

Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership
Habitat Committee Meeting
West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
February 4, 2008, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Meeting Summary

Attendance: Greg Mund, Committee Chair; Gary Noble, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly; Rich O’Neal, MDNR Fisheries Division; Stephen Carlson, West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission (WMSRDC); Kathy Evans, WMSRDC and Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership; Julie Sims, MDEQ Water Bureau; Carl Ruetz, GVSU-Annis Water Resources Institute; Vicki Webster, Muskegon County Health Department/Environmental Health

Fish and Wildlife BUI Removal Targets

Shoreline Fill – Targeted acreages for “fill removed” and “fill improved” will be combined as one target called “improved fill.” During the project design phase, in consultation with landowners, the importance of the removal of fill down to or below the ordinary high water mark will be emphasized. This change was the consensus of participants at the previous Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership meeting as well.

Macrophytes – The previously identified, site specific approach to maintain macrophytes will not be used, but rather a whole lake approach, using guidance from MDNR Fisheries Division will be used. It was determined that the Fisheries IBI would be an indicator of the presence of adequate in-lake vegetation and also that MDNR Fisheries Division guidance to maintain a healthy fish and wildlife habitat in lakes is to not disturb any more than 25% of any existing aquatic habitat component. In other words, a landowner is able to exercise reasonable riparian rights to access and use of the lake and shoreline, but in doing so, would not disrupt more than 25% of any habitat component present. This would apply to all aquatic habitat components, including emergent vegetation such as that found in a marsh or shrub scrub riparian area; nearshore edge/upland; submerged vegetation such as weed beds in the shallow/littoral zone; bottomland; or any other type of aquatic habitat present.

Hardened Shoreline – The goals for the “softening of hardened shoreline” were not changed. More analysis is needed to further determine feasibility of current targets.

Wetland – This target does not need to be applied on a “focus area” specific basis, as previously identified, although the total, combined number of acres for the increase of restored wetlands in the four focus areas did not change from the previously set targets. **The total number of wetland acres to increase/restore will be applied to priority sites within the AOC watershed, rather than on a strict focus area basis.** Priority wetland restoration sites are those that have been filled or degraded by stormwater, causing “the loss of habitat.” Priority wetland restoration sites are also those that have the greatest potential to filter storm water as well as create habitat.

Focus Area vs. Aggregated Sites – *For each of the four Focus Areas, an approach that aggregates individual landowner properties will be used to meet targets.* Each Focus Area will have a scope of work, description of restoration practices, estimated costs, timelines and monitoring needed to meet MDEQ guidance for Fish and Wildlife targets. A list of potential landowner partners will be shown for each of the four Focus Areas. The more detailed, site specific restoration plans, engineering and permits for projects will be carried out in consultation with individual landowners during the design and construction/implementation phase.

Next Steps –

- Over the next month, Kathy will update the Fish and Wildlife Restoration and Delisting Document with the changes recommended by the habitat committee.
- The final draft document will be presented to the habitat committee again and then to the MLWP for final review before it is submitted to MDEQ for their final review.
- Julie Sims will use the updated document as part of the DEQ's Biennial RAP Update for the Muskegon Lake AOC, if it is finished in time.
- At the next meeting discussion will begin on development of a work plan, including prioritization of habitat restoration work (in coordination with BUI removal strategy and beyond BUI targets).

Meetings - The habitat committee will meet monthly, on the 4th Monday from 11:30 – 1:00 p.m. at the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission conference room, 3rd Floor, Terrace Plaza, 316 Morris St., Muskegon. The next meeting will be on March 17.

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