



**GREAT LAKES
COALITION**

*Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter
For Shoreline Preservation*

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Newsletter – Summer 2021

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The Great Lakes Coalition will conduct our Annual Membership Meeting on Saturday, August 14, 2021, once again at the Haworth Hotel on the campus of Hope College, 225 College Avenue, in Holland, Michigan. Meeting is set to begin at 10:00 a.m. (EDT). Members and other interested parties are invited to attend. Due to the uncertainty of the timing of lifting of COVID restrictions, the Board of Directors has decided to conduct this year's Annual Membership Meeting as a business meeting only with no guest speakers. Because of social distancing restrictions which may still be in place, we will need an accurate count of attendees, so we ask that you please register online at www.greatlakescoalition.org/annual-membership-registration or contact our secretary, Marcia Wineberg, at marciawineberg@yahoo.com or call 847-965-5616, if you would care to attend. Business to be conducted: Approval of last meeting's minutes, Treasurer's report, and election of board members (see next article), along with report on lake levels and other business which may come before the board.

GOVERNANCE NEEDED

The Great Lakes Coalition is seeking individuals to serve as directors on the board. People with an interest in protecting the shoreline of the Great Lakes, protection of the lakes' environment, and promoting responsible public management of Great Lakes water levels are encouraged to submit a letter of interest to our office at P.O. Box 429, Saugatuck, Michigan 49453, or email to our secretary at: marciawineberg@yahoo.com.

We are particularly interested in an individual who may have experience in legislative matters or has served as a legislative liaison, but other board positions will be open as well. We are also seeking an individual with an administrative background. Duties include maintaining our membership list, managing our website and compiling and editing our twice-yearly newsletter. The Great Lakes Coalition board meets monthly for approximately two hours. The GLC office is located in Douglas, Michigan, though many of the meetings are virtual. We welcome interest from any potential candidates. We hope to make appointments to the board at the abovementioned Annual Membership meeting in August.

AND NOW— A BIT OF GOOD NEWS

As of June 2, 2021, the level of Lake Michigan-Huron is at 580.49 feet, down from 581.67 feet on October 1, 2020, and down from 582.15 feet – more than 1-1/2 feet – since July, 2020.

[Detroit District > Missions > Great Lakes Information > Great Lakes Water Levels > Water Level Forecast > Monthly Bulletin of Great Lakes Water Levels \(army.mil\)](#)

The lowering of lake levels is due not only to seasonal drop but also a lack of snow and precipitation this past winter. And a generally mild winter has meant warmer temperatures with very little ice forming on the lake but less evaporation since it was not cold enough. But damages are still occurring, bluffs are still eroding and revetments are still being installed. Let's take a look at what is being done and what we can do:

COALITION ACTION POINTS

Here are steps the Great Lakes Coalition believes should be taken. Many of these actions come from International Joint Commission study reports:

1. Restore the Long Lac and Ogoki Rivers in Canada to their original flow channels to Hudson Bay instead of the present diversion into Lake Superior.
2. Operate the Lake Superior Regulation Plan 2012 in a more balanced manner to decrease flows into Lakes Michigan-Huron when their levels are approaching record highs.
3. Remove the in-fills that restrict flow through the Niagara River, open Black Rock Lock in Buffalo, and utilize Welland Canal to increase Niagara River flow.
4. Consider increasing the Chicago Diversion when the Mississippi River is not at flood levels.
5. Install an ice boom at the head of the St. Clair River to reduce the risk of ice jams.
6. Examine ways to accomplish increasing outflow from Lake Ontario.
7. Investigate other outflow sources such as the Erie Canal or Oswego Canal into the Hudson River.
8. Include citizen representatives at the policy decision segment of water level management.
9. Each Great Lake should have some water level control and the water level variance between highs and lows should be smaller.
10. Mitigate water level effects when repairs are made to gates on the St. Marys River.
11. Continued concern about spent uranium storage at nuclear facilities on Lake Michigan (i.e., Cook plant)
12. Encourage offshore sand dredging to nourish depleted beaches.

While these proposed mitigation strategies will not control the rain, snowfall, and evaporation rates, there is enough human control through the International Joint Commission to reduce the severity of the damage currently ravaging the coastal communities. Residents throughout the Great Lakes, be they Canadian or U.S., are suffering, as are the communities in which they live. Loss of property values, diminished levels of tourism, as well as mounting restoration and repair costs are creating a significant economic and environmental crisis for coastal communities, Canadian and U.S. alike. It is time for the Commission to utilize the extent of its power to begin to bring relief. Interested citizens can contact the International Joint Commission by visiting their website at <https://ijc.org/en/contact> for an online message form.

