NE MI Integrated Assessment: Connecting Great Lakes Coastal Access, Tourism, and Economic Development

WHERE ARE WE AT????

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Presented to: NEMIA Working Group
January 23, 2007

Michigan Sea Grant
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Mission: Dedicated to the sustainable use of the nation’s Great Lakes and Michigan’s coastal resources.

Strategic Statewide areas of Work:
1. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)
2. Fisheries
3. Coastal Habitats/Wetlands
4. Great Lakes Education
5. Sustainable Coastal Communities

(Based on 5-year Strategic Plan)
11 Priority Areas

MSG Research Program: a new look...

Integrated Assessments:

synthesis of existing research from various fields of study applied to a specific policy question

Steps of an Integrated Assessment

1) Document social, economic and environmental status and trends related to policy question
2) Document causes and consequences of the status and trends
3) Use both quantitative (e.g., models) and qualitative methods to provide a series of policy options for decision makers to address the consequences
4) Provide technical guidance for implementing each policy option and a certainty assessment for each of the preceding steps
5) Subject peer reviewed document to public comment
6) Deliver public comment and peer-reviewed document for decision-makers to use to develop and implement an action plan
Why the opportunity to pilot this research-based process in Northeast Michigan?

Examples of Coastal Access Opportunities in NE MI

State-owned Coastal access/properties…

…Maritime Heritage Highlights

Photo Credits: NOAA TBNMS and Michigan Sea Grant
**Great Lakes Tourism Opportunities in NE MI**

- **Natural Resources-related Recreation**
  - Fishing
  - Birding
  - Boating
  - Beaches/Swimming
  - Camping/Hiking/Kayaking
  - Geology (Sinkholes, fossils, etc.)

- **Maritime Heritage**
  - Lighthouses
  - Shipwrecks (TBNMS)
  - Historic “Fish Towns” (commercial fisheries)

**Current Initiatives to promote tourism in NE MI**

- U.S. 23 Heritage Route
- Huron Greenways
- Sweetwater Trails
- Lake Huron Circle Tour
- “Positioning NE MI as a Maritime Heritage Destination” initiative (MDHAL, TBNMS, Sunrise Side Tourism)
- Maritime Heritage:
  - Thunder Bay Maritime Festival
  - Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival
- Local Chamber's of Commerce:
  - Salmon Tournaments
  - Birding Tours
  - Lighthouse Tours
Proposed NE MI Policy Question:

Building on and adding value to existing initiatives:

“How can coastal access be designed, in a regional context, for sustainable tourism that stimulates economic development while maintaining the integrity of natural and cultural resources, and quality of life?”

Working Group Contributors:

- NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and Underwater Preserve
- MDNR (Parks Div. & Northern Lower Peninsula Eco-Unit Team)
- MDEQ Coastal Zone Management
- MDEQ Office of the Great Lakes
- MDHAL – NE MI Maritime Heritage Tourism Initiative
- MDOT
- The Nature Conservancy
- Michigan’s Sunrise Side Travel Association
- Alpena County Board of Commissioners
- Alpena Twp.
- Sanborn Twp.
- City of Alpena
- Alpena Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
- TARGET Alpena (Economic Development)
- Alcona County Board of Commissioners
- Alcona Twp.
- Alcona County Economic Development Corp.
- Presque Isle County Board of Commissioners
- Presque Isle Twp.
- City of Rogers City
- Presque Isle County Tourism Council
- Presque Isle CDC/EDC
- Conservation Districts
- Community Organizations
- Interested Citizens
- Legislators/Congressman
- Northeast Michigan Council of Government’s (NEMCOG)
- MSU Extension (County & "Area of Expertise" team support)
- MSU Tourism Resource Center
- University of Michigan
- MI Sea Grant College Program
Technical/Research Collaborators

Ecological Assessment:
- UoM - School of Natural Resources and Environment
- Supported by: The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Natural Features Inventory

Cultural Assets Review/Assessment:
- NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program
- MI Dept. of History, Arts, and Libraries

