



Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates Underway

In May 2021, WMSRDC was awarded a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning Grant to update Hazard Mitigation Plans for the counties of Lake, Mason, and Oceana. Over the next two years, WMSRDC will work closely with the emergency management departments of each county to fulfill this objective.

The primary goal of hazard mitigation is to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property. These plans are helpful in identifying and prioritizing a community's risks and identifying actions to mitigate those risks. Once approved by FEMA, these plans are effective for five years and afford communities eligibility to apply for certain types of non-emergency disaster assistance, including funding for mitigation projects.

Community and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of a hazard mitigation plan is essential to the planning process and has a direct influence on a plan's effectiveness. Therefore, Advisory Teams have been established in each county to help guide the update of the plans. Each team is led by their county's emergency manager and includes representation from an array of sectors involved with emergency planning.

ARPA Local Government Funding Workshop

Save the Date

October 12, 2021

9:00 – 12:00

Hosted by WMSRDC and MSU

More detail to be announced soon

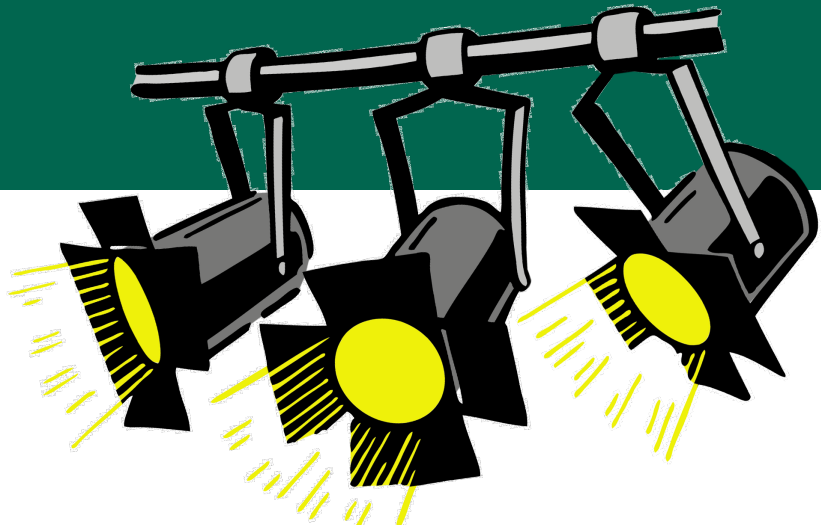
Each county hazard mitigation plan is considered "multi-jurisdictional" which means that cities, villages and townships within each county may be eligible to apply for hazard mitigation grant programs upon completion of the planning process. However, it is important for communities within each county to be responsive and participate in the process. Otherwise, without documented participation in plan development, a community may not be eligible to apply for mitigation funds that require a community to have a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan on file.

This fall, WMSRDC will undertake the first

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SPOTLIGHT STORY

Asset Management Road Rating



After working remotely from their homes for more than a year, regional staff were excited to get out and begin the process of rating federal aid eligible roads for the Commission's annual Asset Management program. The data collection process began in June with road rating taking place in Lake County.

Prior to this, WMSRDC purchased new laptops and car chargers, as well as new GPS receivers so all equipment would be compatible with updated software. Staff began data collection for Mason and Oceana counties in July and completed the ratings in August. It is anticipated that data collection for Muskegon and Newaygo counties will begin in August and be completed in September.

In a typical year, WMSRDC staff, along with a Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) and a county road commission representative, collect condition information for approximately half of all the federal aid roads within the region which equals about 1,100 miles. 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) allowed FY2020 funding to be carried over into FY2021. Since no roads were rated in 2020, WMSRDC will collect statistics for the region's entire federal aid road network in 2021.

Due to ongoing concerns related to COVID-19, MDOT is not participating in data collection this year. However, the TAMC is allowing a crew of two people to rate roads this year, rather than the usual three. In addition, MDOT is providing region staff vehicles with appropriate safety equipment to rate roads.

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 the 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 assessment system rates the surface condition for a given segment of road on a scale of 1-10. This 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 converts 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 the Michigan Department of Transportation (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

Draft Transportation Participation Plan Public Review Period

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which is responsible for transportation planning in the area, is updating its Public Participation Plan in Transportation Decision Making. This plan identifies the steps the MPO will take to involve the community in the transportation planning process.

The draft of the update can be found under Recent Topics on the homepage of the WMSRDC website or by following this link: <https://wmsrdc.org/draft-transportation-participation-plan-public-review-period/>.

