

**Lake St. Clair Coastal Habitat Project Management Team
Conference Call Summary
July 29, 2003**

Participants

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Dave West	Ducks Unlimited Canada	d_west@ducks.ca

Project Overview

Victoria Pebbles provided an review of project goals, objectives and deliverables, including: a

GIS conservation layer based on natural features, land use/land cover, and related data; a web site for information/education purposes and to feature other project products; a draft coastal habitat restoration and conservation plan; and a decision support tool to help resource managers and local officials make informed decisions about conservation planning and related activities.

New PMT Members and Activities

Dave West of Ducks Unlimited Canada (www.ducks.ca) described his history with that organization and the variety of responsibilities and Lake St. Clair projects in which he and the organization have been engaged. A major focus of DU Canada's activities is to restore the hydrological function of degraded habitat through land easements and other agreements and through infrastructure engineering. Some projects are directly along the lakeshore, but most are separated from the lake by dikes and most lands are privately owned and managed by hunting clubs. To this end, DU's habitat work primarily involves upgrading water management infrastructure such as dikes and pumps—a highly engineered approach to habitat management. Of note is the recent negotiated agreement to secure conservation easements on about 600 acres of Lake St. Clair coastal marsh. DU Canada has also been conducting follow up on a study of the socio-economic impacts of restoring 1,000 acres of farmland back to marsh conditions.

Note: DU Canada will send map points (longitude and latitude) for their Lake St. Clair projects to the Great Lakes Commission for incorporation into project products, including maps of known restoration and habitat management projects

Dave White of Walpole Island First Nation Heritage Centre (www.bkejwanong.com) described the ecological and economic significance of wetlands in WIFN—approximately 17,000 acres of wetlands are managed by WIFN, which also serve as the basis for their recreation and tourism-based economy that relies heavily on hunting, fishing and trapping, which comprise WIFN's number one economic activity. Management of WIFN wetlands in a manner that can ensure their sustainability as an economic resource is of utmost importance. WIFN is also interested in the ecological values of natural features and is engaged in a number of projects and activities to expand their ecological knowledge. Projects underway in cooperation with the Royal Ontario Museum to study native mussels and another to study tallgrass prairies are examples of these efforts.

GIS Data: Status and Applications

MNFI reported that Canadian natural heritage data was imminent from Ontario Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) and MNFI will work with the data to match it with MNFI heritage data.

The GLC reported the following data being compiled.

-Coastal wetlands (currently under update) from the Great Lakes Coastal Wetlands Consortium

From Environment Canada's Environmental Sensitivity Index (ESI):

- Shoreline characterization
- Marinas
- Shoreline fauna of note (birds, fish, mammals)
- Human resources (marinas, recreational areas)
- Chemical and oil facilities
- Surface water intakes
- Dune complexes

For the U.S. side from accumulated sources, the GLC has acquired essentially all of the above (with some slight data definition variation). Data for the US side (with the exception of the ESI data) has been collected at a finer scale.

The GLC is still awaiting the following data from Canada (Land Information Office):

- Political Jurisdictions
- Transportation
- Population
- Watershed at the sub-basin level
- Land Use
- Land Cover (possibly pre-settlement)
- Digital elevation models (DEM)
- Hydrography

Note: NHIC and MNFI agreed to share pre-settlement data. MNFI will compile all presettlement data into a single GIS layer that can be used for the project.

NOAA's Coastal Services Center (www.csc.noaa.gov) noted that the new C-CAP (Coastal Change Analysis Program) satellite imagery that had just been received by the contractor covered a 10 mile buffer on the Canadian side of the watershed . Initially, the project was limited to a 1-mile buffer due to contractor costs for obtaining land cover data on the Canadian side. The new data acquired by NOAA for the project will allow the project to expand the study area from a one-mile buffer around Lake St. Clair, including all islands and the delta structure of the St. Clair River, to a 10-mile buffer. While this is still less than the entire watershed, it is considerably larger geographic coverage. (It is still hoped that future initiatives will build on this work for a complete watershed characterization and analysis.) The data includes two time periods—current and five years previous—as well as a land cover change over that 5-year period.

Note: NOAA agreed to send an updated shape file of the new 10 mile buffer for the entire project area to the Project Core Team. The GLC has posed a map of the revised project focus on the project web site at www.glc.org/habitat/activities.

Discussion ensued regarding the waterward boundary of the project. Natural heritage data does not go past the shoreline and since a primary objective of the project is to improve decisionmaking with respect in land acquisition and management for habitat protection and restoration, the project is more landward focused. However, the PMT agreed to reflect aquatic habitat data in project products to the extent it is available. Michigan DNR indicated that they had Lake St. Clair waterfowl habitat data and would provide such to the GLC for inclusion in project products. Canadian Wildlife Service and Ducks Unlimited Canada may have additional waterfowl habitat data for the Canadian side.

Habitat as Land Cover and Natural Communities: Classification of Lake St. Clair Coastal Habitat Focus Area

PMT members received a classification outline derived from the C-CAP classification, but modified to better reflect local natural features (e.g., elimination of “tundra” as a category). There was some discussion as to further simplify the table to better reflect the consolidated categories of land cover used in the C-CAP images yet still integrate with natural feature/heritage information.

There was also some discussion of how grasslands and cultivated lands were classified. **All Jones of USDA agreed to consider this and provide additional feedback to the GLC.**

Decision Point: The Core Team held a conference call on July 30 and agreed to further consolidate the classification in a manner that will simplify its application to project products (e.g., web site, draft plan) while remaining consistent with C-CAP land cover categories. The revised classification is on the project web site at www.glc.org/habitat/activities under “milestones.”

ICM Tool: Progress and Next Steps

An mock up interface of the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) decision support tool has been reviewed by the Core Team and the DSS work group. NOAA is preparing to hold a series of workshops in the region to solicit user feedback and develop training examples that can help interested parties learn to use the tool. The next DSS workgroup meeting will be on September 23, the day prior to the full PMT meeting at the Walpole Island Heritage Center. All PMT members are encouraged to participate in the DSS workgroup meeting. Input and feedback

on the tool will help ensure its effectiveness.

Note : The mock interface of ICM tool is on project web site at www.glc.org/habitat/activities under “milestones.” The DSS workgroup will meet on the afternoon of September 23, the day prior to the full PMT meeting. All PMT members are encouraged to attend.

September Meeting

The next PMT meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, September 24**. The meeting will be held at the Penalty Box restaurant in the Sports Arena on **Walpole Island**. Further details on meeting logistics and accommodations will be provided in early September. Please contact Victoria Pebbles or Tom Rayburn at the Great Lakes Commission if you have a special presentation or agenda item you would like to suggest for that meeting.