

# Michigan Statewide Public Advisory Council

## **Fall Business Meeting**

October 30-31, 2014  
Ellenwood Landing Marina  
Montague, Michigan

### **Meeting Attendees**

Anne Vaara, Clinton River AOC  
Mary Bohling, Detroit River AOC  
Bob Burns, Detroit River AOC  
Dick Micka, River Raisin AOC  
Jamie McCarthy, Kalamazoo River AOC  
Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake AOC  
Dennis Kirksey, Muskegon Lake AOC  
Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC  
Dennis Zimmerman, Saginaw River/Bay AOC  
Patty Troy, St. Clair River AOC  
Emily Martin, St. Marys River AOC  
Tanya Cabala, White Lake AOC  
Greg Mund, White Lake AOC  
Tom Tissue, White Lake AOC  
Victoria Luthy, White Lake AOC  
Rick Hobrla, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes

Roger Eberhardt, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes  
John Riley, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes  
Jen Tewkesbury, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes  
Melanie Foose, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes  
Sharon Baker, Michigan DEQ-Office of the Great Lakes  
Michelle Bruneau, Michigan Dept. of Community Health  
Woody Smith, Avenue ISR  
John Austin, Michigan Economic Center  
Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission  
Bryan Comer, Great Lakes Commission  
Marc Tuchman, U.S. EPA-GLNPO  
John Perrecone, U.S. EPA-GLNPO  
Steve Rice, GEI Consultants  
Mike Mack, Professional Resources  
Annette DeMaria, Environmental Consulting & Technology

### **Meeting Summary**

**Thursday, Oct. 30**

#### **Welcome, Introductions, and Review of Agenda**

*Mary Bohling, SPAC Chair, Detroit River AOC* opened the meeting. She announced that elections were held: Mary remains the SPAC Chair and *Anne Vaara, Clinton River AOC*, is the new Vice Chair. Mary thanked *Tanya Cabala* for her work in the White Lake AOC and in the SPAC.

*Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission*, gave an overview of the meeting agenda and logistics.

Meeting minutes from the July 2014 SPAC business meeting were adopted.

#### **Reports from SPAC Members**

##### **Rouge River**

*Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC*, announced that the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Rouge-a-palooza event was held as well as a lower Rouge River canoe trip. Bill also noted that a number of habitat projects are planned, including the Rouge River Oxbow project. Tree plantings and fish passages are planned. *Bob Burns, Detroit River AOC*, stated that he recently gave a tour of habitat restoration projects on the Detroit and Rouge Rivers; high-profile media outlets were there.

##### **White Lake**

*Tanya Cabala, Delisted White Lake AOC*, noted that a documentary video on White Lake is in the works and there will be a meeting in the spring to showcase some of the work that has been done on White Lake.

##### **St. Clair River**

*Patty Troy, St. Clair River AOC*, explained that the aesthetics BUI has been removed on the Canadian side. Five BUIs have been removed on the U.S. side and three on the Canadian side. A symposium on the bird/animal deformity BUI was held. Two new fish spawning reefs are going in. Also, efforts to reduce discharges from a lingering pollution source have been successful. *John Perrecone, U.S. EPA-GLNPO*, announced that the benthos BUI on the U.S. side is being removed.

### **River Raisin**

*Dick Micka, River Raisin AOC*, announced that three BUIs have been removed, three are in the process of being removed, and three others remain. Dick stated that Michigan Sea Grant conducted a coastal community case study dealing with situational awareness. The study found that it's hard to see that something has happened after restoration, so situational awareness is important. There are hopes that something will be done about the pollution hotspot on the river. The parties involved are MDEQ, EPA-GLNPO, U.S. EPA Region 5, and Ford Motor Company.

### **Saginaw River and Bay**

*Dennis Zimmerman, Saginaw River and Bay AOC*, stated that the AOC started out with 12 BUIs, removed three, and are working on two. Technical committees have been formed. There will be some BUI removal revisions coming down that might work in their favor. Nothing has been decided about dealing with muck, which is a problem in the AOC. Muck impedes the use of the most densely populated beaches.

