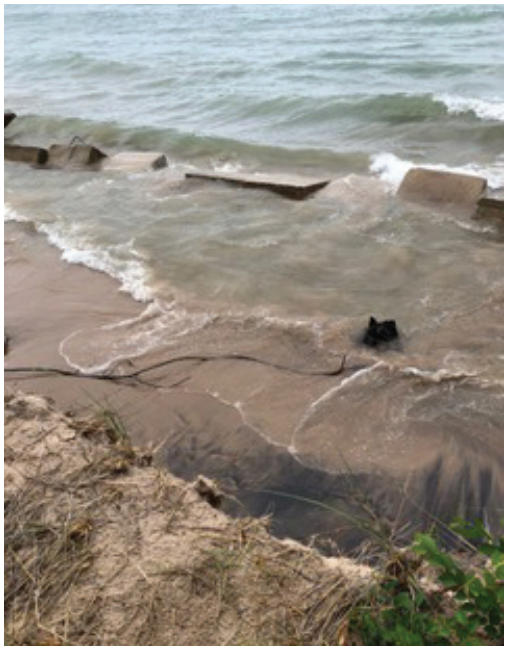
GREAT LAKES COALITION
Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter
For Shoreline Preservation
P.O. Box 429
Saugatuck, Michigan 49453
TEL (269) 857-8945 * FAX (269) 857-8945
www.greatlakescoalition.org
info@greatlakescoalition.org

Newsletter – Winter 2019

HIGH WATER LEVELS AND EROSION CONTINUE…

And property damage mounts. Great Lakes water levels have finally started their seasonal decline but at a rate much below the historical average. Traditionally, water levels tend to lower as Fall and Winter approach but that has not happened this year. And in October high winds and waves have wreaked havoc upon shoreline property owners as well as flooding public marinas and closing state parks and beaches. Beaches have been lost and homeowners are losing stairs and decks and their homes are in danger. Reports have been coming in from up and down the Lake Michigan coast and from Canada as well. Residents along Georgian Bay suffered a particularly damaging storm they refer to as the "Halloween" storm. As of November 1, Lake Michigan-Huron is at 581.69 feet. The beach you visited last year may not be there this year. Several members are reporting disappeared beaches along with washed out roads, stairs and decks and significant property damage. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Monthly Lake Levels Bulletin shows this pattern to continue at least in the near future. http://www.lre.usace.army.mil/missions/Great-Lakes-Information/Great-Lakes-Water-Levels



BERRIEN COUNTY APPROVES RESOLUTION ASKING FOR DISASTER DECLARATION

A resolution, introduced by Berrien County Commissioner Ezra Scott, has been approved by the Berrien County (MI) Board of Commissioners asking Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Legislature to consider requesting a federal disaster declaration for the entire Great Lakes coastline in the State of Michigan. Commissioner Scott will be meeting with state senators, representatives and the White House to support the cause. **What can you do?** Write to your state senator, representative and the Governor. Key points you may want to include, which were submitted by Coalition member Steve Burrows of Grand Mere, Stevensville, Michigan, can be found on our website at: www.greatlakescoalition.org.

Many state senators and representatives have on-line message boxes on their "Contact" page where you can submit your message directly. Find your legislator:

http://www.house.mi/gov/MHRPublic/frmFindARep.aspx

https://www.mml.org/advocacy/federal/federal-midelegation.htm

As this issue goes to press, we have just received word that the commissioners in Manistee County have passed a similar resolution requesting the State of Michigan to seek assistance from Congress as well as the president of the United States.

MICHIGAN EGLE EMERGENCY MEASURES

With Great Lakes water levels at historic highs, and facing the possibility of further increases, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) recently announced additional, significant steps to help Michigan shoreline property owners who are affected by high lake levels that are causing land erosion and threatening property. For homes or structures that are in danger, EGLE is expediting permits for shoreline protection. In cases where

homes or infrastructure are at risk, permits can be issued in a matter of days. EGLE will also divert resources from other programs to assist property owners, local governments and technical professionals in processing permits; prioritize response activities based on the risk to public health and safety; and find appropriate solutions that protect people and the environment.

EGLE has a new webpage where property owners can search for the latest information, find links to helpful topics, begin the permitting process, and search a list of contractors as well as find tips for selecting a contractor who can perform the intended work. Go to: www.michigan.gov/HighWater,

And on November 12, 2019, EGLE hosted an online webinar "Engaging EGLE on Great Lakes Shoreline Erosion." A recap of the current situation, what it means, and what EGLE is doing to assist property owners, along with an explanation of the permitting process and frequently asked questions were presented. A copy of the handout is available on our website at www.greatlakescoalition.org Property owners can direct questions about erosion issues to EGLE's Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278, or by e-mail to www.EGLE-Assist@Michigan.gov.

With a process that normally takes 60-90 days, it is imperative that property owners plan ahead if they think they may face an issue with erosion. If you are considering adding shoreline protection to your property it is important that your application be filed as soon as possible (NOW) so that the application can be approved and ready for construction by the springtime. Even though emergency measures can be implemented as stated above, a permit is still required for shoreline protection measures. According to EGLE, if you are already holding a permit that was issued in the last 5 years, no need to apply again. Permits have a 5-year expiration date.

INTERNATIONAL LAKE SUPERIOR BOARD OF CONTROL QUESTIONNAIRE

In October, the ILSBOC sent out an update on Lake Superior outflows and expected conditions along with a 2019 High Water Levels Questionnaire. The questionnaire has been developed to allow impacted shoreline property owners to report directly on their experiences in 2019. It includes opportunities to describe the types and extent of high water impacts, as well as upload photos to illustrate those impacts. The responses will be summarized by the Great Lakes Adaptive Management Committee (GLAM) as part of its reporting to the International Joint Commission. Results will be used to better predict potential impacts under a range of possible future water level conditions. The Coalition forwarded this online questionnaire to members with e-mail addresses on file. Further information and a link to the questionnaire can be found on the GLAM Committee website at:

https://ijc.org/en/glam/watershed/questionnaire/high-water-levels-2019

The Coalition strongly encourages you to participate in this survey if you have not already done so.

