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Muskegon Lake: Nearby Shoreline and Ruddiman Creek  
Ecological Restoration Master Plan  
Meeting Minutes from 2nd Workshop  
November 29, 2007

**Welcome and Introduction - Paul Kovalcik**

Attendee Name: Christie Kroskie

Organization: Grand Valley University Student – Natural Resources Policy class

Goal for Today: interested public participation process

Attendee Name: Jane Kroskie

Organization: GVSU

Attendee Name: Dennis McKee

Organization: MLWP/ Consumers Energy

Goal for Today: understand plans

Attendee Name: Terry Stilson

Organization: MRWA

Goal for Today: get up to speed

Attendee Name: Gary Noble

Organization: MLWA

Goal for Today: discuss hydrology, discuss Goal A

Attendee Name: Carolyn Weng

Organization: Muskegon Co. Nature Club/ Marsh Monitoring for BSC Coord.

Goal for Today: habitat area, shoreline phragmites

Attendee Name: Greg Mund

Organization: MLWP

Goal for Today: education element – needs to be incorporated into each goal/objective

Attendee Name: Wayne Groosbeck

Organization: angler, MLWP secretary

Goal for Today: fish and wildlife productivity

Attendee Name: John Steinbeck

Organization: land owner / Muskegon Lake PAC

Attendee Name: Joe Bailey

Organization: property owner/ Great Lakes Dock & Materials

Attendee Name: David Boehm

Organization: City of Roosevelt Park

Attendee Name: Mark Eisenbarth

Organization: Muskegon Co. Waste Water

Attendee Name: Tom Berdinski

Organization: MDEQ, Lansing

Goal for Today: wanting to assist w/ process

Attendee Name: Bob Fountain

Organization: City of Muskegon, DPW

Goal for Today: help clarify recommendations

Attendee Name: Rick Rediske

Organization: GVSU

Goal for Today: technical concerns about the plan

Attendee Name: Gib King

Organization: USFWS

Goal for Today: help restore habitat, funding source – interested in goal B

Attendee Name: Bob Kavetsky

Organization: USFWS, coastal program

Goal for Today: partnered in this area

Attendee Name: Todd Parker

Organization: Delta Institute

Goal for Today: shoreline development structures

Attendee Name: Danielle Green

Organization: USEPA, GLNPO

Goal for Today: how restore habitat to de-list BUIs and to show how ecological restoration can be integrated in an urban area

Attendee Name: Jackie Adams

Organization: SeaGrant

Goal for Today: contact between local stakeholders, Biohabitats and EPA

Attendee Name: Julie Simms

Organization: MDEQ, PAC

Goal for Today: learn more about the draft plan – delisting fish and wildlife BUIs

Attendee Name: Tracey Collin

Organization: DEQ - LWMD

Goal for Today: Looking for connections with current work on coastal wetlands restoration plan

Attendee Name: Theresa Bernhardt

Organization: RCTF/MLWP

Goal for Today: public stakeholder interests, Ruddiman Creek is an excellent model to use in other areas –hope this is the beginning of many restoration projects throughout Muskegon Lake AOC

Attendee Name: Dennis Kirksey

Organization: Investments, owns 13 acres in project area – twin spits area

Goal for Today: give input; collaborate on highest and best use for shoreline development

Attendee Name: Hope Mitchell

Organization: Muskegon Planning Dept

Goal for Today: learn how to incorporate the plan into the City's comprehensive plan

Attendee Name: Karen Rodriguez

Organization: USEPA, GLNPO

Goal for Today: 2<sup>nd</sup> project of this kind – still learning, hope this will provide a way to move forward, get community backing and get restoration activities in place. After the plan is accepted, to help get funding, specifically actions that help delist BUIs.

Attendee Name: Rich O'Neal

Organization: DNR fisheries

Goal for Today: Muskegon Lake part of his management area

Attendee Name: Collette Klukos

Organization: White Pine Partners

Goal for Today: letting us know about some other local efforts – education project, get public and children involved – already happening and need other people to work with, like Ruddiman Creek Task Force

Attendee Name: Cynthia Price

Organization: MLWP president

Goal for Today: delisting, remediation is not enough, so glad EPA is supporting restoration plan

Attendee Name: Kathy Evans

Organization: Coordinator for MLWP, grant writing

Goal for Today: developing targets for delisting throughout Muskegon AOC, this plan just one effort- coordination between this plan and AOC plan.

Attendee Name: Ivette Bolender

Organization: Biohabitats

Goal for Today: hear and document all of the concerns so that plan is in their words.

