

**Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership**  
Meeting at GVSU-Annis Water Resources Institute

August 27, 2007

**Minutes**

In attendance were: Cynthia Price, Grand Rapids Food Systems Council, Chair; Wayne Groesbeck, Muskegon River Watershed Assembly, Sec.; Kathy Evans, Director; Richard Rediske and Carl Ruetz, GVSU-Annis Water Resources Institute; Carolyn Weng, Muskegon County Nature Club and Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program; Victoria Webster, Muskegon County Health Department; Bob Fountain, City of Muskegon Department of Public Works; Richard Oneal, Michigan Department of Natural Resources; Hope Mitchell, City of Muskegon Planning Department; Bill Gates, Federal Highway Administration (ret).

The meeting was called to order by Price at 12:08.

Minutes of the 07-23-07 meeting were submitted. Webster mm/sm Weng to accept. Passed.

Revised notes of the 07-12-07 meeting were submitted. Webster mm/sm Weng to accept. Passed.

The primary focus of the meeting was to assess the status of the various Beneficial Use Impairment monitoring programs being conducted by partners. Evans distributed a draft handout that briefly summarized the current status of monitoring underway for the five BUIs approved by the MLWP and DEQ. Price turned the meeting over to Rediske, who presented details about each.

**1) Beach Closings:** The primary reason for periodic beach closings in this AOC is sanitary sewer infrastructure failure. Fountain explained that the sewer lines connecting municipalities to the wastewater treatment system since 1973 were of a new construction which has proven deficient over time. Extensive revision of the system has been done, with still more revision in the near future, but a three year absence of beach closures will be necessary for delisting. Price further inquired about the historically high levels of E. coli bacteria detected in Ruddiman Creek. Fountain responded that cross-connections between sanitary and storm sewers are not a significant factor, but sewer-dwelling raccoons are. The city has corrected a number of cross connections. The city lacks a means of funding ongoing non-point source pollution control due to a Michigan court ruling that does not allow stormwater utilities. E. coli levels following heavy rains will limit human activity at Ruddiman for some time. Price suggested a citizen-led initiative similar to the Plaster Creek plan in Grand Rapids. Webster added that the County Health Department will continue to monitor a Muskegon Lake beach (probably Harbor Towne), but there have been no exceedences this summer.

**2) Fish & Wildlife Habitat / Aesthetics:** Rediske noted that these two BUI's are functionally linked and that changing one would likely change the other. Aesthetics alone are difficult to quantify. Evans noted that activities are underway to clean up specific shoreline sites to meet aesthetics targets and that the MLWP Habitat Committee is continuing to work on fish and wildlife targets for the south shore of Muskegon Lake. The September 11 workshop with the EPA and Biohabitats will further address the fish and wildlife targets. Evans distributed a letter of invitation to the workshop.

**3) Degradation of Benthos:** AWRI is continuing to count invertebrates at specified sites in Muskegon Lake, and has begun to do so this year in Bear Lake. Post remediation monitoring information for Ruddiman Creek is also needed to remove the BUI. Contaminated sediment at the

Division Street and Ryerson Creek outfalls is still being characterized by the EPA/MDEQ. A grant is needed to monitor benthos in the lake and its tributaries in addition to the MDEQ's five year (river) monitoring cycle.

**4) Eutrophication / Undesirable Algae:** AWRI monitors Muskegon Lake, and the MDEQ will have completed a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) assessment for Bear Lake by the end of 2008. Cyanobacteria is also monitored. Rediske suggested a public meeting at Bear Lake in October, 2007 to explain this process and possible consequences. Evans suggested hosting it with a relatively new, but very active Bear Lake group that has formed to address water quality, habitat and land use in the watershed.

**5) Restrictions on Fish Consumption:** AWRI is sampling Muskegon Lake fish for mercury and PCB levels, using Pentwater Lake fish as a control.

Due to time constraints, Groesbeck mm/sm Ruetz to postpone agenda item 4, "Identification of Outstanding Needs for each BUI," to a future meeting. Passed.

Price referenced the prior MLWP decision to hire a facilitator for a strategic planning session. The Community Foundation for Muskegon County, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Muskegon County Health Department were identified as potential resources for a facilitator. Evans, Price, and Webster will make inquiries.

Evans updated the group on current MLWP partnership grant projects. The MLWP/MRWA fiduciary / unrestricted fund has a balance of about \$600. The current MLWP support grant from the EPA is \$6,000 over 16 months. The \$38,000 MRWA/USF&WS coastal grant is directed at habitat improvements at Grand Trunk, the mouth of Ruddiman Creek and the adjacent shoreline. US EPA and Biohabitats will facilitate an ecological restoration master plan workshop for the Ruddiman/Lakeside area at the 09-11-07 meeting. The MCD/CFFMC Grand Trunk picnic shelter grant will be applied to the 09-07-07 Day of Caring event at that site. Partnership projects with Timberland, NFWF, MMP and others are at various stages.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:41 PM.

-submitted by WJG