

Implementation



Teamwork is the key to achieving goals and recommendations of this plan. Local government, agencies, organizations and landowners must work together to build partnerships that rely on each other's strengths and resources. The Misery Bay Initiative Steering Committee can be touted as a shining example of teamwork and has set the groundwork for building partnerships. Another example of partnerships can be found watershed planning and management efforts in Northeastern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. NEMCOG, Huron Pines RC&D Council, County Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Headwaters Land Conservancy, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Watershed Councils, local units of government and citizens have worked together to develop and implement a number of non-point source management plans.

Chapter 6 defines four conservation planning areas, which include riparian land, islands, existing small lot waterfront residential and forestlands. A series of recommendations for each conservation planning area involve a four pronged approach of technical assistance, education, long term preservation and regulation. Many organizations and agencies provide landowner technical assistance, education programs, regulate activity on land and water and offer incentives for long term preservation of critical areas. However, coordination of the existing multitude of options is lacking in Misery Bay, as well as the entire Northeastern Michigan coastal area. NEMCOG, as the regional planning agency for northeast Michigan, will continue to work towards implementing recommendations of the Misery Bay Plan. NEMCOG will apply for grants to fund educational and technical assistance programs. As well, members of the steering committee have expressed similar interest and commitment to implementing the plan. This plan was developed as a blue print for preserving the unique resources Misery Bay; to be used by any entity, public or private, to achieve this goal.

Voluntary Conservation

The quality of the environment and the integrity of the ecosystem can, in large part, be attributed to the stewardship of landowners. The miles of undeveloped shoreline, undisturbed coastal wetlands, thousands of acres of forestland are present today because of the actions of the many landowners in the area. The best opportunity for long term preservation of the fragile and unique areas in Misery Bay will be through voluntary conservation. The plan supports continued resource stewardship and recognizes the need to offer education and technical programs to assist landowners.

There are a number of existing programs that provide some level of technical assistance and resource education to landowners. Several of the agencies providing these services are: Michigan DNR, Huron Pines RC&D Council, Alpena Conservation District, Natural Resource Conservation Service, NEMCOG, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Services are provided on a walk-in basis or are project specific. A landowner targeting program that focuses on the Misery Bay area would likely generate more interest than existing staffing and funding levels at agencies could accommodate. To implement the plan, additional funding will be necessary to support either existing staff or hire new staff to contact landowners, provide landowner assistance, conduct education programs, develop demonstration projects and coordinate with existing programs.

Long Term Preservation

Organizations and agencies have programs designed to protect special areas either through fee simple purchase or conservation easements. Examples of these are Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Coastal Management Program, Michigan Natural Resource Trust Fund, Headwaters Land Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy. Headwaters Land Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy will lead efforts to work with landowners and units of governments to achieve long term protection of critical and sensitive areas through conservation easements and fee simple purchases.

Publicly owned lands offer some level of long term protection. The State of Michigan owns 1,560 acres in the Misery Bay study area. Critical properties include lands along the north shore of El Cajon Bay and most of Prospect Park Subdivision on Misery Bay. These lands have been recommended for Old Growth status. If the State of Michigan should decide to sell or trade any of the land along Misery Bay, this plan recommends Alpena Township pursue acquiring the lands for parks and nature preserves. Alpena Township is in the process of acquiring the southern part of Thunder Bay Island where the lighthouse is located. Acquisition will enable the Preservation Society to seek grants and other sources of funding to restore and preserve the lighthouse and fog horn building. This plan supports the community's effort to protect and restore the lighthouse.

Regulation and Policies

Local, state and federal regulations and policies afford some level protection. Alpena Township holds the first level of responsibility in protecting the unique resources of the area through their land use planning and zoning responsibilities. The Township's master plan recognizes the need to limit development in sensitive natural resource areas by designating 2,800 acres as Environmental Conservation in their future land use plan. These areas are intended to be protected from potential dense development. The future land use plan does not restrict privately owned parcels from development; rather the intent is to restrict the density of development. Alpena Township can apply for funding from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Coastal Management Program to update their zoning along coastal areas to reflect future land recommendations in their 2004 master plan and to consider recommendations in the Misery Bay plan such as reviewing waterfront zoning standards and greenbelts. Long term preservation can be achieved by communities adopting sustainable development approaches and conservation open-space development in their planning and zoning activities.

Other local units of government support long term preservation of the natural environment by protecting groundwater, surface water, forests, wetlands, clean air, fisheries and wildlife. Adjacent communities should recognize connectivity of resources and make land use decisions that will not negatively impact areas outside their boundaries. The City of Alpena will start updating their 1998 master plan in 2005. This plan encourages the City to consider resource protection and management within its boundaries and to recognize ecological corridors that run through its jurisdictional area. The City should apply to the Coastal Management Program to help fund the master plan update.

Misery Bay Initiative Partners

The Misery Bay Steering Committee will continue to meet on a yearly basis to discuss implementation activities and when funding has been obtained to oversee work activities. Misery Bay Initiative Partners should include the following representatives: landowners, Beaumont Point Club, LaFarge Corporation, Alpena Township, Alpena County, City of Alpena, Alpena Conservation District, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, Huron Pines RC & D Council, Headwaters Land Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, Thunder Bay Island, Preservation Society, Thunder Bay River Watershed Council, Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary & Underwater Preserve, Michigan Nature Association, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Coastal Management Program, Michigan Sea Grant, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, GLNPO, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Alpena News.