Attendee Name: Paul Kovalcik

Organization: Biohabitats, Technical Lead

Attendee Name: Brooke Derr

Organization: Biohabitats

Goal for Today: see how well we captured your ideas, incorporate feedback

Attendee Name: Amelia Greiner

Organization: Biohabitats

Goal for Today: incorporate people into stewardship

Also in attendance:

- Janet Vail (GVSU)
- Jill Koebbe-Vihtelic (Representative of Michigan Steel)

**Introduce plan for the day** - Paul Kovalcik

- Discuss process of deriving vision, guiding principles, opportunities and constraints
- Review goals, objectives and actions, then refine them
- Present the plan, talk about how it is organized, define terms, phasing, funding, roles for implementation, lastly, will talk about the timeline for the remainder of this plan.
- Community and state to decide which parts of plan are implemented
- Demonstrate the ability to delist for the rest of AOC

**Review of work thus far** – Amelia Greiner

- Kick-off meeting, September 11<sup>th</sup> workshop – visioning process, principles, opportunities and constraints
- Explained how comments and input from first workshop were analyzed to create the vision, goals, objectives and actions

**Vision statement** – updated to reflect revised site name

Original Vision Statement:

*“Muskegon South Lakeside and Ruddiman Creek: a healthy place for all living things, where people interact with nature through stewardship and recreation.”*

Revised Vision Statement:

*“Muskegon Lake: Ruddiman Creek and Nearby Shoreline; a healthy place for all living things, where people interact with nature through stewardship and recreation.”*

**Discussion of Draft Plan** – Paul Kovalcik

- Goals – based on principles
- Measurable objectives
- Actions, on the ground activities to realize objectives
- Highlighted goals B&C – BUIs connection
- Explained watershed modeling and hydraulics, BMPs
- Planning level cost estimates different than engineering cost estimates

### **Board Tour**

Participants were encouraged to review posters with goals, objectives and actions and to write their comments directly on them. The group reconvened to hear and discuss each comment. The discussion is summarized below.

<b>Comments regarding Goal A:</b>
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<b>Improve hydrology and water quality and in Ruddiman Creek</b>
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**Objective A1)** Reduce flashy flows within Ruddiman Creek.

- Flooding on Sherman Blvd from West Branch.
  - Response: it’s being addressed - Norton Shores doing something, may not be what we had in mind

- Action A1:1 Conduct detailed hydrologic and hydraulic studies within the watershed to model the existing flow regimes.
  - Grand Valley students do Hydrologic modeling on their campus – could be done on a lower scale.
  - Hydro study is really expensive – focus needs to be on projects with greater impact per dollar – other objectives may be better first steps.
  - This needs to be incorporated into city planning instead of this process.
  
- Action A1:2 Identify properties and areas in the watershed where stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be practical and beneficial, including retrofits of existing outfalls.
  - Somebody needs to tell private property owners what to build. They’ll build it, but won’t take time to research what needs to be done.
  - Request that Michigan Department Environmental Quality do hydrologic study
  - Culvert at Barclay
    - lots of attenuation
    - may want to treat it as our first BMP
  - Has there been any planning already done to prioritize BMP implementation associated with Ruddiman watershed?
  - Retrofit of existing outfalls – we’ve done all we can do, detention basin, culvert at Glenside is new and also serves as a detention feature; not a barrier to fish, including big salmon.
    - Run-off issue has to do with large areas of unused paved areas. Detention at parking lots would be good, rain gardens good idea too, but there is little incentive for homeowners to build them.
    - Hydrologic study may not be that helpful – already know the problem.
  - These things will happen anyway because they are required, thus they do not need to be in this plan. Need a partner outside of government to present scientific evidence of hydro problems – the Action should stand as is.
  - Watershed issues with private properties – BMPs will be embraced if landowners are educated and given assistance to implement them.
  - Roosevelt Park did an engineering report to manage storm water  
Response: Roosevelt had to get water out of town – poor infiltration

- Rain gardens offer opportunity for stewardship – students love them – West Michigan Environmental Council has plans for how to install them. Education makes it easier for landowners.
- Ruddiman soils are sandy – good for infiltration – retrofit curb and gutter – only place to control runoff is parking lots.  
Response: Action A1:2 includes parking lots
- Action A1:3 Develop construction documents and construct BMPs at Sherman Blvd, and other key locations in the watershed.
  - disagree with comment that issues at Sherman are being resolved –
  - issues will persist...current solutions simply moving the problem downstream and passing them to West Branch
- Add action –
  - How to fund actions in municipal watershed plans – can't be funded because it's regulated – ties MLWP hands to help fund the projects.