### **St. Marys River**

*Emily Martin, St. Mary's River AOC*, announced that there is an RFP for work on the Canadian side.

### **Clinton River**

*Anne Vaara, Clinton River AOC*, announced that there are eight BUIs and none have been removed. However, progress is being made. The most important recent activity is the formation of a habitat work group. The PAC voted on and approved 14 projects and presented them to U.S. EPA. A coordination group was also formed to discuss the order of projects (timeline and schedule). The PAC is looking for new voting members and is trying to build community interest. Anne noted that the PAC support grants are very helpful.

### **Detroit River**

*Robert Burns, Detroit River AOC*, explained that the AOC started with 11 BUIs; nine remain. The PAC has a grant to perform habitat restoration. Plans have been submitted to MDNR and USACE for review. There are 10 habitat projects. One goal is to create a coastal wetland in Detroit. Lake Okonoka on Belle Isle is in the second phase of work. Additionally, there is a Blue Heron Lagoon project to restore connectivity to the Detroit River. Also, Sea Grant was awarded a grant to create a fishery in the Detroit River.

### **Muskegon Lake**

*Kathy Evans, Muskegon Lake AOC*, announced that three of nine BUIs have been removed. Kathy handed out a fact sheet on the work done, ongoing, and upcoming on Muskegon Lake. Approximately \$13 million of work has been done. Work has been done to reduce *E. Coli* to remove the beach closings BUI. A sewer-sniffing dog was used to find illicit connections to the lake. An illicit connection to the storm sewer was found and repaired. *Dennis Kirksey, Muskegon Lake AOC* stated that there are a lot of projects that have been done. The Veterans' Park project is underway and habitat restoration is being designed for that project. Bear Creek celery flats (a celery farm) has phosphorus issues that are being addressed. There are lingering Muskegon Lake mill debris issues – a lot of the lake is hardened by slab wood. Pilot projects that remove the wood have been conducted to see what will happen with regard to habitat. Wetland restoration work is also being pursued in the AOC. Lastly, the Zephyr site has been characterized.

### **Kalamazoo River**

*Jamie McCarthy, Kalamazoo River AOC*, stated that their BUIs are linked to contaminated sediments. Cleanup is ongoing through Superfund. A lot has been done in riverside sites. The process is now being moved into the main stem of the Kalamazoo River. Then there are plans to do habitat restoration after sites have been dredged. There are also ongoing dam removal projects. NRDA funds to remove a dam on Portage Creek have been provided and the project is ongoing. The PAC is launching an education project for contaminated fish in partnership with the Eat Safe Fish. The PAC wants to better understand the demographics of those eating fish from the river. Lastly, the PAC approved two new members (Pfizer representative and the president of a smaller watershed conservation organization).

### **Report from Michigan DEQ**

*Rick Hobrla, MDEQ*, announced that DEQ is close to finishing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Michigan Department of Public Health. MDEQ is finalizing FY2015 GLRI applications to U.S. EPA. There will be a

slight drop in funding due to delisting two AOCs. MDEQ expects a slightly reduced budget for PAC and SPAC support. NOAA is expected to put forth an AOC land acquisition grant RFP (due in January 2015). The grant provides funding for land purchases within AOCs to further the goal of AOCs (uncontaminated properties only).

A Great Lakes Legacy Act/GLRI meeting with U.S. EPA and other federal officials has been scheduled. The purpose of the meeting is to review the top priorities for all of Michigan's AOCs. It is a discussion meeting, not a decision making meeting. All PACs should be working with their AOC coordinators to make sure the action tables are up to date. Delisting timelines – White Lake and Deer Lake are delisted. About 1/3 of Michigan BUIs have been removed. DEQ intends to offer positions as Ex Officio (non-voting) members of the SPAC to the former SPAC members from delisted AOCs.

### **Report from U.S. EPA**

*Marc Tuchman and John Perrecone, U.S. EPA-GLNPO* updated the SPAC.

Marc noted that the delistings are a big deal. It shows funders that with resources we can make things happen. U.S. EPA recognized those who helped make the White Lake delisting happen.

