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## WISCONSIN COASTAL MANAGEMENT AT 30

*Mike Friis*

The wonder of Wisconsin's Great Lakes shores would be apparent if one considered only a single beautiful location, critical habitat, working waterfront, recreational opportunity or center of commerce and transportation. However, when one thinks about them collectively, our coasts' diversity and abundance make clear we have something special at our doorstep.

In 1978, the federal and state governments began a special partnership to care for Wisconsin's nearly 1,000 miles of coastline on Lakes Michigan and Superior. The Wisconsin Coastal Management Program (WCMP) became the first federal Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) program established in the Great Lakes and among the first ten nationally.

The WCMP guiding principle of *enjoy and protect Wisconsin's Great Lakes coastal resources* embodies the balance of environmental sustainability and public use. The program has a long history of providing the technical assistance and financial catalysts needed to make local and coastwide projects successful.

Consider Sheboygan's South Pier District. This 42-acre brownfield site at the mouth of the Sheboygan River was for over 100 years used for storage of coal, salt, fertilizer and petroleum. A major redevelopment plan began with a small

WCMP investment for beach restoration and trail development. These initial dollars were among the catalysts that transformed this under-used urban waterfront into a tourist destination that adds great value to the community.

In Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley, the WCMP has been involved in several projects that are revitalizing Wisconsin's largest brownfield. A strong group of local organizations including the City of Milwaukee, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center and Menomonee Valley Partners have used WCMP investments and technical support. Their work to plan, design and restore the Menomonee Valley is producing a place where people can again work and play.

Precious undeveloped tracts also benefit from WCMP partnerships. Lion's Den Gorge sits within a 3/4 mile-long pristine stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline in Ozaukee County. Local desire to protect and make this property available to the public was often discussed between County and WCMP staffs. When it became available for purchase, the WCMP was ready to contribute to the funding package that now preserves this shoreline in perpetuity.

The WCMP's financial and technical contributions also extend to public health. Several years ago, Door County was faced with beach sites with

elevated levels of E. coli bacteria. The WCMP participated with several public and academic partners to develop initial remediation plans and implement best practices at the affected beaches. Through local leadership and state support, Door County in one year went from the Natural Resources Defense Council's *Beach Bums* list to its *Beach Buddies* list.

The WCMP played an integral role in the process that led to the nomination of a National Estuary Research Reserve (NERR) site on Lake Superior. In 2005, WCMP-funded research produced "An Assessment of Wisconsin's Great Lakes Freshwater Estuary Applied Research, Management, and Outreach Needs," a project setting the foundation for the NERR site selection process. In 2006, the WCMP worked with the University of Wisconsin-Extension to facilitate a comprehensive NERR public stakeholder process. These initiatives produced fruit in 2008 when Governor Jim Doyle announced the St. Louis River estuary as Wisconsin's nomination for the nation's next NERR site.

How does the WCMP achieve these results? It works with partners to leverage resources and coordinate the many state and local government programs that affect Wisconsin shores. This networked approach is crucial when one considers the varied nature of the coast and the

uses for the Great Lakes. No one state agency can be all things for the management of the Great Lakes. In this coordinating role, the program's placement in the Wisconsin Department of Administration ensures the program retains balance between environmental, economic development, transportation, recreation and many other objectives.

The WCMP has since its inception been responsive to local and tribal governments and the public through policy guidance from the Governor-appointed Wisconsin Coastal Management Council. The fourteen-member Council represents people from all areas of Wisconsin coasts including tribal and local governments, the Departments of Administration, Natural Resources and Transportation, the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute and legislators.

The WCMP annually provides matching grants to local and tribal governments, academic institutions, nonprofits and other state agencies for the protection, sustainable use and study of Wisconsin's coastal resources. The grant program emphasizes wetland protection and habitat restoration, nonpoint source pollution control, public access and historic preservation, coastal resources and community planning, Great Lakes education and coastal land acquisition.



CZMA legislation provides the WCMP with a mechanism to review proposed federal government activities in the coastal zone. These reviews ensure federal actions along Wisconsin's coasts take place in a manner consistent with the policies of the WCMP.

The WCMP founders established a strong program that today is among the nation's most recognized for its effective implementation of CZMA goals. With the importance of the Great Lakes greater than ever, the WCMP will remain relevant and vital in the management of our Great Lakes coastal resources for many years to come.

*Mike Friis is manager of the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. He can be reached at (608) 267-7982 or michael.friis@wisconsin.gov.*