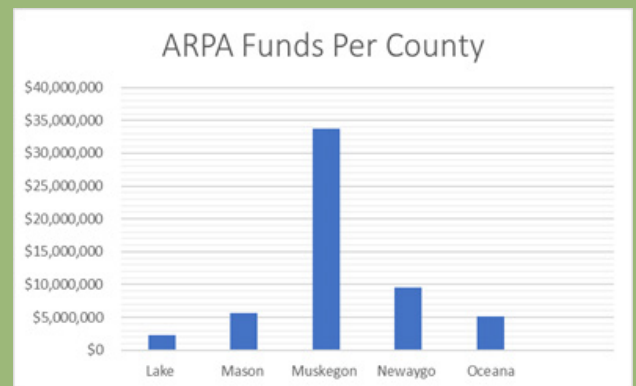




American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA)

WMSRDC wants to know how local governments are using their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars. ARPA is federal legislation enacted in March 2021 to help communities that suffered revenue loss during the Covid-19 pandemic. The act provides \$30.5 billion to help local communities address critical infrastructure needs that were brought to light through the pandemic.

WMSRDC has created a survey to track how these funds are being utilized. Once tabulated, this information will help local governments throughout the region coordinate ARPA investments and maximize impact. WMSRDC will also use the information to better focus regional pandemic recovery assistance efforts and to facilitate the coordination of investments. The local government survey may be accessed at wmsrdc.org on the home page under Recent Topics. The survey will remain open through the month of May.



Communities in the WMSRDC region were allotted an estimated \$56,331,342 in ARPA funds, with Muskegon County receiving the most funding at \$33,713,161. The following link gives a complete estimated funding list of non-entitlement community allocations for Michigan communities:

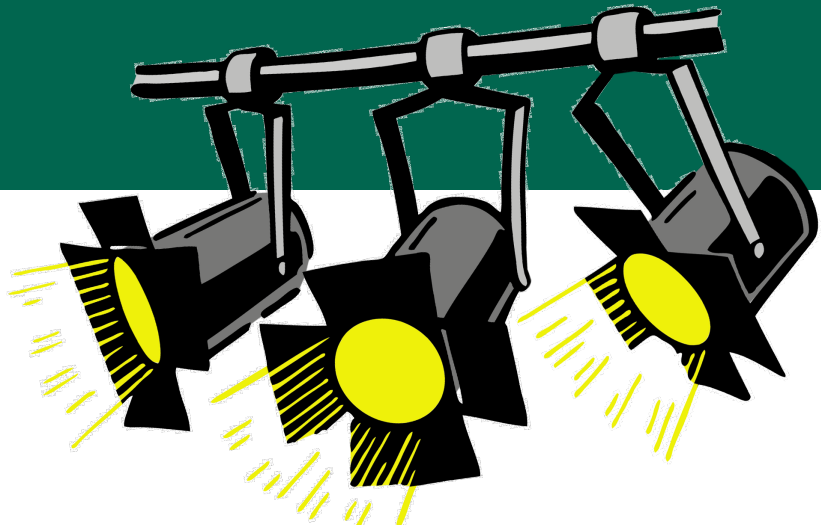
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/treasury/Non_Entitlement_Allocations_6.17.2021_728154_7.pdf

ARPA funds must be used to replace lost public sector revenue, respond to the far-reaching public health negative economic impacts of the pandemic, provide premium pay for essential workers, and/or invest in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. The project and expenditures reporting deadline was April 30, 2022. Non-entitlement units of government (NEUs) which are local governments under 50,000 population must file one report per year through Dec. 31, 2026.

ARPA funds represent a rare and welcome opportunity for public investment. Communities around

SPOTLIGHT STORY

2022 Great Lakes Areas of Concern Conference in Muskegon



The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) presents the Annual Areas of Concern (AOC) Conference. This year's conference will be held May 24-26, 2022, at the new, state-of-the-art VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center in downtown Muskegon. The conference will include several pre-conference tours and activities, including a sunset cruise on Muskegon Lake and guided site tours to 19 of the 29 projects WMSRDC has completed in its effort to delist Muskegon Lake from a Great Lakes AOC. On the evening of May 24th, a pre-conference reception will be held for participants to gather prior to the main event. The conference is an opportunity for other AOC communities and interested parties to share their ideas, efforts, and the progress made in their own respective AOCs.