John noted that over 50 BUIs have been removed, many since GLRI began. He discussed the GLRI Action Plan II, which contains a plan for BUI removal and delistings. Approximately one-third of the GLRI budget is dedicated to the AOC program. The goal is to remove BUIs and delist AOCs. There is a specific plan for the completion of management actions. John gave an overview of the FY14 budget for programs that support BUI removal and the budget and planning process for FY15.

*Mary Bohling* asked about noncompete funds: at what point does a group get on that noncompete list? John stated that there's a tipping point and an important consideration is if there is a plan and critical mass to work toward BUI removal and delisting.

Marc updated the SPAC on the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) program. He reviewed the remediation projects that are underway. There are a number of Michigan GLLA projects in the pipeline. Sixteen GLLA projects have been completed over 10 years. Four projects are underway or have agreements signed. Thirty-seven industries are involved and \$225 million in non-federal match has been provided. About 2.4 million cubic yards have been remediated.

Marc discussed the logistics for the 2015 Annual AOC Conference at the University of Toledo. The agenda will include a recap of program successes, funding levels, AOC delistings, and plans for more delistings. *Matt Doss* explained that there will be travel support for AOC representatives. We would like to get as many people there as possible.

John noted that the low-hanging fruit for BUI removal have been picked. So it's getting harder and harder to remove BUIs. Marc emphasized that delistings are very important to show success and retain funding and bipartisan support.

Matt Doss announced that a letter has been circulating from the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation that is requesting level-funding for the GLRI in the FY 2016 budget.

### **Miscellaneous Updates**

*Matt Doss, Great Lakes Commission* provided miscellaneous updates to the SPAC.

There has been an effort to ensure continuity between SPAC support grants. 2014 grants are under way. Matt reminded SPAC members to keep documentation on expenses.

AOC perceptions research project – assess perceptions of Muskegon Lake and White Lake AOCs to determine how internal/external groups perceive those AOCs. Half of the funding was provided by PAC support grants and the other half from the participating AOCs.

Congressional action on Great Lakes priorities; we are in FY 2015 as of Oct 1. There is a Continuing Resolution through early December. There will be a final budget for the current fiscal year soon. Things are looking good for GLRI, with \$300 million expected for the current year (\$25 million more than the President's request). Matt emphasized the importance of AOC leaders continuing to communicate with their members of Congress on the importance of the AOC program. Also, Matt reported that the State Revolving Fund, which pays for sewerage upgrades, is looking pretty good.

SPAC representation – typically we renew the representation for half the AOCs every year. We are behind, so all SPAC representatives will be renewed this fall. This can be new members or continuing with the current representatives.

### **Overview of Proposed Revisions to Statewide BUI Removal Criteria**

*Roger Eberhardt, MDEQ OGL* discussed statewide BUI guidance, stating that MDEQ has been working on revisions for awhile now. The guidance was prepared in 2004-2006 and updated in 2008. The guidance has been used to remove 36 BUIs to date. Criteria for 3 BUIs have problems with practical application in multiple AOCs. Update in progress; to be completed in 2014. Revisions to the guidance will remove exclusion of the "AOC in recovery" designation. The new GLWQA (2012) does provide for guidance for AOC in recovery but DEQ is not going to use it for now. DEQ wants to make the updated guidance document "timeless" and remove language that "dates" the document. DEQ plans to edit the delisting AOCs section to reflect the actual process in Deer Lake and White Lake. References, web site links, and contact information will be updated.

Beach closings – new guidance will modify Tier 2 to decouple the criteria from the 303d list and TMDLs. New wording that focuses on data and source control will be used.

Eutrophication – new guidance will de-couple criteria from 303d list and TMDLs. New wording based on data: "phosphorus is not present in surface waters at levels stimulating excessive growth of nuisance plants/algae/slimes for two successive monitoring cycles during the growing season."

