the grant, data was collected on over 27,300 hemlock trees while 15,790 hemlock trees were treated across 3,550 acres in Oceana County. Work continues in Muskegon, Oceana, and Ottawa counties to detect HWA and provide treatment to contain this devastating invasive pest. To find out more about HWA, please visit SaveMIHemlocks.org.



GVSU Capstone Projects

WMSRDC is providing assistance to two GVSU environment and natural resources capstone project student groups. One student group has decided to focus on the advancement of volunteer watershed cleanups and the other is focused on public access to natural resources. Both capstone projects are focused on Muskegon Lake.

As part of the overall effort to improve natural resources and environmental sustainability, WMSRDC also participated in a presentation about the cleanup of Muskegon Lake. The event was held on February 17 at the GVSU Kirkhof Center. The film, Muskegon Lake: Back from the Brink was viewed by 30 students, followed by a panel discussion with Dr. Kelly Parker, GVSU; Dr. Rick Rediske, GVSU Annis Water Resources Institute; David Ruck, Great Lakes Outreach Media; and Kathy Evans, WMSRDC.

Recreation Plans Complete

In January, WMSRDC completed recreation plans for Big Prairie Township and the villages of Fruitport and New Era. The plans were then submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for review and approval. Once approved, the plans will help guide each community's decisions related to recreation over the five-year period from 2020 through 2024. In addition, each community will be eligible to apply for recreation grants through the DNR.

Recreation grant applications are due to the DNR by April 1 for communities that have an approved recreation plan. If a community does not have an approved recreation plan on file with the DNR, then it must submit a plan for review on or before February 1 of the year the community wishes to apply. The planning process for creating or updating a recreation plan can take months, therefore communities that wish to apply for a recreation grant must be prepared well in advance of the April deadline.

Port of Ludington SLURP

Through an agreement with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), WMSRDC was able to leverage a Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) technical assistance grant to initiate a unique study for Ludington and Pere Marquette Township in Mason County.

The project has initially been titled the Shoreline Land Use & Resiliency Plan, or SLURP. It will encompass two separate, yet closely related, aspects of the Port of Ludington at Pere Marquette Lake.

First, the study will examine the various existing and planned future land uses surrounding the deep-water port in the City of Ludington and Pere Marquette Township. Second, the study will focus on the resiliency of the immediate shoreline; taking stock of the various community assets and estimating long-term and short-term vulnerabilities, including Lake Michigan water level fluctuations.

A prioritized list of activities will be developed to lead the community towards actions that will increase long-term resiliency of the waterfront, and a shared vision for the future land use surrounding the port will be developed with input from the community. Development of the SLURP will be guided by an advisory council and will include opportunities for public input. The planning process is expected to be completed in the summer of 2020.



Asset Management continued from page 1

pinpointing their asset management strengths, as well as areas that could be improved. Thank you to the City of Fremont, Newaygo County for participating as one of the pilot communities.

WMSRDC staff, in partnership with the MIC and MAR, is ready to help train infrastructure owners with the tool and to collect results that will guide regional and state policy and target resources.

To learn more about the MIC and to download the Asset Management Readiness Assessment Scale, go to www.michigan.gov/mic.

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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