

Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership Strategic Plan



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I. Introduction

Michigan has a wealth of water resources, including 11,000 inland lakes. Most of these lakes are high quality resources highly valued by society for recreation, subsistence, their ecological value and as places to live; however, very few have a strategic plan to guide protection, management, development or use. As demands grow, Michigan's inland lakes will be increasingly susceptible to overuse and environmental degradation. Rehabilitation will be significantly more difficult and costly than protective and proactive management would be.

The responsibility for management of lakes does not reside with any one agency or organization. Not only do federal, state, tribal and local agencies have management responsibilities, but the actions of citizens and environmental organizations (nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs) also can have significant positive or negative influences upon the quality of lakes. To proactively protect and manage its inland lakes Michigan must focus the many interests and responsibilities to achieve a sustainable resource for present and future generations. One of the solutions to this dilemma is a collaborative partnership among state and local agencies, Native American Nations, outreach institutions (universities and other educational institutions), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, industries and citizens.

Background

In 2006, a few NGOs began meeting with Michigan's Departments of Natural Resources (MDNR) and Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) about the possibility of a partnership for the management of Michigan's lakes. Members of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership were invited to Michigan to present their lake management program. The possibility of a lakes partnership for Michigan appeared feasible.

During 2007, MSUE facilitated several meetings with many NGOs, local governmental agencies (Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners and Michigan Townships Association) and Native American Nations. Meeting participants agreed that a partnership for Michigan's lakes was a worthwhile effort and that a three-year partnership should be initiated. At the end of this time period the participating partners could chose to terminate or renew the partnership.

In January 2008, the first meeting of the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership (Partnership) was held. A Governance Document for the Partnership was drafted to delineate: purpose, structure, duration, membership, responsibilities and benefits, ground rules, meeting procedures and evaluation. This document is considered a "living document" and will continue to be adjusted.

The Partnership's first Strategic Plan was created to guide the Partnership's work from 2008 to 2011. Satisfied with its progress at the end of that three-year trial period, as documented in the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership 2008-2011 Report, the Partnership voted to continue its collaborative efforts. This necessitated the creation of a second Strategic Plan, which covered activities from 2012 to 2015. Moving forward, this document, like the governing document, is considered to be a "living document" and will be modified to improve the efforts of the Partnership.

Purpose and Implementation

This Strategic Plan (Plan) will guide the direction of the Partnership and set priorities for undertaking lake protection and management activities. The Partnership will review and amend it as appropriate and will use the Plan to measure and evaluate the performance of the Partnership and report to the citizens and policy makers of Michigan.

The Plan identifies the priority actions for the Partnership and those partners responsible for leading these “team” efforts – the Leadership Team. The Partnership invites others to become involved by participating in and supporting these efforts.

Beneath each Goal listed below, the Leadership Team members are listed by organizational acronym. Additional Partners are encouraged to join Leadership Teams at any time by contacting the Team Lead. A table of Partner organization acronyms is included at the end of this document.

A process for evaluating the Partnership’s progress in implementing this Plan is outlined in the Partnership’s Governance Document.

II. Strategic Goals of the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership

Goal 1. A Michigan Inland Lakes Convention *(updated 6/13/16)*

Leadership Team: Jo Latimore - lead (MSUE), Howard Wandell (McNALMS), Amy Lounds (MDEQ), Scott Brown (MLSA), Lois Wolfson (MSUE/IWR/McNALMS), Joe Nohner (MDNR), and Julia Kirkwood (MDEQ)

The Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership will continue hosting a statewide inland lakes convention.

The intended audience is broad, and includes lakefront property owners, lake professionals (natural resource agencies, private contractors, researchers, etc.), lake users, educators, and decision makers.

The Partnership's goals for the Michigan Inland Lakes Convention are:

1. To raise, and maintain, awareness of the Partnership's mission, goals, accomplishments, and member organizations
2. To provide opportunities for lake-related education and outreach
3. To provide opportunities for networking within and among the stakeholder groups listed above
4. To generate revenue for the Partnership and certain member organizations that rely on conference revenue – MLSA, McNALMS, and MNSP.

When and Where?

Beginning in 2014, the Partnership has hosted a Convention every two years. This model allows member organizations to host their own conferences in alternate years. The choice of specific dates should take into account other organizations' events, schedules, and significant conflicts.

The Convention location can move around Michigan. The venue must be large enough to accommodate approximately 400 people.

