

Commission Quarterly



Materials Management Planning Committee

The counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana are in the beginning stages of preparing a Materials Management Plan (MMP). Over the past several months, the counties have accomplished several steps required by the State of Michigan in the development of an MMP. Initial steps included each county Board of Commissioners agreeing to serve as the County Approval Agency (CAA), naming WMSRDC as their Designated Planning Agency (DPA), signing an interlocal agreement, and filing a Notice of Intent to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).

During the fall, WMSRDC and the counties appointed the Materials Management Planning Committee (MMPC). The first meeting of the MMPC was held on December 2, 2024, at the WMSRDC office in downtown Muskegon. At the meeting the committee appointed a chairperson and vice-chairperson, approved by-laws, established a monthly meeting schedule, and were educated regarding the state's MMP process. Next steps for the committee will be to prepare a Work Plan to be submitted and approved by EGLE in early 2025. WMSRDC, as the DPA for the five county MMP, has developed an MMP webpage to house

information regarding the process including MMPC meeting information, plan development, and resources. The webpage can be found at wmsrdc.org/program/materials-management-planning/. WMSRDC has also developed a distribution list for interested parties to receive information regarding the process. To be added to the list please sign up on the WMSRDC website using the "Contact Us" tab or reach out to the WMSRDC office directly at 231-722-7878.

MMPs are to focus on comprehensive materials management, including recycling, composting, disposal, and other diversion activities. These plans will establish goals with measurable objectives to divert recyclables and organics from disposal while also increasing recycling access and education. Counties will have 36 months (three years) to complete the planning process. Per section 11587 of the amendment, a grant program has been established for the duration of the planning process to assist counties with the formation and initial implementation of the plan. Additional funding for ongoing implementation and maintenance of the plan

will be available by request and approval through EGLE beyond the first three years.

Based on amendments to Part 115, Solid Waste Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, each county in the state is required to prepare a Materials Management Plan (MMP). Once approved, the MMP will replace the existing county solid waste plans. The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes,

continued on page 2



Newaygo Pine Street Access Fill

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Table of Contents

Economic Development	2 & 3
Local Government Services	2
Environmental	3 & 4
Transportation	5, 6 & 7
Commission Operations	7

Economic Development: Agriculture Impact Analysis

In September, WMSRDC was awarded a grant from the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to help bolster the region’s agriculture and food processing industries. The project, entitled the West Michigan Agriculture Cluster Impact Analysis, was initiated on October 3. From then, WMSRDC began the process of competitively selecting a consultant to conduct a portion of the analysis. A qualified candidate is expected to be on board by January 2025. WMSRDC also met with Michigan State University Remote Sensing & GIS staff to begin the asset mapping portion of the project.

In addition, in the fall WMSRDC received significant financial support to help cover matching requirements of the EDA grant. WMSRDC is grateful for the contributions awarded by the Michigan Infrastructure Office through its Making It in Michigan fund, the Fremont Area Community Foundation, and the Community Foundation for Muskegon County.

The project is due for completion before September 30, 2025. The overarching purpose of this project is to inform and empower public officials, economic development organizations, and agriculture producers and processors to make strategic and sustainable investments towards increased efficiency, productivity, and long-term resilience and sustainability of the region’s agricultural economy. Activities will

include agriculture sector research and analysis, data mapping, stakeholder engagement, and identification and prioritization of strategic investments and innovative opportunities.



Food processing is an essential component of agriculture in West Michigan

Local Government Services: Blue Lake Township Planning Assistance

WMSRDC has continued to work with the Blue Lake Township Planning Commission to update the township’s Comprehensive Development Plan and Recreation Plan. A public input phase kicked off the effort in July and August, including an online public opinions survey and a public meeting to gather information and perspectives of

residents. The feedback gathered was used in September and October to help the Planning Commission review and revise the Goals & Objectives of both plans.

Through this initial phase, WMSRDC was able to efficiently work on both plans concurrently. However, the planning timelines began to diverge in November

Materials Management Planning Committee

continued from page 1

and Energy (EGLE) is implementing the law as well as providing guidance, resources, and funding to counties as they embark on the development of MMPs.

Preparation of the MMPs is a new and unique planning process being undertaken in the state. The shift away from Solid Waste Planning to a comprehensive Materials Management Planning process is a practice that has not been done in Michigan. WMSRDC is excited to be partnering with the five counties in our region in navigating this new process together.