COALITION OF OTHER GREAT LAKES ORGANIZATIONS

The Great Lakes Coalition has been working with other organizations around the Great Lakes basin, particularly Lake Ontario groups and groups from Northern Michigan, Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. The purpose of working together would be toward a goal of equal representation of riparian status with the shipping and hydro power interests, along with a louder voice with which to speak to our legislators and decision makers. The groups on Lake Ontario have had much success in lowering the Lake Ontario level by challenging Lake Ontario Plan 2014 resulting in more outflow through the Moses-Saunders Dam into the St. Lawrence River and providing relief from the Spring flooding that has taken place in previous years. By collaborating with them we hope to achieve similar success in our quest for more equitable outflow from Lake Superior by requesting the International Joint Commission to revisit Lake Superior Plan 2012, more carefully consider riparian interests vs. shipping and hydro power interests, and balance outflow.

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

The bipartisan House of Representatives Great Lakes Task Force, consisting of 27 representatives from Great Lakes states, and led by Co-Chairs Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), David Joyce (R-OH) and Bill Huizenga (R-MI), along with Reps. Bill Foster (D-IL) and Jack Bergman (R-MI), has sent a letter to Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, Rickey "R.D." James regarding the Task Force's priorities for the Great Lakes region as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers develops its fiscal year 2021 work plan. Among the priorities is requesting funding for

the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, authorized by the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018. The Study would be an effort to develop a coordinated strategy to manage and protect the 5,200 miles of Great Lakes coastlines, especially in light of recent rapid and unpredictable swings in water levels.

FEMA/STATE LOAN PROGRAM FOR SHORELINE PROTECTION

The STORM Act was recently signed into law. The Act authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide capitalization grants to states to establish revolving funds to provide hazard mitigation assistance to reduce risks from disasters and natural hazards. It establishes loans that local governments could access to help mitigate the impact of rising water levels, coastal erosion and other damage caused by natural disasters in a more cost-effective way. Rules for implementation of the program still need to be developed. The Coalition, working with the Michigan Municipal League, is urging our congressional representatives and lawmakers to make sure the rules are followed and to include shoreline protection for private property owners.

WEBINAR – “PROTECTING YOUR SHORELINE PROPERTY”

On Wednesday, April 28, 2021, the Great Lakes Coalition conducted a webinar “Protecting Your Shoreline Property.” Over 275 shoreline property owners registered for a presentation conducted by Jerrod Sanders, Assistant Division Director of the Water Resources Division of the State of Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lakes & Environment (EGLE). Director Sanders reported that the past months along with the entire past year have been the wettest period in Great Lakes recorded history causing catastrophic impacts to homes, property and infrastructure. There was severe flooding in southeast Michigan and beach and bluff erosion along the Great Lakes shores. Existing support and response systems were stressed. Permits issued for construction of shoreline protection measures skyrocketed: F/Y 2019 saw 730 permits issued, while F/Y 2020 counted 2,238 permits issued. Permits were prioritized and expedited based on risk. Emergency conditional permits were issued for temporary sandbags and Geo-tubes.

So – what's going to happen? Director Sanders stated there is an overall water level decline with the level “bottoming out” in April, but peak level will occur in late summer. The overall water level should be 12-14” lower than last year. However, the high water cycle will happen again – approximately every 30 years. The climate is predicted to be warmer and wetter making weather more volatile with higher “highs” and lower “lows.” The outcomes will be based on how we adapt.

Director Sanders then described systems in place now and what decisions to make regarding planning, policy and education. Some solutions are: better planning, managed retreat, and install “better” solutions such as temporary sandbags or Geo-tubes, bioengineering, and stone revetments. However, all revetments cause some problems. Sand supply is slowed, but not cut off. Scouring occurs and wave energy is up. EGLE is trying to avoid hard armoring and trying for the least harmful method. They are suggesting Geo-tubes for temporary use. The Michigan Coastal Management Program (MCMP) can offer assistance.

