



Photo Credit: Keto Gyekis kgnaturephotography.com

MICHIGAN COASTAL NEWS

A Publication of the Michigan Coastal Management Program Volume 1, Issue 4: Winter 2007

COASTAL PROGRAM STAFF

Cathie Ballard, Chief
cunningc@michigan.gov

Christy Fox Weaver
foxcl@michigan.gov

Alisa Gonzales-Pennington
gonzalea@michigan.gov

Lynda Krupansky
krupansl@michigan.gov

Annette Nealey
nealeya@michigan.gov

Matt Smar
smarm@michigan.gov

Matt Warner
warnermt@michigan.gov

Michigan Coastal News is issued quarterly by the Michigan Coastal Management Program, Environmental Science and Services Division, Department of Environmental Quality. To suggest an idea for an article or submit a volunteer opportunity, contact Annette Nealey at (517) 335-3168, or nealeya@michigan.gov.

Michigan's Port Communities Chart a Collaborative Course in Port Huron

Great Lakes ports are economically vital hubs of commercial and industrial activity, where road, rail, and shipping networks interconnect for the transfer of passengers, bulk cargoes, and other commodities. In many cases, today's ports began as lumber, fishing, quarrying, or resort communities in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and historic buildings, lighthouses, docks, and other structures call to mind each community's rich maritime heritage. A number of ports also make room for marinas and recreational facilities along their working waterfronts, where waterside parks and promenades serve as venues for Tall Ship events, concerts, and festivals. From a community economic development perspective, the history, scenic setting, and mix of activities that energize many ports and working waterfronts are the ingredients for an entertaining and educational visitor experience.

Creative thinking, strategic planning, and collaborative action could firmly position Michigan's port communities among the Great Lakes' premier destinations for maritime heritage tourism. With this in mind, the Governor's Office, Department of History, Arts, and Libraries, and Department of Environmental Quality welcomed representatives from 23 Michigan coastal communities to the first working meeting of the Port Cities Collaborative. More than 80 participants met in Port Huron at the end of October to learn about successful programs in other ports, brainstorm on ways to establish Michigan's port cities maritime experience, identify cooperative projects, and plot out courses of action.

Discussion ranged across four broad themes, specifically, maritime heritage and nautical resources, recreation, environmental sustainability, and the concept of ports as gateways to the community. Ideas emerged and teams formed for several collaborative projects. For example, one team will explore hi-tech tools and approaches for marketing port cities to potential tourists and enhancing the visitor experience. Another workgroup will investigate options for improving transportation networks for visitors moving from port to port, and between waterfront and downtown areas. Since the concentration of industrial, commercial, and recreational uses at ports presents certain environmental challenges, another team will develop a toolkit of resources for "greening" port communities. The teams will discuss project progress and future phases at the next Port Cities Collaborative meeting, scheduled for March 10-11, 2008, in Traverse City.

Contact Cathie Cunningham Ballard, Chief, Michigan Coastal Management Program, for additional information on the Port Cities Collaborative: cunningc@michigan.gov, (517) 335-3456.





Photo Credit: Russ Soyring

Project Spotlight:

Planning for Urban Waterfront Revitalization

The waterfront is a popular destination in many coastal communities, and often ranks among the most scenic, interesting, and vibrant quarters of the city. Waterfront walkways, parks, plazas, and other civic spaces offer ample opportunities for public recreation and events, from strolling and boat watching to outdoor concerts and festivals. Local businesses tap into the stream of visitors and tourists drawn to the water, and areas dedicated to boatyards and other marine industries impart an authentic flavor to the waterfront visitor experience. Developing and maintaining a thriving waterfront takes planning, and a process with substantial public input can yield solid direction for community officials. Public involvement is particularly valuable in addressing issues such as brownfield redevelopment, and sale or acquisition of public lands.

Two Michigan communities used 2006 Coastal Zone Management grants to consult with their citizens and come up with plans for enhancing their waterfronts.

In Traverse City, changes in the use of key parcels on Grand Traverse Bay ripened the opportunity for a public conversation about a new vision for the waterfront. Convinced that the public involvement process is as important as the resulting waterfront plan, city officials launched "Your Bay, Your Say," featuring a series of public meetings, charrettes, presentation of design concepts by landscape architecture students, and other opportunities for sparking the imagination and generating input. The planning effort focused on 12,000 feet of public and privately-owned waterfront paralleling the main traffic artery along the Bay. The waterfront and adjacent areas host a diverse mix of businesses, walkways, a marina, beaches and other open space, and public facilities that enrich community life, including a senior center and the Great Lakes Campus of Northwestern Michigan College. Contact Russ Soyring, Traverse City Planning Director, for additional information about the project: rsoyring@traverse-city.mi.us, (231) 922-4460.