State of the art information sharing will cover a wide variety of topics ranging from habitat restoration issues, contaminated sediments, public outreach, funding, academic collaboration, integrating indigenous ecological knowledge, to diversity, inclusion, revitalization in AOCs and building a blue economy. Presentations will be given by experts with many combined years of experience and knowledge.

WMSRDC has assisted with the planning for this event along with the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership (MLWP), AOC participants, and other partners. WMSRDC is pleased for this opportunity to highlight the decade long progress made by working in concert with its many federal, state, and local partners and the MLWP on the delisting of Muskegon Lake. In that time, WMSRDC has directed over \$40 million in grant funding toward remediation, restoration, and resiliency projects in the Muskegon Lake AOC. Contaminated sediments have been remediated and removed, and wetlands and wildlife habitat have been restored. Projects to provide resiliency to stormwater infrastructure, natural areas, parks and preserves have all

Continued on page 3



SPOTLIGHT STORY CONTINUED

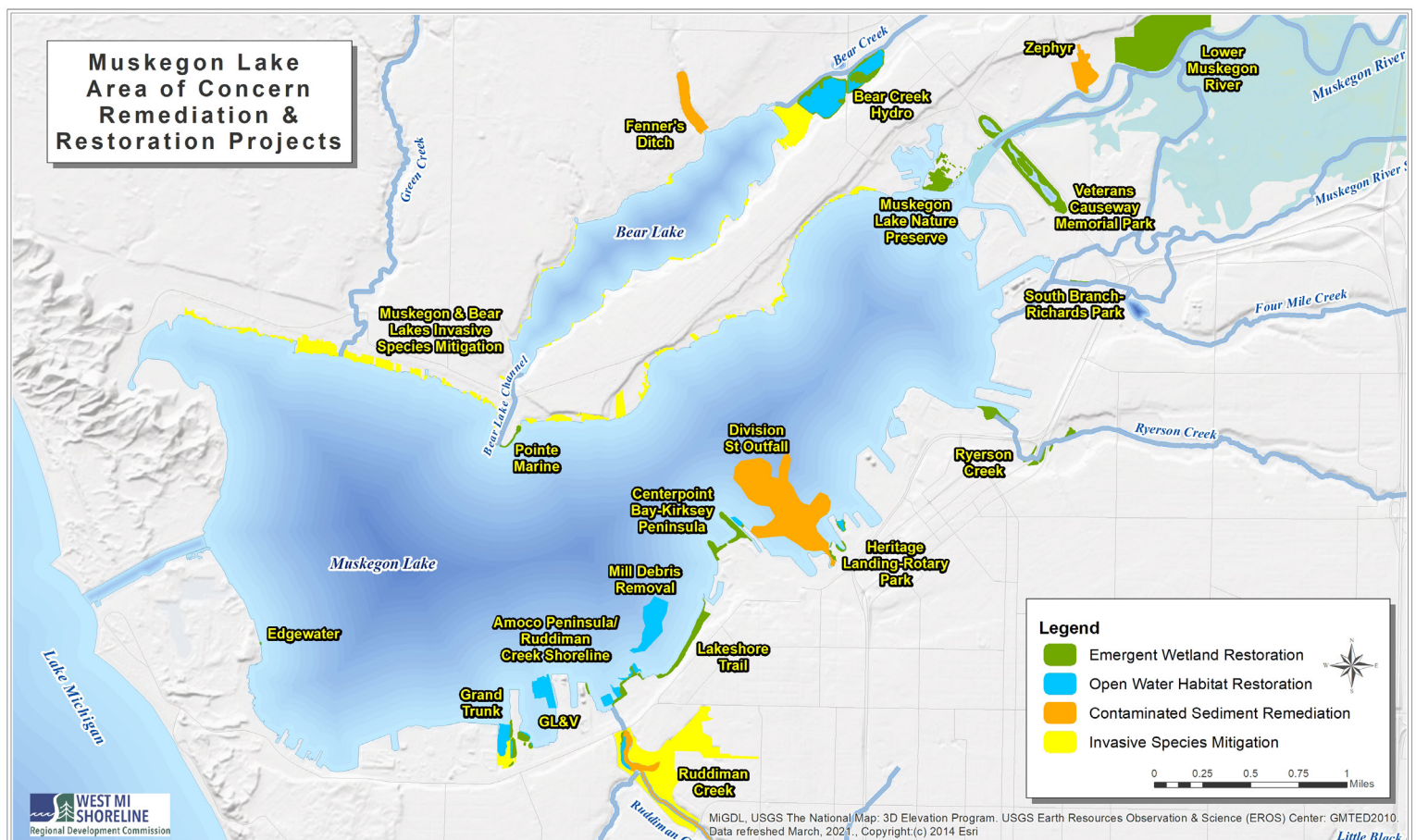
Areas of Concern Conference Continued from page 2