And, here are questions submitted by webinar viewers:

1. Are sandbags permitted for permanent installation? NO.
2. What about rock in the water? ROCKS PUSH WAVE ENERGY UP. EASIER TO REPAIR.
3. Drain wicks? REDUCE BLUFF EROSION
4. How can we determine if any permits are being issued nearby our properties? “MIWATERS” SITE SEARCH.
5. Better solution? GEO-TUBES WORK.
6. If a local community or township adopt special ordinances concerning shoreline protection that are more restrictive than the state rules under EGLE, is it legal? THERE WILL BE LEGAL CHALLENGES.
7. Does EGLE approve certain shoreline contractors? EGLE LISTS CONTRACTORS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY DONE WORK ON THE LAKE MICHIGAN SHORELINE.

8. If a contractor is on the EGLE website list, does that mean it's an "approved" vendor? NO.
9. Does EGLE have specific requirements for stone size, slope, revetment geometry, etc. for each site-specific permit? YES, TO SLOPE AND REVETMENT GEOMETRY. STONE SIZE TO BE DETERMINED BY COASTAL ENGINEER.
10. Does EGLE inspect and approve each stone revetment during construction with a final inspection approval? THEY ARE TRYING TO.
11. Will EGLE permit a stone revetment where a township or local community does not permit it? EGLE IS ASKING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL NOW.
12. Does EGLE allow offshore dredging? If Yes, what are the conditions and requirements? IS ALLOWED FOR BEACH REPLENISHMENT – EGLE LOOKS AT THE PERMIT REQUEST.
13. In areas of extreme erosion often caused by nearby structures such as harbors, can offshore breakwaters be installed? EGLE IS WARY OF OFFSHORE STRUCTURES, BUT WILL CONSIDER.
14. Why does EGLE allow river and harbor dredging materials to be placed offshore beyond the point of closure? Why not place the dredged material at downdrift shore sites? BECAUSE THEY HAVE TO BY LAW.
15. In areas that experience sand starvation, does EGLE have any plans to move sand that is offshore beyond the point of closure back to the shore and within the littoral drift zone? EGLE IS NOT OPPOSED, BUT NOW THEY HAVE NO PLANS (OR MONEY) TO DO IT.* * EGLE HAS NOT RECEIVED AN APPLICATION AS YET. THEY SHOULD ACTUALLY INSTITUTE THE PROJECT BUT NEED FUNDING. THEY ARE VERY INTERESTED IN DOING IT.
16. I would like to know if projects are vetted: 1) to protect neighbors' lakeshore? 2) If neighbors need to be notified and/or give authorization for projects? 3) What is being done when a neighbor's property or beach is eroded or damaged due to a sea wall of similar structure? 4) If public walking areas are lost due to walls, do public rights-of-ways need to be created? ANSWERS TO 1 AND 2: YES. ALL PROJECTS TRANSFER ENERGY TO NEIGHBORS' PROPERTIES. ANSWER TO 3: THIS WOULD BE A CIVIL MATTER IF CONTRACTOR COMPLIED WITH PERMIT. ANSWER TO 4: SEE ANSWER TO QUESTIONS 19 & 20 BELOW.
17. If EGLE has approved construction of a revetment (or other type of hard armoring) but construction has yet to begin and I feel that I will be adversely affected by the revetment, may I appeal EGLE's decision? What is the appeal process? YES, 60 DAYS TO FILE A "CONTESTED CASE."
18. If a revetment on private property has caused accelerated beach or bluff erosion on an adjoining property, what recourse does the adjoining property owner have? THIS WOULD BE A CIVIL ISSUE IF CONSTRUCTION WAS IN COMPLIANCE.
19. If I am not able to walk on "wet sand" to get past a revetment located on private property, am I legally allowed to climb onto or over the revetment to get to the other side, or is that considered trespassing? EGLE DOES NOT ENFORCE THIS—IT'S A COURT DECISION. CONSULT AN ATTORNEY.
20. Is the property owner legally responsible for providing for safe passage past the revetment? NOT REQUIRED UNDER LAW #325.
21. How much below the OHWM, and for how long, does the lake level need to be to activate the requirement to remove the sandbags: EGLE WILL WATCH SUMMER PEAK AND SEE WHAT PREDICTION WILL BE FOR NEXT YEAR, THEN REQUEST REMOVAL, OR SEE IF RISK IS STILL PRESENT.
22. Will EGLE notify holders of sandbag permits that they need to remove sandbags because the lake level is below the OHWM? YES, HOMEOWNERS WILL BE NOTIFIED.