The City of Harbor Beach, in Huron County, has a smaller population and less intensive development on its Lake Huron waterfront. Nevertheless, the 3,000-foot stretch boasts a municipal marina, Coast Guard station, park, and swimming beach. Consequently, the waterfront planning process focused on enhancing existing public access sites and recreational facilities and linking them with a bike and pedestrian path, while preserving opportunities for future, compatible public and private investments such as a cruise ship dock, condominiums, hotels, and restaurants. A 12-acre brownfield redevelopment site and a 7-acre vacant parcel recently acquired by the City collectively made up more than half of the project area. Dozens of Harbor Beach residents took advantage of the offers to provide input, and the City Council engaged the help of a citizen steering committee, Vision for Harbor Beach, to work with the planning and landscape architecture firm that developed the plan. Contact Tom Youatt, Harbor Beach City Manager, for additional information about the project: tyouatt@harborbeachmi.org, (989) 479-3363.

Marinas Invited to Save Money, Participate in Shrink-Wrap Recycling Program

A company that manufactures recycled plastic products from used boat shrink-wrap is looking to sign up marinas for its Michigan collection routes this spring. Many recreational boat owners have their craft covered in low-density polyethylene (LDPE) shrink-wrap for the winter, as protection from snow and ice damage. The covering is removed in the spring, and the used shrink-wrap often ends up in landfills. However, used shrink-wrap is a valuable material that can be recycled into a variety of plastic products. For example, Ohio-based Mondo Polymers Technologies, Inc. manufactures highway guardrails from used shrink-wrap, and needs approximately 50,000 pounds of LDPE per day for its manufacturing processes.

With help from the Michigan Clean Marina Program, Mondo Polymers collected used boat shrink-wrap from several southeast Michigan marinas in 2007. The successful pilot-scale initiative allowed the company to collect 150,000 pounds of material. Participating marinas avoided, on average, about \$250 in waste disposal costs. This year, the company intends to collect used, debris-free boat shrink-wrap between mid-April and mid-June and will schedule free collections in southern Michigan, with the possibility of extending the routes if there is sufficient participation. Interested marina, yacht club, dry marina, and boat storage yard managers should contact company representative Ron Wesel by early February: ron@mondopolymer.com, (740) 376-9396. Information on the shrink-wrap recycling program, including preparation and storage of the material prior to pick-up, is linked to Michigan Sea Grant's Clean Marina Program webpage at www.miseagrant.umich.edu/cmp.

Michigan Sea Grant Spearheads Coastal Community Development Projects

Three coastal areas will be the focus of research, education, and outreach initiatives aimed at encouraging sustainable coastal economies, communities, and ecosystems. Using seed money from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Sea Grant agents in the northeast, northwest, and southwest Lower Peninsula districts are launching one-year projects designed to address issues of local importance. The limited-term projects are intended to leverage support from other sources and assist or serve as nuclei for long-lasting, stakeholder-driven efforts. All of the projects are aligned with Michigan Coastal Management Program objectives and have program support.

Entrepreneurs interested in starting kayaking, diving, or fishing charters, or similar tourist-oriented ventures may look forward to a web-based "toolbox" for coastal tourism businesses in the northeastern Lower Peninsula. Michigan Sea Grant facilitated a two-year, community involvement process to explore economic development opportunities in the region, with an emphasis on sustainable, coastal tourism based on natural and cultural resources. The website concept grew out of the process, and will serve as an information clearinghouse for organizations, agencies, and other partners providing products or services related to coastal tourism. Contact Brandon Schroeder, District Extension Educator, for additional information: schroe45@msu.edu, (989) 984-1056.

Building broad support for lake sturgeon restoration is the goal of another project targeting coastal communities and key stakeholders in the southwestern Lower Peninsula. One objective is to raise public awareness of the potential for restoring lake sturgeon in the region, in ways that are compatible with sustainable economic development. Another objective is to establish a southwest Michigan sturgeon restoration advisory board that would develop recommendations and priorities for the St. Joseph, Kalamazoo, Grand, and Muskegon Rivers. Contact Dr. Dan O'Keefe, District Extension Educator, for additional information: okeefed@mail.msu.edu, (616) 846-8250.

Finally, Michigan Sea Grant will develop outreach and education materials for use in efforts to restore, preserve, and interpret Fishtown, an historic working waterfront along Lake Michigan in Leland. The project, which dovetails with a recent NOAA Preserve America Initiative award, focuses on historic aspects and living history of the fishery and local fishing culture, spanning the period from 1870-2006. The non-profit Fishtown Preservation Society successfully raised funds to acquire the site, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is now seeking funding for sustainability and interpretation. The materials produced will support the Society's work. Contact Mark Breederland, District Extension Educator, for additional information: breederl@msu.edu, (231) 922-4628.