*Roger* stated that the important point is that the previous guidance did not allow for BUI removal if there was a TMDL or 303d. *John Perrecone* commented that makes sense to de-couple BUI removal from the 303d list and TMDLs because the AOC program is non-regulatory, while the 303d list is.

*Patty Troy* mentioned that in 2006, the guidance went to the PACs for approval. *Roger* proposed to only take the guidance to the PACs that would be affected and see if it is agreeable.

SPAC members and MDEQ agreed that the word "eliminated" in the beach closing BUI needs to be softened.

*Jen Tewkesbury* stated that AOC coordinators should talk with the PACs about the new BUI language. Then the SPAC can let MDEQ know what they think about the new BUI language at the next SPAC meeting.

Dredging – new guidance will modify the criteria to define restrictions and to remove the option for comparison studies. New wording – there have been no restrictions on routine commercial or recreational navigational channel dredging by the USACE, based on the most recent dredging cycle, such that use of a TSCA level confined disposal facility is required for dredge spoils due to chemical contamination. Calling for a TSCA-level CDF is a real change to the criteria.

*Mary Bohling* noted that the Detroit River may never have the dredging BUI removed under this change. And *Marc Tuchman* stated that the USACE cannot dredge TSCA level material, so the language might not make sense.

*Mary Bohling* said that the BUI removal criteria language changes will go out to the PACs, and a date prior to the next SPAC meeting to get comments back to MDEQ will be set.

### **Panel Discussion: Restoring Habitat in the AOCs: Different Approaches and Lessons Learned**

*Matt Doss* opened the panel discussion by posing the following questions: What approaches (funding, lead agency, local partners, etc.) have been used to restore habitat in the AOCs and what are their advantages and disadvantages? What capacity is needed to lead habitat restoration projects? What is the role of the PAC, and how does this differ in the planning and implementation stage? What lessons have we learned and how can these be applied in AOCs with upcoming habitat restoration planning and implementation?

*Melanie Foose*, MDEQ noted that habitat projects get funded in multiple ways. In the AOCs she coordinates, there are U.S. EPA grants to implement three habitat projects. Melanie mentioned that it is important for DEQ to get involved from the beginning. Then DEQ can report back to the PAC and make sure that they are getting the exact project that they want. Also, when DEQ is involved from the beginning then they can help with some of the permitting issues. In general, DEQ has found that projects work better when U.S. EPA funding is funneled through DEQ to contractors (rather than U.S. EPA directly funding the contractors) so that DEQ can stay in the loop and catch potential problems.

*Bob Burns*, Detroit River AOC said that the GLRI asked for shovel-ready projects. The PAC had to take a list of 100 projects and narrow it down to those that were shovel-ready. The problem is putting the cart before the horse. He mentioned that funding to identify contaminated sediments in the river in the first place is necessary before cleanup to remove that BUI can be performed. In 2005, DEQ and U.S. EPA came to it and asked if Friends of the Detroit River would be the fiduciary of the PAC. The PAC got money to identify the problems in the river. Then the GLC came through with PAC support grants, which helped remove a lot of BUIs. Bob mentioned that the planning is down to a science. The PAC got everyone to the table, contractors were involved, they had feasibility discussions, and then remediation work started. Bob noted that it is crucial to get everyone that needs to be involved in the discussion from the beginning.

The panelists identified a key point: identifying the appropriate local partner is a key to success.

*Anne Vaara*, Clinton River AOC mentioned that the Clinton River Watershed Council was one of the first GLRI recipients for dam removal and wetland restoration. They contracted out to consultants on some projects, but not all. The consulting firms are crucial to the work that is being done in the watershed. Anne said that because the Clinton River is on the 2018 list, funding will be coming in and they will have to decide how to allocate it. One challenge is that most communities will not want to manage a grant for another community. One solution may be for the watershed council to manage the grant. They have the capacity to do that.

*Kathy Evans*, Muskegon Lake AOC agreed that local management is great if they can do it. Kathy mentioned that the key is to build relationships. Kathy also noted that the PAC needs capacity to manage projects and funds. She also noted the importance of competitive bids for work to drive down the price of restoration. Lastly, Kathy said that it's easier to get land owners involved when they see the restoration work done on their neighbor's property (if it's done well).