**Objective A2) Improve water quality of Ruddiman Creek.**

- Action A2:1 Continually monitor, identify and eliminate illicit discharges.
  - NPDES covers a lot of the issues.
  - Illicit connections are addressed, ordinances are in place.  
No stormwater ordinance, coming in 2009
  - How do illicit connections get reported?  
Response: Each jurisdiction records separations
- Add action -
  - Create local stormwater management that controls runoff release rate that would accommodate protection of fish and wildlife habitat and encourage infiltration. Response: Addressed in NPDES

**Comments regarding Goal B:**

**Restore fish and wildlife habitat within the project area.**

**Objective B1)** Enhance physical aquatic habitat features in the project area.

- USFWS can help fund this
- Action B1:1 Remove concrete debris, recontour and revegetate shoreline areas near the Ruddiman mouth, the former AMOCO tank farm, and near Michigan Steel.
  - Need proper engineering design
  - part of hardened shoreline used for high water protection and needs to stay in place to protect bike path
  - 30 acres of land near spits will be developed; would like to contribute to the goals of this plan in some way.
  - Work with current owners to design and implement in connection with development plans
- Action B1:2 Remove debris from the mouth of Ruddiman Creek and install a more natural grade control structure to promote fish passage.
  - Why was lagoon created?
  - Used for holding area for logs.
  - Break up Step structure, but keep riffles
  - Lagoon used to be larger – filled with foundry sand, a mini drowned river mouth
  - MRWA – supportive of more natural hydrologic conditions – this is an opportunity to restore to natural condition.
  - Try to enhance mouth while maintaining current water level in lagoon
- Action B1:3 Incorporate large woody debris in the banks, channel, and floodplain of Ruddiman Creek and the lagoon.
  - What is large woody debris...could we use what is there now on lake bottom?
  - Response: Yes – however could be cheaper to bring in new?
  - Response: Woody debris could be used to moderate flows to and help hydro objective too
  - What target species will benefit?
  - Where would woody debris be used?

- Action B1:4 Reconfigure the Glenside Boulevard culvert for improved fish passage.
  - Barclay/Glenside culvert, see earlier comments - should explore bridge option, but city sees major hurdles
  - See page 42 in draft plan
  - deer, fox, mink, bald eagle, herons, green frogs use the main stem corridor
  - Leave culvert as is, doesn't impede fish movement

**Objective B2)** Protect and enhance native aquatic vegetation along the Muskegon Lake shoreline.

- Action B2:1 Identify potential locations for vegetative enhancement and install and monitor test plots, for species expansion.
  - MLWP group currently wrestling with underwater macrophytes (SAV) vs. emergent vegetation.
  - Current SAV okay for AOC, but this plan could go ahead and propose more.
  - Hard to set objectives because it's a moving target.
  - Focus on emergents such as bullrushes
  - Don't focus on submerged veg. Young submerged veg is difficult to protect from wave action, boat props and waterfowl. This is an expensive proposal that may not be effective. Focus on wetland. The submerged veg will naturally establish itself.

**Objective B3)** Enhance terrestrial habitat including riparian buffers and corridors in the project area.

- Action B3:1 Expand the Ruddiman Creek riparian buffer within McGraft Park between Lakeshore Drive and Glenside Boulevard.
  - Needs City approval; parks board
  - City commissioner asked for buffer vegetation to be cut down to improve view of the pond
  - Change in water levels in main stem 120 years ago compared to low levels today more important to address than the grass area next to lagoon.
  - Parks board and commissioner have jurisdiction over grass area (McGraft Park) – but boardwalk idea may be received well.
  - Meadow or low native vegetation along the edge –may be okay – needs to

be aesthetic. Area along Lakeshore Dr. above tank farm – strip of scrubby forest – people want to remove to increase view of the lake.

- Bridge to connect park and stay off road
- Stabilize dirt hill near lagoon; trees have been cut down
  
- Action B3:2 Expand the riparian and upland buffers along the Muskegon Lake shoreline, and along the bike path.
  - Not feasible. Culvert detains flash flows
  - Not based on good hydrological studies

**Objective B4)** Restore and enhance existing wetlands throughout the project area.

- Action B4:1 Concurrent with all Goal B objectives re-establish Great Lakes Marsh habitats and restore existing shoreline wetlands along the shore of Muskegon Lake.
  - High benefit relative to cost
  - How can you make a wetland on polluted site – tank farm?
  - Phytoremediation – could this be explored as an action?
  
- Action B4:2 Explore opportunities for wetland creation at the AMOCO tank farm site.
  - City needs to decide what it wants to do with AMOCO.
  - Phytoremediation (plant uptake of contaminants) may be an option
  - Other more aggressive remediation
  - Purge/treat for discharge to sanitary sewer
  - If the public is made aware of these issues, then maybe the local government would be pushed to help implement the actions. Need to get the public behind the plan – thus education is key.
  - tank farm – have they looked into petroleum consuming bacteria
  - Response: probably not – no incentive
  
- Other ideas for Objective B4
  - Start with invasive species removal (phragmites and Japanese knotweed are at manageable levels now and should be controlled before they worsen).
  - Focus on reestablishing diversity before Threatened & Endangered Species. Focusing only on a few sensitive species could be unsuccessful.

