

Getting the Message Out on Great Lakes Restoration:

Communicating with Local Communities on Restoring Michigan's Great Lakes Areas of Concern

Friday, November 9, 2007
Michillinda Lodge
5207 Scenic Dr.
Whitehall, Michigan

OVERVIEW

This one-day workshop will review how progress in restoring Michigan's Great Lakes Areas of Concern is being communicated to the public, elected officials, and other audiences. Scientists, journalists, agency staff and Area of Concern leaders will discuss how information has been conveyed to local communities and suggest ways to better inform and engage the public on Great Lakes restoration efforts. Experts will provide training on "messaging" Great Lakes restoration and developing effective public participation programs for watershed management.

AGENDA

9:00 a.m. **Welcoming Remarks and Review of Workshop Purpose**

9:15 a.m. **Setting the Stage: The Status of Michigan's Great Lakes Areas of Concern Program and How Restoration is Being Communicated**

Rick Hobrla, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
Tanya Cabala, White Lake Area of Concern
Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake Area of Concern

10:15 a.m. **Break**

10:30 a.m. **Communications Challenges and Opportunities for Michigan's Areas of Concern**

This session will feature speakers from different disciplines who have participated in Area of Concern cleanup efforts. They will discuss their experiences, the lessons they have learned, and suggest opportunities to improve how we communicate progress in restoring environmental quality in the Areas of Concern.

- *A Media Perspective on Covering the Areas of Concern*
Greg Means, Editor, White Lake Beacon
- *Communicating Science in the Areas of Concern*
Dr. Al Steinman, Director, Grand Valley State University – Annis Water Resources Institute
- *Talking as if the Law, Policy and Facts Matter: Communicating on Cleaning up Toxic Sites*
Frank Ruswick, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- *Lessons Learned from Delisting the Oswego River Area of Concern in New York*
(Speaker to be determined)

Moderator: John Perrecone, U.S. EPA, Great Lakes National Program Office

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Sponsors:



12:00 p.m. **Lunch and Keynote Speaker**

Healthy Waters, Strong Economy: The Benefits of Restoring the Great Lakes Ecosystem

Soren Anderson, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Michigan, Department of Economics

Soren will present the results of a recent study published by the Brookings Institution that estimated the economic benefits of restoring the Great Lakes ecosystem and will discuss strategies for communicating the importance of these results to different audiences.

1:15 p.m. **“Messaging” Great Lakes Restoration**

Jordan Lubetkin, National Wildlife Federation/Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition

The Healing Our Waters – Great Lake Coalition has used public opinion research from the Biodiversity Project to identify sectors of the public who are most sympathetic to the plight of the Great Lakes. Building on the values and concerns of these "target audiences," the coalition has developed campaign materials and ways of talking about Great Lakes issues that can motivate people to take action to protect the lakes – ranging from signing petitions to contacting elected officials. This session will present opportunities for Area of Concern groups to communicate more effectively to build support among policy makers and the public for restoring the Areas of Concern.

2:15 p.m. **Doing it Right: Measuring the Success of Public Participation in Watershed Management**

Seth Tuler and Thomas Webler, Social and Environmental Research Institute

Staff from the Social and Environmental Research Institute will discuss how to get the most out of community involvement in watershed management programs. With funding from U.S. EPA, they are conducting research in Waukegan, Illinois and New Jersey on how to develop and implement an effective community participation process. They will review strategies for getting community feedback and recommend how to adapt the community involvement process to make it more useful to local stakeholders.

3:15 p.m. **Break**

3:30 p.m. **Communications Challenges and Successes: Case Studies from Great Lakes Areas of Concern**

The workshop will conclude with a series of case studies from Great Lake Areas of Concern focused on how both challenges and successes in restoring water quality are communicated to local communities. Open discussion will follow with all workshop participants.

4:45 p.m. **Wrap Up and Conclusions: Maintaining Effective Communications to Advance Great Lakes Restoration**

5:00 p.m. **Adjourn**