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MICHIGAN COASTAL NEWS

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New 2011 Coastal Projects Launch, 2012 Project Proposals Requested

Every year, the Michigan Coastal Management Program (MCMP) awards grants for projects aligned with our mission to protect, restore, and promote appropriate, sustainable use of Great Lakes coastal resources. Funding is provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Local and tribal governments, nonprofit groups, universities, and state agencies are eligible recipients.

In 2011, Michigan's coastal communities and environment will benefit from 33 new projects that collectively meet a range of priorities. Some of these projects represent new directions for the MCMP. On the Lake Huron coast the City of Cheboygan, Rogers City, Presque Isle County, and City of Alpena will team up with the Northeast Michigan Council of Governments to inventory the assets of their commercial and recreational ports, and develop a strategy to capitalize on the major growth opportunities for each port working individually and as part of a regional collaborative. On the Lake Michigan coast, Preserve the Dunes, Inc. will organize a juried design competition for residential architecture in Critical Dune Areas. Winning prototypes will unify progressive design with resource protection principles and sensitivity to the dune landscape.

Other projects address emerging coastal management challenges. For example, resource managers, policy makers, and wind energy stakeholders recognize that the prudent development of Michigan's offshore wind energy industry would benefit from additional information on use of coastal and offshore waters by migratory birds and bats. Two research projects, one in Saginaw Bay and the other in Lake Michigan, will develop data that will assist in siting and designing offshore wind energy facilities in a way that minimizes impacts to species protected under state and federal law. Preparing for a changing climate is another challenge, and Michigan State University Extension will continue a two-phase effort to identify the State's rare coastal species and ecosystems vulnerable to anticipated long-term shifts in weather patterns and lake levels, and craft adaptive conservation actions to buffer the impact of these changes.

Coastal land and water trails, public access improvements, natural resource inventory and protection efforts, waterfront redevelopment, historic restoration, watershed management, and outreach and education programs round out the list of 2011 Coastal Zone Management Grant projects.

The MCMP is accepting proposals for projects beginning January 1, 2012. Applications must be postmarked no later than May 16, 2011. The application form and supporting information is linked to our webpage at www.michigan.gov/coastalmanagement under "Coastal Management Program Grants and Application." Please contact us for information on any of the 2011 projects or the 2012 request for proposals.



Photo Credit: Michigan DNR



Project Spotlight: Removing Barriers to Coastal Access

Michigan's coastal lands and waters are the State's greatest recreational and scenic assets, and a Michigan Coastal Management Program goal is to create and enhance public access to the coast. Yet wetlands, steep dunes and bluffs, and other picturesque features of the coastal landscape challenge attempts to establish convenient access, especially for visitors with limited mobility. In some locations, topography, fragile ecosystems or historic resources, and prevailing construction practices preclude the development of coastal access for the widest spectrum of visitors. In other places thoughtfully planned, modest improvements to existing facilities can open the way for new visitors to enjoy the Great Lakes. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is committed to ensuring that people

of all abilities have access to Michigan's outdoors. To that end, the agency recently used a Coastal Zone Management grant to create a barrier-free pathway to a popular Great Lakes lighthouse.

Little Sable Point Light Station stands a stone's throw from Lake Michigan in Silver Lake State Park, near the city of Mears. The 107-foot tower is all that's left of the original station activated in 1874. It is one of the oldest remaining brick lighthouses on the Great Lakes and the adjacent broad, sandy beach is an ideal vantage point for watching the late afternoon sun set the red brick tower aglow. The Sable Points Lighthouse Keepers Association leases the tower from the DNR and volunteer docents offer interpretive tours to a stream of visitors during the summer. Until last year some prospective visitors were unable to take advantage of the tours or appreciate a view of the beach because a low, vegetated dune lies between the parking lot and the tower, effectively preventing visitors with mobility issues from reaching the lighthouse.

To address this obstacle, the DNR constructed a wheelchair-accessible concrete walkway from the parking lot to the base of the lighthouse. A walkway extension alongside the parking lot allows visitors to conveniently reach the walkway from their cars and helps separate pedestrians from vehicle traffic, to improve safety. Benches offer visitors the opportunity to rest. These simple improvements yielded immediate benefits, with a doubling in the number of visitors to the light following completion of the project, including several visitors in wheelchairs who could not have reached the tower previously. Additionally, the walkway is reducing visitor impacts to the dune now that pedestrians prefer to use the hard-surfaced walkway rather than trampling over the sensitive dune vegetation to reach the beach. For additional information contact Charlotte Kiefer, Silver Lake State Park Acting Park Manager, at **(231) 873-3083** or kieferc@michigan.gov.