Photo Credit: Christy Fox Weaver, MDEQ

Historic Fishtown, Leelanau County

New Marine Conservation Area in Lake Superior

On October 25, 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the latest addition to Canada's system of parks and protected areas, the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA). The signing of an Agreement in Principle to create the NMCA caps a ten-year process involving studies, public input, and negotiations between the Canadian federal government, Ontario provincial government, and northern Superior region representatives of The First Nations. When formally established, the new NMCA will be the largest freshwater marine protected area in the world, encompassing more than 3,900 square miles of Lake Superior lakebed, as well as approximately 20 square miles of islands and coastal lands. The area harbors critical spawning habitat for salmonids and lake herring, islands used by colony-nesting waterbirds, coastal habitat for a remnant population of woodland caribou, pictographs and First Nations cultural sites, and dozens of shipwrecks. A portion of Michigan's international border with Canada defines the southern, offshore boundary of the Conservation Area.

Management of the new NMCA will balance resource protection with sustainable use. Dumping, mining, oil and gas exploration and extraction will be prohibited. Activities in some zones may be permanently or seasonally restricted, for example, to protect important habitats, sites of cultural and historic significance, or sites dedicated for research or environmental monitoring. Shipping and economic uses based on renewable resources will continue, such as commercial fishing, fishing charters, and diving charters. In fact, establishment of the NMCA is expected to boost regional tourism and create jobs, and the designation has abundant support from North Shore communities. Maps and additional information on Canada's NMCA system, including the Lake Superior NMCA, are available at www.pc.gc.ca/progs/amnc-nmca/index_E.asp.

Marsh Monitoring Program Seeks Help Expanding in Michigan Areas of Concern

Since 1995, hundreds of trained volunteers across the Great Lakes basin have collected population data on the bird, frog, and toad species breeding in Great Lakes marshes, under the auspices of the bi-national Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP). The information added to the MMP database increases its value every year, and allows researchers, habitat managers, and government agencies to identify long-term trends in the distribution and abundance of the birds and amphibians that depend on marshes for survival. These species trends, in turn, serve as a barometer of marsh ecosystem health at local and regional scales.

The MMP data also have application in measuring the progress of environmental clean-up and recovery efforts, and there is growing interest in using the data to inform regulatory decision-making. As a case in point, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Environment Canada are funding the establishment of a long-term wetland monitoring and assessment strategy for Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs). The AOCs are identified in the 1987 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement as areas where the degree of contamination, habitat degradation, and other environmental stressors impair their beneficial use. Bird Studies Canada, which coordinates the MMP, is managing the project to build on the existing basin-wide monitoring network. The goal is to use the MMP data in tracking the success of efforts to restore degraded wetlands and aquatic habitats, and ultimately remove sites from the AOC list.

Photo Credit: Steve Timmermans



One of the challenges to growing and maintaining a robust monitoring network at AOCs is the need to provide periodic in-person training, technical assistance, and encouragement to the volunteer marsh monitors. The project partners have found that local MMP volunteer coordinators are the most effective means of providing the necessary assistance and support, and are looking for committed people to lead and coordinate wetland monitoring efforts at several Michigan AOCs and surrounding regions, including: River Raisin; St. Clair River; Saginaw River and Bay; Detroit River; Rouge River; Clinton River; Kalamazoo River; St. Mary's River; Manistique River; Menominee River; and Torch Lake in the Ke-

weenaw Peninsula. Volunteer coordinator positions are unpaid, but training and materials are provided, and travel and certain other coordinator-related expenses may be reimbursed.

Bird Studies Canada plans to hold a two-day orientation workshop for new Michigan MMP volunteer coordinators on January 19-20 at the Chippewa Nature Center in Midland. The new coordinators will also be required to attend a spring outdoor training workshop in the same area. For information on these position opportunities or the upcoming workshops, contact Ryan Archer, MMP Assistant Coordinator: rarcher@bsc-eoc.org, (888) 448-2473 x 235.

Volunteer for Michigan's Coast!

Enjoy the camaraderie of fellow volunteers and freedom from mosquitoes while you help the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Alliance, Michigan DNR, and Michigan Nature Association with winter trail and habitat projects:

- **Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Workdays.** Individuals, service groups, and scout troops are invited to help build trails and post refuge boundary signs at North America's first International Wildlife Refuge. January 12 is trail building day at Humbug Marsh, sign posting days are January 19, February 23, and March 22. Contact Lisa Appel for details and to register: lisa_appel@fws.gov, (734) 692-7671.
- **State Park Stewardship Workdays.** The DNR Parks and Recreation Division needs weekend volunteers to remove invasive shrubs at Algonac State Park in St. Clair County. Workdays are January 6, February 10, and March 2. Contact Laurel Malvitz for information: malvitzl@michigan.gov, (248) 359-9057. Additional DNR volunteer opportunities are posted at www.michigan.gov/dnrvolunteers - click on "Calendar of Volunteer Stewardship Workdays."
- **Saginaw Wetlands Preserve Stewardship Workdays.** Volunteers are needed to remove invasive shrubs from one of the world's highest-quality remnants of lake-plain prairie, located in Huron County. Several workdays are scheduled this winter: January 5, 8, 10, 17, 19, 22, 24, and 31; and February 2, 5, 7, 16, 19, 21, and 28. Contact the MNA office for directions and other information: michigannature@michigannature.org, (517) 655-5655.