*John Perrecone*, U.S. EPA, said that after U.S. EPA awards money, they watch very closely and keep tabs on the project schedule. It's important to meet delisting goals because U.S. EPA has to report to Congress and OMB. Some panelists noted that bureaucracy can put projects behind schedule.

A common theme throughout the panel discussion was that the stakeholder involvement process is imperative. There is local knowledge issues associated with the proposed project and the history of the area. And then there is long-term maintenance after the fact. Also, communication between federal, state, and local entities is crucial to success.

### **Upcoming SPAC Activities**

*Matt Doss*, GLC, spoke about a briefing for the Michigan legislature. In past years the SPAC has had a briefing for new legislators in Lansing, and doing it at the beginning of a new legislature can be good. One issue is that DEQ has restrictions on lobbying, and there are other restrictions on communicating with elected officials. However, DEQ and SPAC members support a legislative briefing. If a legislative briefing breakfast is held, an SPAC meeting might not be necessary at the annual AOC conference in Toledo.

One other issue is the future of AOCs and LAMPs. This gets at life after delisting. With the new GLWQA, there are ongoing discussions on the role of the LAMPs. And the LAMP forum might be a venue for former AOCs. Matt suggested a meeting to discuss the role of the LAMPs and life after delisting. *John Perrecone* noted that there are talks on if/how LAMP forums will happen. The annual AOC meeting in Toledo might be an appropriate venue.

There may also be discussions on the role of stormwater and nutrients in AOCs in the future.

*Mary Bohling* closed the first day of the meeting.

## Friday, Oct. 31

### Opening Remarks and Review of Agenda

*Mary Bohling* opened the second day. Mary commented that the delisting celebration the previous evening was a success.

### Report on the Perceptions Research Study and Next Steps for Muskegon Lake and White Lake

*Woody Smith, Avenue ISR*, presented on the perceptions research study for White Lake and Muskegon Lake. Woody noted that he relied on Muskegon and White Lake PAC members and thanked those who helped make the project a success. Research was conducted over spring/summer. Study objectives were to analyze to what extent potential visitors are aware of Muskegon Lake and White Lake relative to other destinations in Michigan? What are the positive and negative associations with the two lakes? To what extent are people aware of the AOC and the progress that has been made?

Woody and his team conducted 28 in-person interviews with community members and leaders. They also held group conversations with the Muskegon Lake Watershed Partnership and the White Lake PAC. A literature review of related studies informed the work. There were 428 responses to the Muskegon Lake community survey; 163 responses to the White Lake community survey; and 445 responses to the prospective visitor survey.

Most potential visitors were unfamiliar with Muskegon Lake or White Lake. Of those that are at least somewhat familiar, what were their overall opinions of the lakes? Lake Michigan 94% positive; Muskegon Lake 59% positive; White Lake 61% positive. Not many “negative” opinions at all. Most people outside White Lake and Muskegon Lake were not aware that they were listed as AOCs. A relatively small percentage in both cases thought the lakes are “very polluted” or “extremely polluted” today. Takeaways – from the “outside in” may have low awareness of the AOC. Most are not aware at all of White Lake or Muskegon Lake. When people are aware of White Lake and Muskegon Lake, they may have generally positive impressions and the lakes are seen for their significant recreation potential. Even among those who are familiar with these areas, prospective visitors may have low awareness of AOC status. Whereas 93% of White Lake community members are aware of White Lake’s (former) AOC status and >60% in Muskegon Lake.

In Muskegon Lake community members believe that they have seen substantial progress across a range of activities and outcomes, including preventing new pollution discharges into the lake, improving wastewater treatment, etc. Today, fewer than 6% believe Muskegon Lake is still “extremely” or “very” polluted, but there is the perception that it was more polluted in the past. For the most part, people are seeing improvements in quality of life. People highlight the rich and numerous recreation opportunities in Muskegon Lake and say it is large and beautiful, connected to Lake Michigan, etc.