- For entire AOC, attempt to use monitoring protocols for Great Lakes Coastal Wetland consortium – they have basin-wide IBIs for monitoring coastal wetlands
- Enhancing wetlands at AMOCO is a good idea, but should be lower priority because of contamination

**Objective B5)** Reduce the abundance of invasive plant species in the project area.

- Action B5:1 Conduct invasive species management in selected areas.
  - Do this now while populations are manageable

**Comments regarding Goal C**

**Restore fish and wildlife populations in the project area.**

- Redundant to Goal B. Habitat will restore populations
- Use Michigan wildlife plan to define species of conservation need

**Comments regarding Goal D**

**Permanently protect and conserve existing and restored habitats.**

**Objective D1)** Place publicly held properties in permanent easements that protect and conserve restored and existing wildlife habitat.

- Action D1:1 Work with the City of Muskegon to consider stronger protection of 50 acres designated as open space recreation, including the AMOCO Tank Farm Site, and land on the West side of Ruddiman lagoon.
  - Work with City to create better ordinances to protect habitat
  - Best way to protect is to acquire
  - Find potential buyers before the condos go up
- Action D1:2 Propose and enact conservation zoning for 7 acres of shoreline between the AMOCO Tank Farm Site, and Lakeshore Yacht Club.
  - Remediate using wetland plants?

**Objective D2)** Encourage major private landowners to establish permanent easements to protect restored and existing wildlife habitat.

- Consider creating a Ruddiman Conservancy program – provide an incentive (tax break) for placing land in conservation status.
- Conservancy can be a program to negotiate a design that fits landowner and natural balance needs
- Michigan Wetland Program
- Want the public involved in development, but it will be developed, will not be open space – not in their interests. 400 boat marina with a public element – supportive of bike trail – active, working waterfront – rain gardens, BMPs etc or habitat.
- Michigan Steel employs 200 people, they are concerned that sale of property will be restricted of the perception that it is to be conservation land.
- relocation of Michigan Steel is an option
- there are options for moving the operation, however owner is not getting assistance to make the move
- Opportunity of this planning process – ecologic and economy can go hand in hand for overall improvement of area. Other corporations have done natural landscaping on their property temporarily
- Vision for spits – fishing pier, small shops, boardwalk
- Michigan Steel is concerned with current permitting structures
- All upland area is foundry fill

## Comments regarding Goal E

### Increase opportunities for recreation, education, and stewardship.

- Should education be incorporated in each goal or be a stand alone goal?  
Consensus: Highlight education potential in each goal, but keep the education goal

**Objective E1)** Work with local stakeholders to encourage opportunities for passive recreation and wildlife viewing.

- Action E1:1 Explore the feasibility of placing an observation blind near the lagoon.
  - Establish a mini laboratory or station for data collection, experimentation
  - Vandalism will be a problem for a blind. Who will maintain it?
  - native plant/weed education would be helpful for local landowners
  - AMOCO site might be a good place for restrooms, educational kiosk, shelter – she is already working on education materials

**Objective E2)** Encourage opportunities for active recreation along, and in Ruddiman Creek and Nearby Shoreline.

- Action E2:1 Explore the feasibility of placing a boardwalk in the lagoon area.
  - Would have to be incorporated into Parks Master Plan
  - Boardwalk near Grand Trunk Area

**Objective E3)** Promote local stewardship and education opportunities.

- Work with White Pine Project in schools
- Action E3:4 . Maintain and promote research opportunities through GVSU.
  - Interpret natural history
  - Work with White Pine Project
  - Work with private and public schools
- Proposed action - Expand outreach/ do not limit who we talk to – broader audience beyond Ruddiman Creek will be helpful
  - mention the possibility of collaboration with other local efforts (white pine project)

- Other
  - Wildflower education, particularly around purple loosestrife as it is being sold in wildflower blends
  - Urban areas for crane habitat not a priority

**Other comments**

- Delisting goal – improve areas of fill – prairie, landscaping – can be done without full wetland restoration
- Idea of a conservancy – agreement, buffer width, native plants, limited pervious surface – room for negotiation.
- Update zoning map and include definitions of zones.

**Transition to Implementation** – Paul Kovalcik and Karen Rodriguez

- Roles – who is going to do what -
- Adaptive management/monitoring (who?)
- Biohabitats will draft plan, but then their contract ends. EPA will support – but it is their (MLWP) plan to carry forward.

**Next Steps:**

- Minutes due to MLWP/PAC December 7th
- All comments on current draft due to Biohabitats by December 14<sup>th</sup>
- Biohabitats to have revised Plan to MLWP by January 11<sup>th</sup>
- Consolidated comments of this final plan due to Biohabitats January 15<sup>th</sup>.

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