Michigan Maritime Heritage Resources Study Enters Next Stage

A federally-facilitated study to develop options for better protecting and interpreting maritime heritage resources in Michigan is beginning its second phase. The Michigan Lighthouse and Maritime Heritage Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-436) directs the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a special study of Michigan's maritime heritage resources in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office, other state and local public agencies, and private organizations. The National Park Service (NPS) is the federal agency leading the study and developing recommendations for the long-term protection, interpretation, and promotion of Michigan's maritime heritage resources. The study examines historic resources that are present because of the coastal location, and derive their significance from contributions to Michigan's maritime heritage. Main resource categories under review include the maritime industry, lighthouses, watercraft, navigational aids, harbors, and cultural resources.

The special resource study presents an unusual challenge for the NPS, which typically focuses on resources that are more geographically discrete and thematically cohesive. To meet the mandate of the federal act, the agency expanded its usual approach to address a broader genre of resources across a very large area, specifically, more than 3,200 miles of Michigan's coast. In the first phase of the study, teams of NPS staff identified and researched more than 500 candidate resources and sites, and surveyed many of them last summer. At this point, the project team is beginning to explore several management alternatives, including a potential maritime heritage trail and other alternatives based on comparable models such as the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network and Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail. A number of promising alternatives involve collaborative management by federal, state, and local partners.

With the first-phase inventory and background research completed, the NPS project team is looking to engage local stakeholders involved in maritime heritage in discussing management alternatives for a future trail. The project team is planning stakeholder meetings this summer and broader public meetings this fall. Contact Ruth Heikkinen, NPS project manager, for additional information at **(402) 661-1846** or ruth_heikkinen@nps.gov.

Clean and Green Marinas

Contributed by Elizabeth LaPorte, Michigan Sea Grant



Photo Credit: Michigan Sea Grant

Best practices for boat fueling include having a trained marina employee available to assist, and having oil-absorbent pads, fuel collars and spill cups handy to prevent fuel from entering the water.

Certified Clean Marinas voluntarily focus on environmental stewardship (best) practices. Completing a training program is key to becoming a certified Clean Marina. The Clean Marina Classroom provides marina operators with access to educational modules, photos, videos, and examples of best practices from marinas in Michigan. Michigan Sea Grant partnered with the Michigan Boating Industries Association and the State of Michigan to develop this web-based classroom.

Self-Paced Training and Common Sense Tips

The Clean Marina Classroom is a self-paced course with information about recommended and mandatory practices. It includes a review of relevant laws and regulations and covers each checkpoint that marinas need to address in order to become certified.

The training modules focus on practical, common sense tips for controlling pollutants associated with recreational boating operation, maintenance and storage, proper management practices and environmental stewardship. Materials include interactive glossaries as well as Clean Boating tip sheets.

Easy-to-Understand Instructions

"This program allows marina operators to go through the Clean Marina certification process with easy-to-understand instructions and examples," said Eric Foster, General Partner of Belle Maer Harbor. *"I recommend this course to any marina operator who wants to become certified as a Michigan Clean Marina."*

A Competitive Edge

Many marina businesses are struggling during these tough economic times. Becoming a Clean Marina provides a competitive edge. Clean Marina operators recognize that it's important to provide a positive experience for boater-patrons. Boaters are increasingly aware of the connection between stewardship best practices, good water quality for swimming, as well as healthy fisheries and beaches. Many of the state harbors managed by the DNR are certified Clean Marinas, such as the Mackinaw Straits State Harbor. Other benefits to becoming a certified Clean Marina include:

- Reducing pollution and improving water quality, fish and wildlife habitat
- Enhancing the marina's public image by promoting environmentally sound practices
- Reducing costs by adopting best management practices

Learn More about the Clean Marina Program: Registration, YouTube Video, and Radio Interview

- Register for the Clean Marina Classroom training: www.michigancleanmarina.org
- YouTube Video with Paul Petersen, DNR Harbor Program Manager, *Designing and Building a Green Marina*: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_v3F-vGCU0
- Radio Interview of Eric Foster, Belle Maer Harbor, *Greening of the Great Lakes*, Kirk Heinze: http://www.greeningofthegreatlakes.com/modules.php?name=Programs&op=news&sp_id=65&m1=31&cat_id=44

Planning for Resilient Communities Conference May 13th

Community planning is about preparing for the future, mainly by defining and organizing land uses and identifying infrastructure projects needed to ensure the community's long-term economic, environmental, and social well-being. Consequently, prudent planners have long relied on information about future population growth, development trends, and other predictive data to help them anticipate the likely changes facing their communities and accommodate them in their plans. On May 13th, the Michigan Association of Planning (MAP) will hold its 2011 Spring Institute in Lansing and offer the planning community an opportunity to explore the value and practice of incorporating another type of forecast into community planning, specifically, regional climate change projections.