been accomplished while simultaneously educating the public on resource issues. The map below depicts the remediation and restoration projects on Muskegon Lake that have taken place toward the delisting.

As Muskegon Lake draws near to being removed from the list of Great Lakes AOCs, WMSRDC looks forward to sharing successes with AOC members during the conference. Members from throughout the Great Lakes States and Canada will be provided opportunities and information that will assist all the AOCs in achieving their delisting goals.

Federal agencies, including the EPA, state AOC program managers and staff, AOC advisory council chairpersons and members, private sector and academic interests, and other interested parties are encouraged to attend. The registration deadline is May 13th. For registration information, please visit <https://egle.idloom.events/annual-aoc-conference>.

Remediation and Restoration Projects on Muskegon Lake in Efforts Toward the Delisting of the AOC



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development District Update

WMSRDC hosted the spring CEDS Strategy Committee meeting on April 29, 2022 via Microsoft Teams. A focus of the meeting was to discuss regional priorities and strategies for the WMSRDC Pandemic Response and Recovery Plan (PRRP). Attendees also participated in a roundtable discussion of recent and upcoming economic development events in the region.

In addition to being a focus of the CEDS meeting, staff discussed the PRRP with the WMSRDC Board during its regular bi-monthly meeting which was held at the Mason County Airport in Ludington. The PRRP is nearing completion and is on track to be published in June.

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 next committee meeting is July 29 at 11:30, also to be conducted over Microsoft Teams. If interested, please contact Stephen Carlson at scarlson@wmsrdc.org for more information.

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 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).

Technical Assistance Update

March 31, 2022 marked the application deadline for U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). EDA will continue accepting applications through its regular funding programs, which typically do not have deadlines. In advance of the recent deadline, WMSRDC staff focused on providing technical assistance to interested communities, which ranged from vetting and developing project narratives to preparing and submitting applications. Three applications for EDA ARPA funding were submitted, including a workforce and economic diversification study and two municipal wastewater projects.

Go to <https://eda.gov/funding-opportunities/> for information regarding current funding opportunities. And as always, please reach out to WMSRDC to discuss potential projects for EDA assistance. The sooner, the better!



Coastal Resilience Pre-Proposals Submitted

WMSRDC has submitted two pre-proposals to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the U.S. Department of Defense, Occidental Petroleum, Shell Oil Company, and Transatlantic Holdings, Inc., and with additional support this year from the Bezos Earth Fund, under the 2022 National Coastal Resilience Fund.

The first proposal is for final design and permitting to stabilize Big Sandy Bend, an eroding stream bank on the Pentwater River. This project will provide protection for a Great Lakes coastal marsh at the mouth of Pentwater River, improve riverine habitat, reduce negative sediment impacts on downstream river habitat, and restore wetland floodplain habitat. Project partners will be the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division, Pentwater State Game Area, Pentwater Lake Association, Pentwater Lake Board, West Michigan Watershed Partners, and Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute.

The second proposal is for a project site assessment and preliminary design to plant diverse vegetation in critical dune and shoreline understory areas along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan in Muskegon and Oceana counties. The project will provide resiliency against erosion, other threats associated with high water levels, and hemlock woolly adelgid. Project partners will include the Muskegon Conservation District, the Oceana Conservation District, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and community members.

Cleaning Up Along Muskegon Lake

The Muskegon Lake Annual Spring Cleanup took place on Sunday, April 24th. The chance of rain did not deter approximately 50 volunteers from removing litter and debris at eight locations around Muskegon Lake. To start the event, the group met at CIO Hall at 8:00 a.m. to plan while enjoying doughnuts and coffee. At noon the volunteers gathered back at CIO hall to tally up the trash data collected, share stories, and eat pizza.