In White Lake, people perceived that there is progress on removing contaminated sediments, preventing new pollution, removing waste/fill from the lake, etc. Nearly 88% of community members have seen substantial progress in reducing pollution in White Lake since 1984. Many said that the lake was very/extremely polluted 50, 30, and 20 years ago but that it is much less polluted now. Perceptions of White Lake were mostly positive.

Survey participants identified priorities for White Lake as follows: prevent new pollution discharges into White Lake; reduce nutrients that produce nuisance weeds/algae; remove/control invasive plant species. White Lake

residents recognize the need to remain vigilant/active; make progress on nutrient loadings; provide clear, definitive information on swimming, fish and drinking water; etc. after delisting. More than 84% are willing to do something to support the continued health of White Lake, especially in reducing certain types of fertilizers. White Lake residents would like to maintain or increase funding across all levels of government.

White Lake outreach – White Lake Beacon is the best single medium to reach a large number of community members.

Priorities for Muskegon Lake were as follows: prevent new pollution, reduce signs of urban decay and abandoned properties, remove contaminated sediment, etc. A lot of people wrote in responses about redeveloping the SAPPI site for mixed use. More than 87% are willing to do something, especially participate in shoreline cleanups/plantings and reduce certain types of fertilizer. Muskegon Lake would like increased funding across the board from all levels of government.

Muskegon Lake outreach – Best ways to reach Muskegon Lake residents are Facebook, Muskegon Chronicle, and email.

Implications for SPAC members – for many prospective visitors and new residents and entrepreneurs there is an opportunity to start with a clean state. The focus of ongoing communications and engagement efforts about the AOCs should focus on community members. Community members may be very aware of the status and progress of the AOC. They are likely to believe that progress on cleanup directly translates to improved quality of life and health. Even when AOCs are on the verge of delisting, community members believe there is still work to do, both in terms of cleanup and in terms of lakeshore access and amenities. Although they would like continued support from public bodies, community members are willing to do some hands-on work to help with ongoing cleanup efforts. Communications and engagement efforts should be tailored to local conditions but will probably need to depend on a balance of traditional media, digital communications, direct mail/email and social networking.

### **Reaction to Perceptions Research Study**

*Thomas Tisue, White Lake AOC* said that it was telling that people spoke about nutrient/weed control. It was encouraging that people knew the connection between nutrient loading and weed control. He said that it seems like people had some sort of direct experience with White Lake because casual visitors would not notice.

*Woody Smith* said that his biggest surprise was how positive peoples' views are about these lakes and their willingness to see with fresh eyes and start over again.

There was some discussion about peoples' perceptions about interacting with local, state, and federal government, although these types of questions were not directly addressed in the research. *Kathy Evans* noted that it was encouraging that participants ranked habitat restoration as a priority, and this work is supported by state and federal governments.

*Bill Craig, Rouge River AOC*, said that the information in this survey will be good to promote to the communities. The investment in having such a survey done could be valuable. Now there is a template for doing the same thing in other AOC communities. *John Riley* stated that the opportunity was made to all the AOCs to have this kind of survey work and only two took advantage.

*Kathy Evans* said that the findings of the research are especially useful for Muskegon because the PAC will be better able to engage the community now that they know people are focused on pollution prevention.

*Michelle Bruneau* cautioned that one thing to keep in mind is that we are dealing with highly engaged people. Those who are identified by the groups are more likely to be those that are engaged.

*Tanya Cabala* said that the study confirms some of the early research done in White Lake, which is good because the earlier work was not statistically significant. She said that the perceptions were more positive than she thought they would be and said that working with Woody was great. She also said that the clean slate was good. The results will be useful in further PAC media outreach.

### **Strategic Transition Plan for White Lake**

*Mike Mack* outlined a strategic transition plan for White Lake. The project goal was to develop a strategic transition for “life beyond delisting” for the White Lake area: “A mechanism for the continuous improvement of White Lake.” The process will be to select a team, decide on an approach, develop an action plan, solicit community feedback, and provide and implement that plan.