Important Considerations

1. *Partner involvement is key.* The Convention is an opportunity for Partners to work together on a significant project. To be successful, all Partners must contribute substantially.
2. *This takes time and money.* Continue to pursue capacity-building grants or other support to cover some of the costs of planning and implementation. Develop realistic goals for revenue generation and expenses, as well as a detailed estimate of the time and effort necessary, by learning from our experiences with prior Conventions and others' experience in planning similar events.
3. *Individual partner organizations' identities must be preserved and respected, while the Partnership and uniqueness of the Michigan Inland Lakes Convention is emphasized throughout the event.* Annual lake conferences are a central part of the identity and function of some of our Partners. It is critical that all Partners respect that the Michigan Inland Lakes Convention is hosted by the Partnership as a whole, while allowing for individual Partner organizations to hold their own business meetings and events as much as possible within the Convention agenda and venue.
4. *Agenda must have broad appeal to attract the broad audience described above.*

Goal 2. Increase Membership and Participation in the Partnership *(will be updated 2016)*

Proposal team: Dick Pinagel – lead (MAMA/MAPMS), Scott Brown (MLSA), Christina Baugher (MDNR)

Background: Increasing membership would bring more diversity to MILP. Diversity adds to creativity, credibility and potential access to additional resources.

Many groups such as MUCC, Bassmasters, Trout Unlimited, Michigan Boating Industries Association, Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners, Native American Nations, and the Nature Conservancy have been previously involved with MILP but have since not attended meetings on a regular basis. It was discussed and agreed that an effort should be made to get these groups back at the table. Further, it was agreed that these groups by the very nature of their structure and missions have much to bring to the table and in turn much to gain by their involvement with MILP.

Much of the last 3 years with MILP have been spent developing mission statements and operating procedures. This had to be accomplished meeting only 4 times a year and perhaps some of the original stakeholders as mentioned grew discouraged by the perceived lack of promotion of our collective capacity to advance the stewardship of Michigan's inland lakes.

Actions: It is recommended that a focused effort be made to contact all the original stakeholders and ask that they reconsider their decision not to attend MILP meetings. It is suggested that all existing Partners pick a few key contacts that they may be familiar with, send a letter developed by MILP stating that the partnership has developed all the internal governance documents necessary to operate and is moving forward in its effort to advance the stewardship of Michigan's inland lakes. Further state that their involvement is crucial to the overall success of that goal, and that being involved as a stakeholder with MILP has value to their membership and offers a chance for their respective organization's representation. It is also recommended that phone calls be made to the past participants and any identified additional participants.

It is also recommended that a brochure be developed illuminating the mission and purpose of MILP. This brochure can be sent to various groups with the initial target audience of the many sporting groups. The brochure should be developed to catch the eye of these types of organizations and their membership base.

Goal 3. Promoting Collaborative Protective Management for Michigan Inland Lakes: The Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership will develop an Action Plan that all partners can agree upon to minimize unnecessary cultural eutrophication and other negative environmental impacts to lake ecosystems.

Leadership Team: Julia Kirkwood (DEQ – Lead), Howard Wandell (McNALMS), Joe Nohner (MDNR), Mike Waltherhouse (DEQ), Jo Latimore (MSUE), Jason Broekstra (MAPMS), Ralph Bednarz (citizen; DEQ-retired).

Background: Michigan’s inland lakes are unique and fundamentally ecologically different than river ecosystems. Additionally, political, economic and geographic complexities complicate lake management. The consideration of these conditions is critical when managing Michigan’s lake ecosystems. Some of the more significant conditions include:

- Michigan’s geological and glacial history shaped the landscape and created the numerous and varied inland lake basins and lake watersheds of the State. Unlike rivers which are flow-through ecosystems, lakes are deposition ecosystems. Depending upon a lake’s water retention time, minor to large amounts of material can be permanently deposited in the lake. These materials can include: chemicals like nutrients and heavy metals, sediments, organic material, and living biological agents.
- Every lake is a unique ecosystem with distinctive morphology, hydrology, geography, water quality, trophic state, and biological integrity. Consequently, every lake needs its own exclusive management plan.
- Michigan inland lakes are ranked among the best in the nation in regards to water quality, and biological diversity and integrity with healthy native plant and animal communities.
- Most lakes are sensitive to degradation. They respond rapidly and dramatically to material additions.
- Most lakes are insensitive to restorative actions. Major cost and effort must be made to achieve even a minor rehabilitation results. While the technology exists to partially restore lakes, the commitment needed for even one or two lake restoration efforts exceeds all available resources in any given year.
- Michigan has 11,000 lakes over 5 acres in size. This is a recreational benefit, but for the State’s resource management agencies a difficult management task that must rely on collaboration with others to comprehensively manage the resource.
- Many lake protection/management strategies are actually land/watershed management activities, especially within the immediate drainage and lakeshore zones. These strategies are usually the responsibility of the lakefront property owners and local government.

If Michigan wants to keep its unique lake ecosystems, the Partnership must promote protective lake management to sustain the distinctive qualities of each lake. Protective lake management is the practice of proactively managing lake ecosystems and watersheds, including conservation practices, to protect and preserve ecosystem quality and attainable uses. It is far more ecologically and economically realistic to protect lake ecosystems than attempt to restore them once degraded.

Actions: The Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership will develop an Action Plan for managing Michigan's inland lakes that all partners can agree to collaboratively implement. The Plan may include the identification of:

- Critical management needs,
- Data available for decision making and data deficiencies,
- Appropriate management strategies,
- Possible funding opportunities,
- Demonstration projects available and needed,
- Educational needs and opportunities, and
- Existing program and resource deficiencies and possible resolutions.

