

ELK RIVER CHAIN OF LAKES WATER FIRST ACTION PLAN

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SEPTIC SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

GOAL STATEMENT

Ensure all septic systems function in a way that protects public health and water quality.

ACTION STEPS, ROLES, AND TIMELINE

1. Educate and advocate with local officials to get local septic tank inspection ordinances passed.
 - a. Project coordination: Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council,
 - i. Consult/inform: Scott Zimmerman, FLOW, Whitewater Township
 - b. Timeline: ongoing through 2023
 - c. Tasks:
 - i. Local government event for elected/appointed officials focused on septic systems
 - ii. Universal presentation to share with planning commissions and township/village/county boards
 - d. Priority areas/Community readiness: Alden, Helena Township, Torch Lake Township, Forest Home Township
2. Share information with landowners to educate them about their choices, including as voters who can advocate for policy changes at the local level that will support high water quality.
 - a. Project coordination: Three Lakes Association, Whitewater Township
 - i. Consult/inform: Scott Zimmerman
 - b. Timeline: ongoing
 - c. Tasks:
 - i. Identify shared messaging, including informational materials
 - ii. Identify key audiences (i.e. realtors, landowners, local officials)
 - iii. Identify champions to share the message locally
 - iv. Provide case studies
 1. Share the story and meaning of the data
 2. Feature people and projects that are making a difference
 3. Share testimonials from landowners and contractors choosing natural landscapes
 4. Celebrate projects and land management activities that have a positive impact on water quality
 - v. Focus new educational efforts on community treatment systems
3. Educate policy makers at the state level, and advocate for a state-level policy or ordinance.
 - a. Project coordination: Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Kalkaska County Drain Commissioner
 - i. Consult/inform: For Love of Water
 - b. Timeline: awaiting state-level movement
 - c. Tasks:
 - i. Identify shared messaging, including a case statement that reflect a unified statement of need

4. Measure nutrients and monitor water quality in an ongoing way and as resources are available.
 - a. Project coordination: Three Lakes Association, Torch Lake Protection Alliance, Intermediate Lake Association
 - b. Timeline: ongoing
 - c. Tasks:
 - i. Identify potential enforcement actions
 - ii. Identify and/or establish monitoring protocol

RESOURCES REQUIRED

1. Brochures and websites
 - a. Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy michigan.gov/egle
 - i. Onsite Wastewater https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313_71618_51002---,00.html
 - b. Health Department Northwest Michigan nwhealth.org
 - i. District Sanitary Code <http://www.nwhealth.org/pubs/District%20Sanitary%20Code.pdf>
 - ii. Septic Care <http://nwhealth.org/septic.html>
 - iii. Time of Transfer Evaluation <http://nwhealth.org/tot.html>
 - c. Environmental Protection Agency epa.gov
 - i. Septic Systems <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
 - ii. SepticSmart Homeowners <https://www.epa.gov/septic/septic-smart-homeowners>
 - d. Michigan State University Extension canr.msu.edu
 - i. Septic System Education, Programming, Resources https://www.canr.msu.edu/septic_system_education/index
 - e. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council watershedcouncil.org
 - i. The Septic Question Project <https://www.watershedcouncil.org/septic-question.html>
 - f. For Love of Water flowforwater.org
 - i. Septic Summit <https://www.facebook.com/TACMtv/videos/2165059723796067/UzpfSTM0Njg0MjIzNToxMDE1NzU2MDYyMjI2MTIzNg/>
 - g. Torch Conservation Center conservetorch.org
 - i. True Blue Living <https://conservetorch.org/caring-for-water/true-blue-living/>
2. Funding
 - a. Replace/repair failing septic systems
 - i. USDA grant funding <https://www.rd.usda.gov/newsroom/news-release/usda-announces-funding-available-septic-system-repairs>
 - ii. EPA federal, state, and tribal funding <https://www.epa.gov/septic/funding-septic-systems>
 - b. Staff time and travel for in-person meetings
3. Expertise
 - a. Dr. Joan Rose at Michigan State University