With the benefit of a wealth of historical data for Michigan combined with sophisticated models of global weather patterns, climate scientists have broadly outlined a projected track for the State's climate over the next several decades. Generally, Michigan's climate is expected to grow warmer and probably drier over the course of the 21st century. Longer growing seasons, drier soils, and lower lake levels would count among the many tangible results of this projected climate trend. Speakers at the Spring Institute will discuss preparing for these changes in relation to agriculture, public health, risk management, and other issues central to community planning. Additional information on the MAP conference and on-line registration are available at www.planningmi.org/si.asp.

The Sweetwater Sea: An International Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Lake Huron

Contributed by Michelle Selzer, Office of the Great Lakes, DEQ and Greg Mayne, Environment Canada

Lake Huron is an ecologically rich and internationally significant ecosystem; however, its biodiversity is at risk due to a number of stresses including degradation of water quality, climate change, invasive species, rapid and poorly planned residential and industrial growth, altered hydrology, and incompatible agricultural, fisheries, and forestry practices. The Lake Huron Binational Partnership, a federal, state, provincial, and multi-stakeholder planning group that coordinates environmental activities in the Lake Huron Basin, identified biodiversity conservation, ecosystem change, and the loss and degradation of fish and wildlife habitat as priority binational issues.

Recently, the Lake Huron Basin received unprecedented attention to address native biodiversity conservation. A two-year (2008-2010) conservation action planning process involving over 400 individuals from more than 100 agencies and organizations resulted in the completion of *The Sweetwater Sea: An International Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Lake Huron*. The Strategy identifies actions needed to protect and conserve the native biodiversity of Lake Huron and serves to reaffirm and advance existing and complementary initiatives.

Stakeholders involved in the process of developing the Strategy selected biodiversity features thought to represent the spectrum of biodiversity within Lake Huron, including its species, natural communities, and ecological systems. The current "health" status was assessed using established conservation methods, tools, and where applicable, science-based measures of ecological condition representing each biodiversity feature's landscape context, condition, and size. Threats to biodiversity were prioritized according to their scope, severity of impact, and irreversibility. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) analysis was also used to illustrate the spatial distribution of the threats across the Basin. The next step was to develop conservation strategies that alleviate and/or reverse these critical threats. Conceptual models were created by participants to illustrate a common understanding of how social, political, economic, and environmental systems act together to bring about direct and indirect threats to each biodiversity feature. This method and its results provided the foundation to develop a list of recommended conservation strategies. Where possible, strategies were aligned with existing complementary plans to avoid duplication of effort, identify gaps, and promote ongoing efforts. With the Strategy now developed, it is the hope of the Lake Huron Binational Partnership that this important document will lead to greater awareness and collaboration among organizations and communities active in biodiversity conservation within the Basin.

A full copy of the report and an abridged, reader-friendly version are both available at <http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/lakehuron.bcs/documents>.



Photo Credit: Alice VanZoeren, USFWS

Watch where you step! Piping plover nest protectors needed.

Mormon era in the 1850s. The Beaver Island Historical Society hopes to remove the home to another site for restoration. Workday participants may keep items they find. Contact Cindy Mom for information on volunteering at **(231) 344-1011** or cindy@landtrust.org.

Upper Peninsula and Northern Lower Peninsula Coasts - Piping Plover Protection. Volunteers are needed at several coastal locations this spring and summer to monitor nest sites and assist in related protection efforts for the endangered piping plover, a beach-nesting shorebird. Contact the following individuals for information on volunteering at **Upper Peninsula** locations: **St. Ignace** - Steve Sjogren at ssjogren@fs.fed.us; **Nahma** (on Big Bay de Noc) - Janet Ekstrum at jekstrum@fs.fed.us; and **Grand Marais, Manistique, and Escanaba** - Lynnea McFadden at uplc@uplandconservancy.org. Contact the following individuals for information on volunteering at **northern Lower Peninsula** locations: **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore** - Sue Jennings at sue_jennings@nps.gov; and **State Parks including Wilderness, Fisherman's Island, Leelanau, Ludington, Silver Lake, Hoffmaster, Hoelt, Negwegon, and Tawas Point** - Lisa Gamero at gamerol@michigan.gov.

Volunteer for Michigan's Coast!

Saginaw Bay Coast – Reptile and Amphibian Surveys. Volunteers can help with a reptile and amphibian inventory along the Saginaw Bay coast this spring and summer. Familiarity with Michigan reptiles and amphibians is desirable. Volunteers under 18 years of age must be accompanied by an attentive parent or guardian. Contact David Mifsud for information on volunteering at **(517) 522-3524** or dmifsud@herprman.com.

Beaver Island – Nature Preserve Workday. Little Traverse Conservancy needs volunteers on May 14 to remove debris in and around an old farmhouse in the Little Sand Bay Preserve. The 64-acre preserve on Lake Michigan protects high-quality coastal habitats and rare plants, and is a popular destination for island residents and tourists. Volunteers will remove home and farm debris around the vacant squared log house believed to have been built during the