Goal 4. Develop, Endorse and Promote a Comprehensive Lake Management Educational Program for Citizens, Local Governments and Others Involved in Lake Management (*updated June 2016*)

Leadership Team: Jo Latimore - lead (MSUE), Lois Wolfson (MSUE/IWR/McNALMS), Howard Wandell (McNALMS), Julia Kirkwood (DEQ), Dick Pinagel (MAMA/MAPMS) and Scott Brown (MLSA)

Background: The Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership recognizes the importance of education in promoting inland lake stewardship. The Partnership has endorsed and promoted several educational events and conferences since its inception, and will continue to emphasize education of Michigan residents and decision makers.

At this time there is: no comprehensive educational plan for lake management, no coordination of educational opportunities, no promotional clearinghouse for educational events, and educational events are sporadic. These limitations diminish the attendance at educational events and the overall effectiveness of lake management educational opportunities. Improvement of lake management education should substantially increase the quality and quantity of lake management efforts in Michigan.

Actions: In recognition of the importance of educating Michigan residents and decision makers about limnology and inland lake management, and developing their capacity to become effective stewards of inland lakes, the Partnership will :

1. Identify existing educational programs as well as subjects/issues needing the establishment of educational programs. Use these data to develop a comprehensive lake management educational plan.
2. Post the educational plan and links to existing educational programs on the Partnership web site on a page devoted to lake education. Review this listing regularly.
3. Encourage Partner organizations to promote participation in these programs by their own members and constituencies.
4. Encourage Partners to participate in the programs as instructors or local hosts, as appropriate.
5. Allow the use of the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership name and endorsement for promotional purposes of approved educational programs.
6. Specifically promote these educational programs: Introduction to Lakes, the Lake and Stream Leaders Institute, and the Michigan Shoreland Stewards program

Goal 5. Build local support for shoreline restoration and riparian buffer zones.

This will be accomplished through training program(s) for local officials/representatives (in cooperation with Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership) and encouraging community foundation support. (will be updated in 2016)

Leadership Team: Amy Lounds – co –lead (Action 1) (MDEQ), Julia Kirkwood co-lead (Action 2) (MDEQ), Howard Wandell (McNALMS), and Tom Frazier (MTA)

Actions:

1. Work with the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership to educate local officials and representatives on natural shoreline management (Amy Lounds – lead). The Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership will provide input on this project regarding:
 - Identification of partners for the project (e.g., the Citizen Planner program, the Michigan Lake and Stream Leaders Institute)
 - Development of education materials
 - Example/model ordinances
 - Workshop planning
 - Encouraging integration of concepts into other existing programs
 - Recognizing model natural shoreline installations through the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership

MILP will also have the opportunity to add components or contribute resources to this initiative.

2. Contact all County Community Foundations in Michigan to encourage their support & funding for voluntary shoreline restoration program(s) to protect inland lakes, improve water quality & provide native shoreline habitat. Program(s) could be modeled after MRWA's existing program for 3 lakes in Newaygo County, funded in large part by the Fremont Area Community Foundation (FACF). FACF funds are used to pay for native plants & professional assistance as incentive to lakefront owners to participate in the shoreline restoration program. Existing program involves lakefront owners agreeing to convert portions of their turf grass lawn to native plant buffer (restoration) areas within 30 feet of the water's edge.
 - Provide MILP letter of endorsement and/or letter recommending that the County Community Foundations take action to fund this type of voluntary program in their communities working with local conservation partners. Possibly provide referral contact information to Community Foundations on where they can seek guidance or partners on setting up a local program.

III. Participating members of the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership as of June 2016

Coordinating Council of the Partnership	
<i>Acronym</i>	<i>Organization</i>
IWR	Institute of Water Research, Michigan State University
MAMA	Michigan Aquatic Managers Association
McNALMS	Michigan Chapter of the North American Lake Management Society
MDEQ	Michigan Department of Environmental Quality- Water Resources Division
MDNR	Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Fisheries Division
MLSA	Michigan Lake and Stream Associations
MSUE	Michigan State University Extension
MTA	Michigan Townships Association
MAPMS	Midwest Aquatic Plant Management Society
MWA	Michigan Waterfront Alliance
Associate Partners	
GTBOC	Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
GLWSI	Great Lakes Water Studies Institute
HP	Huron Potawatomi, Inc.
HRWC	Huron River Watershed Council
LVDB	Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
LRBOI	Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
LTBB	Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
MACDC	Michigan Association of County Drain Commissioners
MBIA	Michigan Boating Industries Association
TU	Michigan Council of Trout Unlimited
MUCC	Michigan United Conservation Clubs
MRWA	Muskegon River Watershed Assembly

TNC	The Nature Conservancy
NMEAC	Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council
TOMWC	Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
WCGTB	The Watershed Center – Grand Traverse Bay