4. Case studies/examples
 - a. Milton Township's Time of Transfer Ordinance <https://miltontownship.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/septicord.pdf> and annual report <https://miltontownship.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Milton-Township-Time-of-Transfer-Ordinance-Annual-Report.pdf>
 - b. Manistee Lake Association (LINK)
 - c. Green Lake's community septic treatment system https://www.record-eagle.com/news/local_news/green-lake-gets-community-septic-meant-to-benefit-water-quality-homeowners/article_8203bc28-f90f-11ea-9da2-f7d97a9fafdf.html
5. Presentation to share with planning commissions and township boards
6. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council's owned and operated drone

METRICS AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

1. 2-3 septic tank inspection ordinances passed within 1-3 years
2. Statewide ordinance passed within 5 years
3. Educated elected/appointed officials

ELK RIVER CHAIN OF LAKES WATER FIRST ACTION PLAN

STRATEGIC PRIORITY: SHORELINE PROTECTION

GOAL STATEMENT

Protect and restore natural shorelines.

ACTION STEPS, ROLES, AND TIMELINE

1. Strengthen, develop, and enforce setback and/or vegetated buffer ordinances.
 - a. Project coordination: The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association, Grass River Natural Area
 - b. Timeline:
 - c. Tasks:
 - i. Meet with local elected/appointed officials to discuss and assess community needs, priorities, and readiness
 - ii. Identify champions in high priority communities
 - iii. Identify zoning opportunities along Grass River area
 - iv. Develop best practices for policy development including checklist of strong provisions
 - v. Provide resources and expertise to local units of government regarding ordinance enforcement
2. Educate landowners, policymakers, and contractors about tools to protect shorelines.
 - a. Project coordination: Grass River Natural Area, Whitewater Township, The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association, Torch Conservation Center, Three Lakes Association
 - b. Timeline: ongoing
 - c. Tasks
 - i. Identify shared messaging, including informational materials
 1. "Then and now" perspective
 2. "Why" behind importance of shoreline protection
 3. Shared messaging focus group
 - ii. Identify key audiences (i.e. property owners, elected/appointed officials, contractors)
 1. Tip of the Mitt will host landscaping contractor trainings
 - iii. Provide case studies

RESOURCES REQUIRED

1. Brochures/websites
 - a. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council [watershedcouncil.org](https://www.watershedcouncil.org)
 - i. Antrim County Local Ordinance Gaps Analysis
https://www.watershedcouncil.org/uploads/7/2/5/1/7251350/antrim_county_gaps_analysis_2020.pdf
 - b. Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership mishorelinepartnership.org

- c. Northwest Michigan Invasive Species Network habitatmatters.org
 - i. Go Beyond Beauty <https://www.habitatmatters.org/go-beyond-beauty.html>
 - d. Torch Conservation Center conservetorch.org
 - i. True Blue Landscaping <https://conservetorch.org/caring-for-water/true-blue-landscaping/>
 - ii. True Blue Lawns <https://conservetorch.org/caring-for-water/true-blue-gardening/>
 - e. Antrim Conservation District antrimcd.com
 - i. Healthy Lakes Healthy Landscapes (LINK)
 - f. Michigan Audubon michiganaudubon.org
 - i. Plants for Birds <https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>
2. Funding
 3. Expertise
 - a. Peg Comfort's involvement and lessons learned in Forest Home Township
 4. Case studies/examples
 - a. Planning and Zoning Center at Michigan State University
https://www.canr.msu.edu/landpolicy/program/planning_zoning_center_at_msu/index
 - b. Environmental policy document for townships, villages, and counties in ERCOL
 - c. Riparian buffer provision memo from The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
 - d. Urban Cooperation Act of 1967 <http://www.legislature.mi.gov/documents/mcl/pdf/mcl-act-7-of-1967-ex-sess-.pdf>
 - e. Manistee Lake Association <http://www.manisteelake.org/>
 5. Presentation to share with planning commissions and township boards

METRICS AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

1. Linear feet of shoreline protected
2. Total phosphorous and nitrogen and suspended solids in waterways
3. Presence of ordinances
4. Enforcement of ordinances
5. Documentation of streambank stabilization projects and impacts