In total, approximately 660 pounds of litter was removed. The most abundant items collected were food wrappers followed closely by plastic bottle caps. Other prevalent items in order of number found included tiny plastic pieces, cigarette butts, plastic bottles, plastic bags, cups and plates, lids, straws and stirrers, fishing line, shotgun shells, and pieces of paper. The most talked about items included a deer blind someone seemed to have once lived in and a leaking gas can that was brought to Auto Zone for proper disposal.

Partners for the event included DTE Foundation, the City of Muskegon, Greater Muskegon Jaycees, Muskegon County, Muskegon County Environmental Coordinating Council, Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership, the local United Auto Workers, United Way, WMSRDC, and West Michigan United Labor.



Top Picture: Mother and son team cleaning along the lakeshore.

Bottom Picture: The cleanup team at Heritage Landing.



Hazard Mitigation Planning Update

Efforts to update the hazard mitigation plans for Lake, Mason, and Oceana counties continue. In March, WMSRDC staff coordinated with each county's emergency manager to send letters to all local units of government. The letters served to notify local units of the plan updates over the next 12 to 16 months and to seek their participation in the process.

The plans will enable counties, and local municipalities that participate in the planning process, to apply for funding to lessen or prevent the effects of natural hazards. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires these plans to be updated every five years.

Feedback from each community within the county is critical to the quality of this effort. Opportunities for input will be made available through the WMSRDC website. Communities that choose to participate will be notified when opportunities arise. There is no cost or obligation associated with participation. However, failure to participate may jeopardize a community's eligibility for hazard mitigation funding or projects in the future.

If your community wishes to participate, and has not yet responded to the aforementioned letter, please appoint a point of contact for your community by sending a name and email address to scarlson@wmsrdc.org. Questions and concerns regarding the hazard mitigation plan updates may also be sent to that address, or directed to your county's emergency manager.

Local Planning Clearinghouse

As a regional planning and development organization, WMSRDC serves a wide variety of roles. One perhaps lesser-known role is to provide a clearinghouse for local planning efforts. In Michigan, local governments that are creating or updating master planning and recreation planning must notify the local regional planning agency when they are engaging in the activity, and they must provide a copy of the plan to the regional planning agency when it is complete. This may be in the form of a paper copy, a digital copy sent via email, or a link to the plan online.

In the coming months, WMSRDC will step up its "clearinghouse game." A project page will appear on the WMSRDC website to provide information about

the status of community master and recreation plans within the region, links to those plans (if available), and instructions on how to submit plans to WMSRDC. This public-facing clearinghouse will facilitate awareness for planning and be a resource for communities and interested individuals.

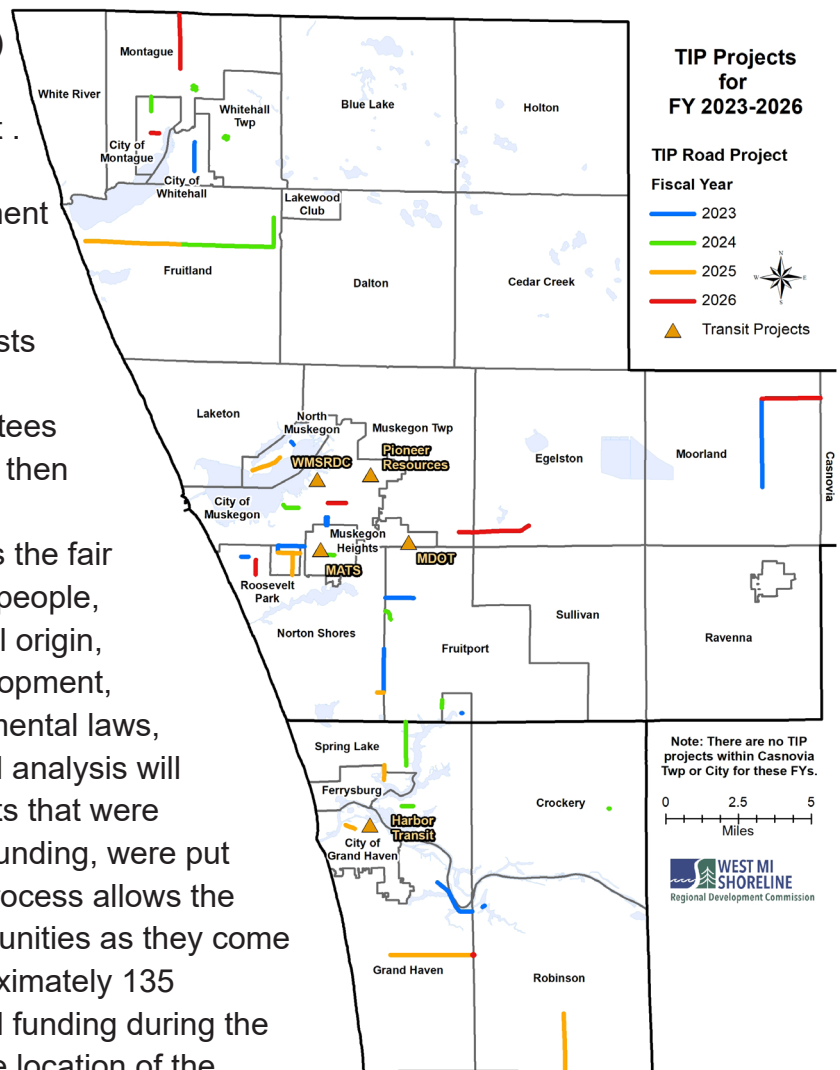
"...a lesser-known role of WMSRDC is to provide a clearinghouse for local planning efforts."



