

**WMSRDC**

**WEST MICHIGAN SHORELINE  
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

2008  
annual  
report

# Message from the Chairperson & Executive Director

The year 2008 will be remembered at WMSRDC as a productive one with valuable services provided to our local communities and region. A few highlights include:

- Successful completion of the first regional homeland security program.
- Initiation of “Strengthening the Role of Regional Councils/Economic Development Districts in the New Global Economy”.
- Completion of a five county Regional Transportation Plan.
- Implementation of a federal, state, and local partnership through the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program.
- Several regional forums, including the West Michigan Watershed Partners Forum.
- Assistance to several small communities through the Community Development and Local Government Services program.
- Implementation of several High Priority Project transportation improvements.

Evelyn Kolbe, Chairperson

Sandeep Dey, Executive Director

# Economic Development

WMSRDC assisted local governments in identifying seventeen regionally significant economic and community development projects through the 2008 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process. WMSRDC is designated as the Economic Development District for the five county area from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration.

WMSRDC continued to work with the Lake County Economic Development Committee to implement the Lake County Economic Adjustment Plan. This plan, completed in 2007 with the assistance of WMSRDC, identified several economic development initiatives such as the development of an industrial park and a skills training program.

WMSRDC began working with the Michigan Association of Regions to strengthen the role of regional councils/Economic Development Districts (EDDs). The focus is to look at the characteristics of what an economic development district is, what the mission is supposed to be, and what EDDs could be in order for their communities and regions to compete in the new global economy.

# Transportation

WMSRDC implemented and amended the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan and the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program. Both documents outline the transportation needs of the area.

Every Federal Aid eligible road in the region was rated by WMSRDC and partnering agencies through the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Program. WMSRDC also contracted with several local governments to rate their local roads.

WMSRDC planned for the implementation of over \$6 million in road projects through High Priority transportation funding as derived from the Higher Education Area Access Study and the North Central Muskegon County Transportation and Land Use Study. These studies, managed by WMSRDC, focused on ways to address congestion around the colleges and the Michigan Adventure Amusement Park.

A Regional Transportation Study is being prepared to prioritize the transportation needs of each county in the region. This study will serve as a guide for future funding needs.

# Homeland Security

WMSRDC completed a second year as the fiduciary/planning agency for the Region 6 Homeland Security Governing Board (HSGB). The Region 6 HSGB consists of the following West Central Michigan counties: Clare, Ionia, Isabella, Kent, Lake, Mason, Mecosta, Montcalm, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana, Osceola, and Ottawa.

Throughout 2008 WMSRDC assisted the HSGB in securing several State and Federal Homeland Security Grants. These important grants included explosive response equipment and funds for “Project IGNITE” which is a Region 6 Law Enforcement Information Sharing Enhancement Project. Also received were funds to purchase several “Black Box” kits that provide for tactical communications between various radio, telephone, cellular phone, and internet connections. Enhancements to the Underwater “Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV)” were also secured for the HSGB as well as the purchase of equipment for Muskegon’s Regional Response Team.

Several training courses and opportunities were also coordinated for the HSGB by WMSRDC in 2008.

# Environmental

In 2008, WMSRDC hosted a successful Watershed Partners Forum and collected input from participants for the development of WMSRDC's Watershed Partners Inventory. The inventory summarizes the status of many water quality concerns and programs underway in West Michigan watersheds.

WMSRDC supported a regional partnership to restore fish and wildlife habitat in the Muskegon Lake watershed, and to remove it from the list of Great Lakes Areas of Concern. With support from state and federal sources, WMSRDC and partners provided technical support and project coordination to restore fish and wildlife habitat and related water quality. See more information on this in the "Spotlight" section of this Annual Report.

Partnering with the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC), WMSRDC continued the Ozone Action Program which promotes voluntary emission reduction activities. The WMCAC is a partnership of business, education, government, and non-profit groups working to achieve cleaner air in the region through education and promotion of voluntary emission reduction activities.

# Community Development & Local Government Services

Throughout 2008, WMSRDC continued to assist the Muskegon Area-wide Plan (MAP) in hosting quarterly county-wide planning commission meetings. Wind energy in Michigan and an evaluation of the MAP from Dr. Joseph Ohren of Eastern Michigan University highlighted this year's series.

WMSRDC assisted Newfield Township, Oceana County to develop a comprehensive land use plan. WMSRDC worked closely with the Township Board to develop goals and objectives and held several public meetings to gather input from the community.

WMSRDC completed a small project for Golden Township, Oceana County to map township-owned vacant and recreational properties.

The North Central Muskegon County Joint Planning Commission (JPC), staffed by WMSRDC, identified future tasks and activities in order to implement the JPC Comprehensive Land Use Plan. In 2008, the member townships of Blue Lake, Dalton, Fruitland, Laketon, and Muskegon passed a budget supporting the functions and activities of the JPC.

# Information & Communications

WMSRDC annually hosts a series of regional forums. 2008's series was highlighted by the ever popular Rural Local Government Assistance Workshop. This encore workshop focused on assistance available in the areas of transportation, recreation, economic development, land use planning, infrastructure, and water quality.

Through the Federal Project Review System, WMSRDC continued to review federal/state grant assistance applications to coincide with local and regional goals and policies.

WMSRDC continued to publish the bi-monthly newsletter, "Commission Communications." Every issue of the newsletter is chock full of information about WMSRDC's projects and programs with a unique program/project spotlighted in every issue. "Commission Communications" is distributed to a mailing list of over 500 including local governments, business, non-profits and interested citizens.

WMSRDC hosts and maintains a comprehensive website ([wmsrdc.org](http://wmsrdc.org)). The website contains demographics, program information, downloadable documents, etc.

## Spotlight On the Environment

In 2008 a partnership was announced between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Great Lakes Commission, the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership, and WMSRDC. This partnership aims to restore coastal habitat in the Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC), with site-specific restoration projects in Muskegon Lake. A second site was selected in Wisconsin.

The Muskegon Lake project, coordinated by WMSRDC, will restore habitats vital to self-sustaining populations of fish, waterfowl, reptiles, amphibians, and migratory birds. Restoration plans will address delisting targets of the AOC.

An AOC is an environmentally degraded area within the Great Lakes basin. To qualify as an AOC, an area must contain one or more beneficial use impairments.

NOAA seeks \$1.5 million in Fiscal Year 2009 to launch the NOAA-wide Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Program. NOAA will build on existing expertise and ongoing partnerships to address state, local, and tribal priority needs.

## **WHO IS WMSRDC?**

*The mission of the West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission is to promote and foster regional development in West Michigan through cooperation amongst local governments.*

WMSRDC is designated by federal, state, and local governments as a regional planning and development agency serving the West Michigan counties of Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. WMSRDC operates programs in economic development, transportation, homeland security, environmental planning, community development, information & communications, etc.

A twenty-one member board comprised of local elected and appointed officials directs agency policy and has final authority over its activities.

**Evelyn Kolbe, Chairperson**  
**Oceana County Commissioner**

**James Rynberg, Vice-Chairperson**  
**Mayor, City of Fremont**

**Robert Genson, Secretary**  
**Mason County Commissioner**

**Sandeep Dey, Executive Director**



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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

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