23. How much time will EGLE give the homeowner to remove the sandbags? NO ANSWER.

24. Question regarding surface water runoff at top of bluff causing erosion: How can EGLE support homeowners suffering from improper or negatively impacted surface water drainage including unpermitted land clearing? EGLE ONLY DEALS WITH WHAT REGULATIONS GIVE THEM. THIS COULD BE A CIVIL MATTER BETWEEN PARTIES.

For more information, you may contact Jerrod Sanders at the Michigan Department of Energy, Great Lakes and Environment at SANDERSJ3@michigan.gov.

RESEARCHERS ENLISTING CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

Researchers at Michigan State University say that though Great Lakes water levels are down, the risk of coastal erosion remains. Now, they are enlisting “citizen scientists” to assist in helping better understand coastal change. Funded by an early concept grant from the National Science Foundation Coastlines and People Initiative, the Interdisciplinary Citizen-based Coastal Remote Sensing for Adaptive Management (IC-CREAM) project is looking to work with multiple communities in the Great Lakes region facing impacts from record-high water levels. The IC-CREAM team is developing a first-of-its-kind citizen science program to equip and train volunteers to pilot drones and use other geospatial technologies to better monitor and understand coastal change and vulnerabilities. The team is currently working with citizen scientists to gather data in the communities of Marquette, Manistique, Iosco County, Chikaming, Manistee, and South Haven. They believe that getting scientists, citizens, and community decision makers to work together is an important step in addressing coastal issues. For more information, use this link:

<https://www.wkar.org/post/msu-researchers-enlisting-volunteers-document-coastal-erosion-mi>

IMPACT OF HARBORS ON EROSION AND THE NEED FOR OFFSHORE DREDGING IN MICHIGAN *(reprinted from last issue to stress the importance and cost-effectiveness of offshore dredging)*

Large areas of the shoreline of Michigan have been greatly impacted by the severe erosion which has been exacerbated by the impact of harbors and jetties that were designed and installed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE). Serious erosion has occurred even before we experienced high water and erosion has been a continuing problem since the harbors were built. Harbors located in New Buffalo, St. Joseph, South Haven, Saugatuck (and many others) have interrupted the natural littoral drift of nearshore sand resulting in severe erosion and sand starvation on the least dominant harbor side. In some cases, such as New Buffalo, the ACOE was to supplement the “interrupted” sand flow by a sand nourishment plan. According to the ACOE, a properly designed harbor would initially interrupt sand flow for a certain period of time thus requiring sand nourishment until the area reached an “equilibrium” by filling the fillet on either side of the harbor after which sand would flow to beaches on both sides “naturally”. In many cases, a periodic nourishment program is required.

Unfortunately, in some cases (well documented in the New Buffalo Harbor Case) the ACOE did not fulfill their nourishment obligation leaving the area south of the harbor void of sand resulting in zero beaches and severe erosion. When sand leaves the beaches accelerated erosion occurs resulting in a steepening of the lakebed. A steeper lakebed allows larger waves to reach shore causing huge shoreline damage and a continual steepening of the lakebed. This is a vicious (compounding) cycle and occurs even when the lake levels are normal. Of course, it is accelerated with high lake levels. Lake areas that have a healthy beach are more resilient to damage from large waves. The beaches on the downstream side of a harbor will be impacted for several miles depending on harbor length (into the lake) and the predominant sand drift in the area.

The ACOE and EGLE are very much aware of jetty and harbor impact on littoral drift, sand starvation, and erosion. Although we are not aware of any new plans for larger harbor construction being made in Michigan, we assume given what is known today, any new construction would either require better harbor design approaches (that must allow sand to by-pass) or they must make hard legal (monetary) commitments for continued sand nourishment. The severe erosion

caused by the New Buffalo harbor has put the City's water intake in peril and a home near the water intake was severely compromised by a storm in 2015, partially fell in the lake, and was later removed (demolition) by the City of New Buffalo. This was well before the water levels increased to historic levels. You may have read about the severe damage done recently to beaches and shoreline near Ogden Dunes, IN. There are large harbors in the area (including the Michigan City Harbor) that impact sand flow on their shoreline.

The sand flow mechanics vary with harbor design (size) but in most cases the results are:

- Sand is blocked by the harbor building large beaches on the predominant flow side.
- Sand can be re-directed out into the lake beyond the "depth of closure" and may not ever be able to reach the beaches by natural mechanisms (wave action).
- Sand can by-pass the harbor and create offshore sand bars often within the depth of closure.
- Sand is not appreciably deposited anywhere near the shoreline on the downstream side.