A public review period is scheduled from August 23, 2021 through October 6, 2021. In addition, public comment opportunities on all related transportation planning activities are always available at MPO meetings. Upcoming MPO Technical Committee meetings are on September 2 and October 7 and upcoming MPO Policy Committee meetings are on September 15 and October 20.

Comments can also be submitted directly to the MPO in the following ways:

Phone: (231) 722-7878 ext. 190
Email: ahaack@wmsrdc.org
Mail: West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
316 Morris Avenue, Suite 340
Muskegon, MI 49440

MPO Update

In August, staff prepared and presented Amendment 17 to the FY2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Technical and Policy committees. The transportation projects in the amendment were approved by both committees and will be moved forward in the process for final approval from the Federal Highway Administration.

The MPO has received the new revenue estimates for the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program (CMAQ) as well as estimates for the FY2023-2026 TIP. The MPO plans to issue a call for projects to all road agencies in the coming months. Staff will work closely with the MPO road and transit agencies to develop a prioritized and financially constrained project list for eventual inclusion in the newly developed TIP. Opportunities for public involvement will be available throughout the process and all MPO meetings are open to the public.

The MPO committees approved distribution of the Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Covid Relief funding at their August meetings. Selected projects will be updated and added to the statewide JobNet database and amended at the next MPO meetings. The MPO was able to program \$1,093,118 toward projects within the MPO area based on guidance from the Technical and Policy committees.

MPO meetings are now being held in person and will continue as such until further notice. Meeting materials can be found on the WMSRDC website.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Technical Assistance

As the region's designated Economic Development District, the WMSRDC Economic Development program is required to develop, maintain, and implement the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). To facilitate implementation of the CEDS, WMSRDC provides local communities and other eligible applicants with technical assistance (free of charge) to guide and refine potential project ideas into competitive project applications for Economic Development Administration (EDA) investment. The EDA has many funding programs with the flexibility to invest in a range of activities, from economic development studies to infrastructure construction. Organizations interested in seeking EDA investment should contact WMSRDC early and often to ensure the best chance for success.

On July 22, the EDA announced a suite of funding opportunities through which it

will allocate \$3 billion in supplemental funding received through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. This funding enables EDA to provide larger, more transformational investments across the nation while utilizing its greatest strengths, including flexible funding to support community-led economic development. With an emphasis on equity, the EDA investments made under the American Rescue Plan will directly benefit previously underserved communities impacted by COVID-19. Visit www.eda.gov/funding-opportunities/ to learn more and to access links to the grant opportunity for each program, which include:

- Economic Adjustment Assistance
- Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation
- Indigenous Communities
- Build Back Better Regional Challenge
- Statewide Planning, Research and Networks
- Good Jobs Challenge

Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Survey

In fall 2021, WMSRDC, in partnership with local economic development offices (LEDOs) from the counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo and Oceana, will roll out an online survey to gather perspectives that will help document and respond to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey is a component of a pandemic recovery and resiliency economic development plan that WMSRDC is developing for the WMSRDC Economic Development District (EDD).

The survey will solicit viewpoints regarding specific impacts of the pandemic upon local economies; public infrastructure and services in light of the pandemic; anticipated further economic impacts

of the pandemic; recommendations for economic recovery and resiliency; and pandemic success stories from local businesses.

Surveys are expected to be available online through the WMSRDC website from September through October 2021. Visit <https://wmsrdc.org> for additional information. The final Pandemic Recovery & Resiliency Plan will be completed by June 2022. This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) with federal funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020.



Lake Michigan Rivers and Coastal Wetlands

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration selected WMSRDC for the Lake Michigan Rivers and Coastal Wetlands Regional Partnership in 2020.

The partnership is designed to restore fish and wildlife habitat in eastern Lake Michigan drowned river mouth systems. The partnership's first year provided funding for engineering and design work to improve fish passage, stream habitat, and wetland connectivity in Little Cedar Creek, part of the Muskegon River watershed in Muskegon County.

On July 27, 2021, NOAA selected three additional projects for a \$3,568,576 award. The projects are:

- Implementation of the Little Cedar Creek engineered design in Muskegon County.
- Engineering/design and implementation of the White River Fish Passage and Stream Habitat Restoration Project in Oceana County.
- Engineering/design and implementation of the Stony Creek/Marshville Dam Project in Oceana County.

WMSRDC is managing the projects in partnership with the Muskegon County Road Commission, Oceana County Road Commission, Oceana County Parks, Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute (GVSU AWRI), Conservation Resource Alliance, watershed groups, and private landowners.

GVSU AWRI is performing fish monitoring as part of the project. WMSRDC selected GEI Consultants to design the Little Cedar Creek project. WMSRDC will seek additional, competitive proposals for the Stony Creek and White River projects later this year. The Regional Partnership will end in 2023, with the potential of an extension through 2025.