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

New Transportation Improvement Program Near Completion

The West Michigan Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (WestPlan) is wrapping up development of the Fiscal Year 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Staff has been working with local transit and road agencies on the document for the past year. Final approval on the TIP from the WestPlan Technical and Policy Committees is anticipated in June. Project lists for federally funded local, state, and transit projects were developed through the committees and approved in January. The projects were then mapped using GIS and analyzed by staff for Environmental Justice (EJ) compliance. EJ is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, national origin, or educational level with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. The EJ process and analysis will be outlined in the final TIP document. Projects that were submitted by agencies, but not selected for funding, were put into the TIP illustrative list of projects. This process allows the projects to be ready for future funding opportunities as they come up. The FY2023-2026 TIP consists of approximately 135 programmed projects that will receive federal funding during the course of the TIP. The map above shows the location of the projects. Staff also met with the Inter-Agency Work Group (IAWG) to review the project list and determine if further air quality analysis would be needed for any of the projects. The public comment period for the draft TIP will be May 10-24, 2022 with a public comment open house at the WMSRDC office on May 17th from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. The draft document and large maps of the projects will be available for review and comment.



Metropolitan transportation planning addresses a multitude of transportation projects such as resurfacing and reconstructing existing roads, preventative maintenance, safety and bridge repair projects, air quality related projects, and non-motorized projects. The planning program also assists in transit planning for the Muskegon Area Transit System and Harbor Transit in northern Ottawa County and several other local transit providers such as Pioneer Resources, AgeWell Services, and Goodwill Industries. Planning activities include assistance with applications, studies, and collaborating on services related to seniors and individuals with disabilities.



ARPA

(continued from front page)

the country are already employing ARPA funds to address essential infrastructure needs, such as disparities in access to quality broadband internet. However, concerted long-term efforts are needed to truly help local communities recover from the pandemic and be better prepared to face emergencies in the future. The WMSRDC local government survey will provide insight into local needs and opportunities for collaboration. Results will be made available through this newsletter and the WMSRDC website by early summer.

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.

Bonnie McGlothlin, Chairperson, Councilperson, City of Muskegon Heights
Dale Nesbary, Vice-Chairperson, Muskegon Community College
James Maike, Secretary, Newaygo County Commissioner
Ron Bacon, Mason County Commissioner
Ron Christians, Oceana County Commissioner
Kim Cyr, Muskegon County Commissioner
Jennifer Hodges, Supervisor, Muskegon Township
Rich Houtteman, WMSRDC Appointee
Marcia Hovey-Wright, Muskegon County Commissioner
Ken Johnson, Commissioner, City of Muskegon
James Kelly, WMSRDC Appointee
Bryan Kolk, Newaygo County Commissioner
Andrea Large, WMSRDC Appointee
Roger Morgenstern, Councilperson, City of Norton Shores
Phil Morse, Oceana County Commissioner
James Rynberg, City of Fremont
Lewis Squires, Mason County Commissioner
Len Todd, Lake County Commissioner
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