Socio-Economic Assessment:
- NOAA Marine Sanctuary Economist Team
- Supported by: MSU Tourism Resource Center

Regional Planning and Zoning Assessment:
- UoM - Urban and Regional Planning Program

Sustainable Development Assessment Team (SDAT):
- American Institute of Architects: Sustainable Design Assessment Team

Added-Value connection opportunities:
- MDNR Eco-team, Parks, etc. (State Property Planning Processes)
- Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary (5-year management)
- …and others

Timeline

- 2005: Background scoping for Integrated Assessment, initial community meetings
- 2006: Integrated Assessment program elements, task force meetings, etc.
- 2007: Completion of final products and presentation to Task Force
Where we’ve been...

- June-August 2005:
  Initial discussions with MSUE, NEMCOG, TBNMS, MDNR, and others

- September 2005:
  Gather small working group, agree project desired in NE MI, identify issues/opportunities, develop draft policy question

- February 2006:
  Expand working group, identify additional issues/opportunities, revise policy question

Where we’re at now...

- June 2006:
  Formally initiate assessment process

- August 2006:
  Technical, research teams provide preliminary reports

- October-December 2006:
  AIA SDAT – synthesizing research in big picture context; begin visioning and policy option development

- January 2007 (Today!):
  Prioritizing policy options; technical teams will use your priorities to focus their forecasting analyses
What have we accomplished??

So far...
- Regional relationship building!
- Prelim. Assessments by 4 technical teams, providing:
  - “current status and trends” – a review compiling significant existing data; and
  - “forecasting assessment” tools related to policy options/actions you prioritize
- AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team Project: …a “big picture” look at 3 counties

Remaining…
- Technical Teams “forecasting assessments”
- Final Integrated Assessment Report: a focused look at coastal access and related economic development/tourism development opportunities

Other opportunities relevant to this process...
- MDNR Parks (State Parks Planning Processes): potential support for regionally coordinated planning and future investment in Negwegon, Rockport, Thompson’s Harbor
- MDEQ Coastal Management Program Funding: Prioritizing regional needs and opportunities; providing a foundation for projects to potentially be funded through this program
- US 23 Heritage Route Initiative: Adding-value to existing regional efforts to promote tourism in NE MI
- “Creating Entrepreneurial Communities” initiative: positioned NE MI team to be selected as a CEC Pilot Community – a regional economic development opportunity
- Regional relationship building…
  …this has purposefully not been a “one week and report out” process; but rather a process that has allowed regional relationships to develop in addressing the policy question.
Jan 23 -- prioritize policy options/actions

February – early March (WORKGROUP MTNG): Preliminary Report; Technical teams report back with their prelim. assessment for the priority policy options selected; Begin public information process.

March-early May Scientific Peer Review (Sea Grant facilitates this); revise document based on review of outside researchers

May (PUBLIC INFO./INPUT MEETINGS): Public comment (we will ask county sub-teams to help organize and lead these); Press releases can be developed and timed to correlate with these public meetings.

June (FINAL WORKGROUP MTNG) -- Document finalized and delivered

Implementation: Will vary and is up to members/agencies/organizations to implement components relevant to your community roles and responsibilities
Public Comment: Informing & Involving your Community Constituents

Potential Media Campaign & Timeline:
An example of what we might prepare with work group & ask local media to help us provide in communities:

Week 1: NEMIA Overview: Background & Intro process, partners, and policy question…
Week 2: Coastal Ecological Features and Opportunities Focus
Week 3: Cultural Assessment: A Review of NE MI Assets and Initiatives
Week 4: Planning and Zoning Assessment Focus
Week 5: Socio-Economic Assessment Focus
Week 6: NEMIA Review of Product – connecting the dots!

Public Invite to public open-houses to discuss: dates, locations, times, etc.

Open-Houses (May, tentatively) – probably by County:
...these public information releases lead up to public meetings; we will partner with work group to plan & host public “open-houses” locally to facilitate public input on final document.

Thank You for your continued Commitment and Contribution to this Process!