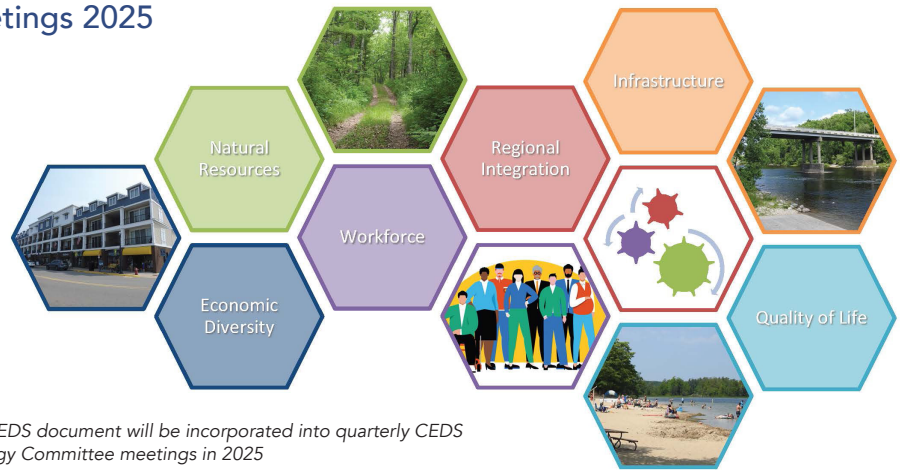


Cover page of the draft recreation plan

when a proposed Recreation Plan draft was made available for public review, followed by a public meeting scheduled for December 10 at the Blue Lake Township Hall. The Recreation Plan is on track for completion in January, at which time the Planning Commission will shift its attention to completing the Comprehensive Plan update.

Economic Development: CEDS Meetings 2025

The CEDS Strategy Committee exists to guide the development and implementation of the region’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is a five-year plan required by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) to be eligible for economic development funding. Eligible EDA applicants include local governments, nonprofits, and other public entities. The CEDS process, including the 5-year plan and CEDS Strategy Committee, represents a long-standing framework for economic development visioning, regional coordination, and connecting stakeholders with resources.



The CEDS document will be incorporated into quarterly CEDS Strategy Committee meetings in 2025

In 2025, the CEDS Strategy Committee will convene quarterly via virtual conference. Each meeting will have a theme related to the CEDS Goals & Objectives. The tentative dates and themes are as follows: January 24 (Infrastructure), April 24 (Workforce),

July 25 (Economic Diversity/ Regional Integration), and October 24 (Natural Resources/ Quality of Life). Please send an email to info@wmsrdc.org if you are interested in receiving economic updates and meeting notices from WMSRDC!

Environmental: New Grant Awards

WMSRDC is pleased to announce two newly awarded projects under the environmental program!

Project Planning - Through the National Coastal Resilience Fund (NCRF), a partnership between the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Department of Defense (DoD), Shell USA, and Occidental, funds were awarded to Support Resilience Planning in West

Michigan to Protect Communities and Drowned River Mouth Systems.

West Michigan hosts several lakes commonly known as “drowned river mouth lakes.” Formed by glaciers, these lakes are located at the mouths of rivers flowing into Lake Michigan, separated only by short channels. Drown river mouth lakes provide critical habitat and nursery grounds for native and recreational fish in the Great Lakes.

Unfortunately, all watersheds in the project area have known sites of erosion, road stream crossing that are not adequate for fish passage, and stormwater management needs that impact the local economies.

WMSRDC will collaborate with community leaders, stakeholders, and an environmental consulting firm to develop a prioritized list of nature-based projects that benefit community resilience and

continued on page 4



West Michigan Drowned River Mouth Systems: Pere Marquette Lake, Pentwater Lake, White Lake, Muskegon Lake, Mona Lake.

Environmental: City of Muskegon Urban Tree Management

City of Muskegon Urban Tree Management will be conducted thanks to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act (UCF IRA) Grant Program made possible through IRA funding provided by the USDA Forest Service’s Urban and Community Forestry Program.

In 2023, WMSRDC engaged a subset of Muskegon neighborhoods for their input on tree planting locations. During these meetings it quickly became apparent that the true need from these underserved communities is the removal of trees threatening public safety. With this knowledge, WMSRDC will partner with the City of Muskegon to provide a phased approach to urban forestry. A forestry consul-

tant will be competitively selected to conduct an unbiased and detailed tree inventory. A corresponding tree management plan will categorize the most dangerous trees in need of removal. Then, with consideration to input provided by underserved community members, the City of Muskegon will implement tree removals and new tree plantings, leading to restored tree canopy resilience with healthy and biodiverse trees. To further engage the youth within the community, Muskegon Community College Forestry Program students will be given



Example of healthy trees within the City of Muskegon

the opportunity to job shadow the forestry consultant, the city’s staff, and WMSRDC staff during all phases of the project. Additionally, Muskegon Public Schools high schoolers will assist in new tree planting on the school’s property.

Environmental: New Grant Awards

continued from page 3

fish and wildlife habitat along coastal Lake Michigan and its associated drowned river mouth systems in Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana counties. WMSRDC will host West Michigan Watershed Partners meetings and county level planning meetings to allow participants to provide input on locations in need of protection and the ideal outcomes and benefits from resiliency and restoration efforts. Depending on each project’s scope and budget,

two to four of the identified projects will be prepared to flow into the Site Assessment and Preliminary Design phase of the NCRF pipeline. The additional projects recognized in the plan will continue to work through development and community preparedness to be submitted under future years of the NCRF pipeline or through other funding programs. All future designs will utilize soft engineering solutions influenced by fluctuating water levels

seasonally and annually and resilient to site hydrology to reduce any future coastal hazards, while ensuring all projects enhance habitat and benefit native wildlife, leading to improved habitat for native plants and animals, reduced shoreline erosion, improved fish passage, and increased tourism due to improved fishing, boating, wildlife watching, and aesthetics.