Perched culverts like the one at Sweeter Road prevent fish passage.

Environmental Outreach: Purpose, Participation, Promotion, Productivity and Partnerships

Recently, WMSRDC presented a tour of the AMOCO Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration site (the bike path project) for the Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council (MCECC). WMSRDC was happy to provide this opportunity as part of our outreach services to stakeholders, clients, funders, and partners. The MCECC is a diverse group whose members represent many segments of the community including education, business, environmental, and governmental interests. This site tour allowed WMSRDC to provide information on the why, how, and who is working to restore our resources.

In the case of the AMOCO site, the MCECC group was impressed to learn that the funds were provided by a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant passed from the EPA to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and administered by the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) with WMSRDC being selected as the project manager. WMSRDC shared details of the project, like acres of wetland restored,

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Environmental Outreach continued from page 5

linear feet of concrete wall and tonnage of fill removed, number of native plants planted, and fish habitat installed to name a few. The group was able to appreciate the commitment of WMSRDC and its partners toward restoring Muskegon Lake's beneficial use impairments (BUI) that will allow Muskegon Lake to be removed from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC). MCECC was just as impressed to learn that AMOCO is just one of three remaining habitat restoration sites currently under way.

Project stakeholder tours are but one of the outreach services WMSRDC provides. WMSRDC also has partners that want to review project sites and funders who want to better understand the local needs they are funding. WMSRDC provides educators with information and networking opportunities and stakeholder volunteers (Neighborhood Associations, environmental interest groups, or the general public) with training that can help with monitoring projects, protect property, or to just feeling good by participating in resource improvement efforts. WMSRDC works to notify project neighbors of important scheduling dates and tasks and answer questions as they come up.



Above: The Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council participating in the AMOCO site tour provided by WMSRDC staff and contractors.

WMSRDC is also assisting the Great Lakes Areas of Concern Conference planning committee and will host tours of Muskegon Lake fish and wildlife habitat restoration sites during the conference in May of 2022. Details on how to register will be available in the coming months.



Above left: NOAA and GLC staff on a site visit at Veterans Memorial Park. Above right: West Michigan Environmental Women's Lunch and Learn at the Muskegon Lake Nature Preserve



The purpose, participation, promotion, productivity, and partnerships are the goals enhanced through WMSRDC's outreach services and how valuable work is provided.



Left: WMSRDC consultant and GEI staff bio-engineer Brian Majka sharing project details with West Michigan outdoor education environmental interest groups at the Muskegon Lake Nature preserve.

Veterans Park Memorial Markers Mapped

With the completion of restoration work on the south pond of the Veterans Memorial Causeway Park, the veteran's memorial markers have been returned to their trees with help from the Muskegon County Veterans Affairs office and the Northside Lions Club. A map was created to help family and visitors locate the memorial trees within the park.

To compliment that work, WMSRDC's GIS staff is currently mapping the walkway markers throughout the park. When completed, the current map showing the veteran's markers located by the trees in the park will also show the location of each honored veteran's walkway marker, its location and picture of the marker, along with information on each veteran.

A QR code sticker will be created and placed throughout the park to make it easier for visitors to access the map on their smart phones to then be able to locate markers and plaques within the park in real time. The walkway markers have been purchased through the Veteran's Affairs office and contain the name of the local serviceperson, their branch of service, and the years they



WMSRDC staff has been very busy this summer with the clean-up, inventory, photographing, and mapping of the walkway makers.

served. The walkway that meanders through the park and on the island is made up of cement pavers that are roughly five feet squared. Each paver usually holds four individual markers but could include more. Once updated, the online map will be searchable by name and will show the user the exact location of the square of each marker throughout the park. This map and its data will also be used by the Veteran's Affairs Office to keep track of new markers and assist with maintenance.

To learn more about WMSRDC's mapping services, please contact Jamie Way, WMSRDC GIS Specialist at (231) 722-7878 ext. 150.

The WMSRDC office is open.

Staff is currently working a hybrid of in-person and remote.



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major task in the update planning process to conduct research and verify factual information contained within the existing plans. Then, during the first few months of 2022, input will be sought from jurisdictions, stakeholders and the general public regarding vulnerabilities and concerns related to the known hazards within the area. It is intended that a variety of means will be utilized to solicit input, including in-person open houses and online surveys. This strategy will need to be flexible, however, considering uncertain circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information regarding the Hazard Mitigation project visit <https://wmsrdc.org/program/hazard-mitigation/> or please contact Stephen Carlson at (231) 722-7878 ext.110 or scarlson@wmsrdc.org.

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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