Select a team – define strategic stakeholder groups; identify key participants within these stakeholder groups; select 8-10 active participants. That number is variable.

Decide on an approach: team meetings; focused team environment; utilize available resources to build on current foundation; develop effective communication/education channels.

Develop an action plan: create mission, goals, objectives and activities; establish 3-5 year action plan; initiate 5-10 year development plan.

Solicit community feedback: regular news releases and updates; utilize social media; public meetings.

Implement the plan – develop an interdisciplinary, intergovernmental, and community-based implementation team; drive tasks/ timelines from the plan; utilize existing resources and stakeholders while systemically building new, diverse participants; be active and persistent.

*Marc Tuchman*, regarding local government involvement, said that it really helps when the local community is heavily involved and organized. There is a sense that everyone is involved and invested and it makes it an easier sell for higher levels of government participate.

*Mike Mack* explained that there’s a generational move. A new generation is taking over and there are questions in the community about what the AOC and legacy of chemical contamination means for the economy first and the environment second. *Tanya Cabala* said that, in general, city governments were unresponsive to citizen concerns until recently (the 90s). But it took us awhile to ask city governments to participate and they have been excited about delisting.

*Mike Mack* expects the strategic transition plan to be complete within six months, depending on the level of participation. Mike also clarified that the plan should be thought of as a “continuous improvement cycle” rather than starting over if priorities change over time.

### **Report on Growing Michigan’s Blue Economy Initiative**

*John Austin*, *Michigan Economic Center*, shared a report on “Blue is the New Green – Michigan’s Emerging “Blue Economy.” John said that because we led the green revolution, we can also lead the blue revolution. He noted that water is very important for economic development and growth.

The “blue economy” builds on the Great Lakes region’s abundant water, access to water, water education, and innovation assets for economic growth.

Legacy water uses in the region are shipping, ports, and commercial fishing. There are also big water-using businesses like agriculture, energy, manufacturing, and beverages. 1.2 million jobs in the Great Lakes region are linked to big water-using industries, and there are emerging water products and services.

John noted that we have not considered the economic value of water place-making and lifestyle in the past. If you add up all the economic development and people moving in, you get a huge number of jobs and billions annually, with almost unlimited upside potential.

John said that blue is the new green. We wrapped our heads around the potential and importance of the green economy. We need to do the same with the blue economy. Milwaukee was one of the first to focus on building a



blue economy. Then there's Grand Rapids that is putting the rapids back in the Grand River. Macomb County Blue Economy Initiative. Marquette, Duluth, Buffalo, and others are embracing the blue economy.

Lessons in blue economy building – restore, clean, reconnect to, and celebrate water; leverage and grow the water education, research and innovation centers of excellence and activity; support businesses growing sustainable “smart water” solutions; and embrace the values of sustainable water use, water stewardship, and water innovation. This sends the message that the Great Lakes region is the place where we care for our water and are solving the world's water challenges. We can be the leaders around the blue economy: from rust to blue. John said that when you move from calling it an “environmental” program to a “jobs” program, it can really work. It's got to be about jobs in Michigan.

A blue economy report is expected in December.

### **Discussion and Next Steps to Support Planning for “Life After Delisting”**

*Matt Doss* noted that life after delisting is becoming a more urgent topic for some AOCs but not for others. We want to find a way to address both groups of AOCs. Matt asked what SPAC members want to do in this topic area.

*Tanya Cabala* said that any way that we can find to document and get out the success stories is important. We're doing it in our individual communities, but the lessons we are learning are more than just lessons about AOCs. It's about collaboration, working together, persistence. And they're stories about people. The AOCs have a lot to teach other communities. Communities besides AOCs need to hear about lessons learned. Tanya also suggested a need connect life after delisting to sustainability.

*Dennis Zimmerman, Saginaw River/Bay AOC*, spoke about placemaking and striking a balance between designing against urban sprawl and placemaking.

### **Plans for Next SPAC Meeting**

Matt Doss suggested that the next SPAC meeting would occur in winter or early spring 2015. He will consult with the SPAC officers and the full Council regarding dates, agenda topics, etc.