Transportation: Non-Motorized Plan

WMSRDC staff, along with the consulting firm, Progressive Companies, will work on updating the non-motorized transportation plan for the Muskegon County/northern Ottawa County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The current plan was completed in 2013 with help from Progressive Companies and local stakeholders.

The new plan will examine current non-motorized trails as well as on-road facilities within the MPO boundaries. The plan will also identify potential new connections to fill in the gaps between existing and proposed, but not yet constructed, trails and on-road facilities. It will provide a glimpse of existing and potential links that create an extensive interconnected system for the entire MPO area.

Additionally, the City of Muskegon Parks Department is also partnering on this project with the Muskegon Lake Greenway. Since the Muskegon Lakeshore Trail is largely complete, full-scale trail planning is not necessarily needed, but urban greenway planning is needed as this trail connects many public park spaces, business districts, amenities, and other destinations. With the Muskegon/North Ottawa Greenways Plan, the Muskegon Lake Greenway will be a focus area and provide a "model within the model" demonstrating the potential of urban greenway planning and design.

This plan will also coordinate with an 18-county regional non-motorized pathway plan being undertaken by the West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition. The plan will include a robust public outreach process to educate residents, stakeholders, staff, and policymakers on the best-practice infrastructure and the benefits of this infrastructure. The update will be completed in FY2025.



Berry Junction Trail in Muskegon County



Berry Junction Trail in Muskegon County



Muskegon Lakeshore Trail



Trail in Oceana County

Transportation: FY2026-2029 TIP Development

WestPlan MPO staff issued a “Call for Projects” in early September to MPO member road and transit agencies. Those agencies submitted prioritized project lists for consideration in the new TIP that is under development. MPO staff hosted a project selection work session on December 5, 2024, to discuss the project submittals and agree on a preliminary draft list to be acted on in January at the MPO meetings. Technical Committee members were able to agree on a draft list and MPO staff are currently working to program the projects into JobNet, the statewide database that houses all federally funded transportation projects. One of the key requirements of this process is that the recommended list is fiscally constrained within the estimated budget for the different funding categories. When the final list is approved, MDOT and WMSRDC will run the projects through several analyses to ensure compliance with federal guidelines. The final FY2026-2029 TIP document is expected to be completed in April of 2025.



2024 construction project in the City of Muskegon on Laketon Avenue at Seaway, looking east.

Transportation: FY2023-2026 TIP Update

The WestPlan MPO Technical and Policy Committees last met in December where they reviewed and discussed the 21st Amendment to the FY2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MPO committees took action to approve the amendment. Projects in the amendment included a project for the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) on I-96 which includes Road Rehabilitation between US-31 and Apple Drive. The other project on the list was for the Muskegon County Road

Commission for a resurface project on Michillinda Road in Fruitland Township. The addition of new projects, or changes that impact the cost or scope of existing projects require an amendment and must follow the MPO public involvement procedures. Minor changes such as typos or minor description changes are allowed to be changed administratively by MPO staff. Any changes to the TIP document are discussed



Work began this summer on this stretch of Broadway Avenue in the City of Muskegon Heights.

at the MPO committee meetings which occur monthly. Details of WestPlan MPO TIP amendments and other MPO related information can be found by visiting the website at www.wmsrdc.org.

Transportation: Rural Task Force Update

The five-county Rural Transportation Task Force (RTF) continued to meet in 2024. The task force receives approximately \$4.2 million of federal funding as well as a little over \$900,000 in State funding per year. Typical projects include road construction, road maintenance, and transit bus purchases. Projects were chosen at the individual county level prior to approval at the five-county task force meeting.

The West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC) assists in the administration of the RTF for the counties of Muskegon, Oceana, Newaygo, Lake, and Mason. WMSRDC is responsible for scheduling meetings, administering the public involvement process, documenting meeting activities, and submitting information to MDOT.

During the fall of 2024, staff scheduled and held local RTF task force meetings for all five counties in the region to choose projects for fiscal years 2026-2029. After local projects were chosen, the full five county task force met in December to approve the projects.



Road Construction in Muskegon County

Commission Operations: New Database and Email Platform

In November, WMSRDC switched their database and email platform to Constant Contact. This platform will be used for larger, group mailings and will come from the email address, wms shoreline@wmsrdc.ccsend.com. Please add this email address to your address list or have your IT department give permission to receive email from this address, so you will continue to stay informed! Please note that regardless of this change, WMSRDC employee email addresses will remain the same.





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