In most cases the natural sand that would be present (pre harbor construction) on the shoreline downstream side of the harbor is nonexistent for several miles downstream!

What can be done to fix the problem? Short of tearing out existing harbors and constructing improved harbor designs that minimize littoral drift impact we should be locating the sand that is impacted by the harbor and place it back on the downstream shoreline. Offshore dredging (not just channel dredging) is required to collect the impacted sand and returning it to the natural location it would be if no harbor construction interfered.

If the State of Michigan doesn't do something to protect sand in the littoral drift, eventually we will lose great volumes of sand to the deeper parts of the lake. Offshore dredging is done in many areas in the country to replenish beaches and is a normal "maintenance" activity on some of the nation's most popular beaches (refer to item under New Buffalo Shoreline Alliance concerning offshore dredging). Offshore dredging can be done anywhere suitable sand deposits are located that could be placed on a depleted beach (does not have to happen near a harbor). We believe that the State of Michigan should take a more active role with the ACOE to establish sand replenishment programs.

The State of Michigan has a Great Lakes Plan that provides 823,000 jobs for the State, 12.8 billion dollars to the travel industry, 21 million dollars to the charter boat industry and 2 billion dollars to harbors and marinas from the recreational boating industry. Local communities rely on tourism as our economic driver. Without sand on our beaches this economic activity is put in jeopardy. Sand protects the shoreline from erosion!

The State of Michigan has the largest freshwater coastline of any state, yet Michigan does not protect their greatest asset with a budgeted beach nourishment program. Michigan with over 3,000 miles of coastline spends zero to protect their greatest asset. New Jersey with only 94 miles of coastline spends 20 million dollars a year to protect their coastline and Florida spends 100 million dollars a year. Hawaii recognized that beaches are a state asset regardless if they are public or private and spends state money to protect them.

Why doesn't Michigan protect this precious asset and budget money to protect it? The Great Lakes Coalition will continue to urge our lawmakers to realize the importance and cost-effectiveness of offshore dredging and offshore breakers and to take appropriate actions.

UPDATE: As of June 2021, Rep. Fred Upton, (6th, Michigan) has secured funding for dredging of the St. Joseph, Michigan harbor beginning immediately, and has sent a letter to the U.S. House Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development asking them to support the Biden Administration's budget request for nearly \$109 million for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that would, in part, dredge several key harbors in southwest Michigan, including Holland, South Haven and New Buffalo. Upton says that lake freighters bringing needed sand and gravel for road projects need to get to these harbors.

USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District
477 Michigan Avenue
Detroit, MI 48226
Phone: 313-226-5013
Website: www.lre.usace.army.mil

Honorable Gretchen Whitmer
Governor, State of Michigan
P. O. Box 30013
Lansing, MI 48909

International Lake Superior Board of Control
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
550 Main St.
Cincinnati, OH 45202
Phone: 513-684-2010
Website: www.ijc.org/en/lisbc

Contact State of Michigan:
Dept. of Energy, Great Lakes & Environment (EGLE)
www.michigan.gov/highwater

Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
Shore Protection Division
120 Chapin St.
Cadillac, MI 49201
Phone: 231-876-4442 (Barry Peterman)
E-mail: Peterman@michigan.gov

Contact Your State Legislators:
<http://house.michigan.gov/mhrpublic/frmFindaRep.aspx>
<https://senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html>

If you have not already done so, time to renew your membership for 2022, or join us if not already a member:

Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter-Great Lakes Coalition
P. O. Box 429
Saugatuck, MI 49453
(269) 857-8945

We are a 501© (3) tax-exempt organization
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NAME _____

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SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION: _____\$35 _____\$50 _____ \$100 _____ Other

6/21

OR, visit our website at www.greatlakescoalition.org and open the Membership tab to renew online.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MISSION STATEMENT

The Great Lakes Coalition (GLC) concentrates on water levels; natural sand supply to beaches, dunes, and bluffs; and coastal management. The objective is to promote environmentally sound management of the coastal zone. Natural conditions have been changed by sometimes flawed government intervention and judgment. The GLC is a respected advocate for shoreline property owners that challenges inappropriate regulations and encourages beneficial government decisions.