MESSAGE TO THE IJC

The Great Lakes Coalition Board of Directors has once again corresponded with the International Joint Commission requesting immediate action be taken and assure us that everything that can be done will be done to lower existing high water levels and avoid higher record setting levels in the future. Here are some highlights from the letter:

"…the Corps of Engineers Monthly Bulletin of Lake Levels for April 2019 predicted that the level of Lake Michigan would be about half a foot higher this summer than it was a year ago. However,

this summer levels rose to 582 feet, more than a foot higher than last summer. Indeed, the level has been above the "Emergency Preparedness Plan-Action Level of 580.0 feet," cited on page 67 of the IJC "Level Reference Study" issued March 31, 1993, for quite some time. In fact, summer levels have been about a foot (!) above the emergency level. Lake Michigan water level is up 3" since September when it should be going down. Lake Superior is up .3 feet from a year ago; however, Lake Michigan-Huron is up 1.3 feet for the same period.

"THIS IS TRULY A CRISIS AND IT IS TIME FOR ACTION! As a first step we believe the inflow to Lake Superior from the Long Lac and Ogoki Rivers should be halted. We would remind you that on page 74 of the March 31, 1993 "Levels Reference Study," during the last episode of high water, the report says:

> "The Board further recommends that the following be implemented in the near future: '…The manipulation of the four major Great Lakes diversions: Long Lac, Ogoki, Lake Michigan at Chicago, and the Welland Canal, during crisis situations, when conditions permit." (It's been done before.)
>
> "The Board further recommends that, prior to implementing the manipulations of diversions, the potential impacts within and outside the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River system of changes to the Long Lac, Ogoki and Lake Michigan at Chicago diversions be determined."

"We respectfully submit that it is long past time to get going on these determinations. We do not understand the apparent reluctance of the Board to do so. If the Board expects its reports to be taken seriously, it cannot continue to duck its own recommendations. To do so leads to the perception that power generation is more important than the interests of other stakeholders."

And the letter concludes by asking:

"What specific actions will the International Joint Commission take within the next few months to assure us that everything that can be done will be done, to lower existing levels and avoid higher record setting high levels next year?"

Copies of the letter were sent to Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer and Lt. Governor Garlin Gilchrist, U.S. Senators Stabenow and Peters and all Michigan Representatives in Congress. You can view the entire letter on our website at www.greatlakescoalition.org.

GREAT LAKES HIGH WATER LEVELS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

High water levels in the Great Lakes have created enormous problems for coastal communities. States and Provinces with coastlines on the Great Lakes have been coping with flooding problems ushered in by high water and several strong autumn storms in 2019. Flooding is hardly the end of it. Significant additional problems are in the offing for Great Lakes coastal communities.

The homes of lakeshore residents are threatened as high waters undermine the banks and bluffs. Already the lakes have claimed dozens of residences while rendering others unsafe to occupy. As homes, debris cascade down the bluffs, and into the waters, materials hazardous to boating and even safe drinking water are entering the waters. But this does not begin to articulate the enormity of issues that will have to be addressed by lakeshore communities. The lost residences translate to loss of tax base and skyrocketing insurance costs. Realtors are reporting a flat lining of lakeshore home sales.

Lakeshore communities may operate marinas, beaches, and parks catering to residents and tourists. Public marinas are a major source of income for municipalities and therefore, critical to the recreational boating industry. A study done for the City of South Haven showed that nine direct jobs contributed to an industry output of $1,423,000 per year. Hundreds of marina operators and their employees are threatened by the developing situation. With the Spring thaw will come a twisting and grinding of melting ice that is easily capable of dislodging boat slips and tearing out the boat slip infrastructure such as electric power feeds. Repair of marina facilities due to damaging ice will be another strain on municipal budgets—loss of revenue and needed money to repair the damage.

Municipalities have also expended precious resources in maintaining beaches and beach access. Coastal communities are tourist communities because many of them draw people wanting to enjoy a Great Lakes beach. Diminished beaches and damaged beach access points necessitate restoration. But news that beaches are damaged, diminished, or inaccessible will have a dampening effect on the tourism industry. Tourism from the recreational boating industry and from available beaches could be seriously reduced if the current situation continues. For communities like South Haven, New Buffalo, and St. Joseph, Michigan, loss of water-based public and user facilities to high waters will cost these tourism dependent communities otherwise dependable revenue streams and drive up maintenance costs.

States like Michigan that spend tens of thousands of dollars in tourism promotion campaigns need to push their congressional delegations and organizations like the International Joint Commission. Nature is the ultimate arbiter of high water levels with rain and snowfall and evaporation rates, but there is some human control of inflow and outflow in the Great Lakes. In an attempt to stop or even reduce the destruction associated with high waters, the Great Lakes Coalition submitted the following recommendations to the International Joint Commission:

1. Restore the Long Lac and Ogoki Rivers in Canada to their original flow channels to Hudson Bay instead of the present diversion of them into Lake Superior.
2. Remove the in-fills that restrict flow through the Niagara River.
3. Open the Black Rock Lock in Buffalo in order to increase Niagara River flow.
4. Utilize the Welland Canal to supplement Niagara River flow.
5. Consider increasing the Chicago Diversion.
6. Install an ice boom at the head of the St. Clair River to reduce the risk of ice jams.

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. It is time for the Commission to utilize the extent of its power to begin to bring relief.

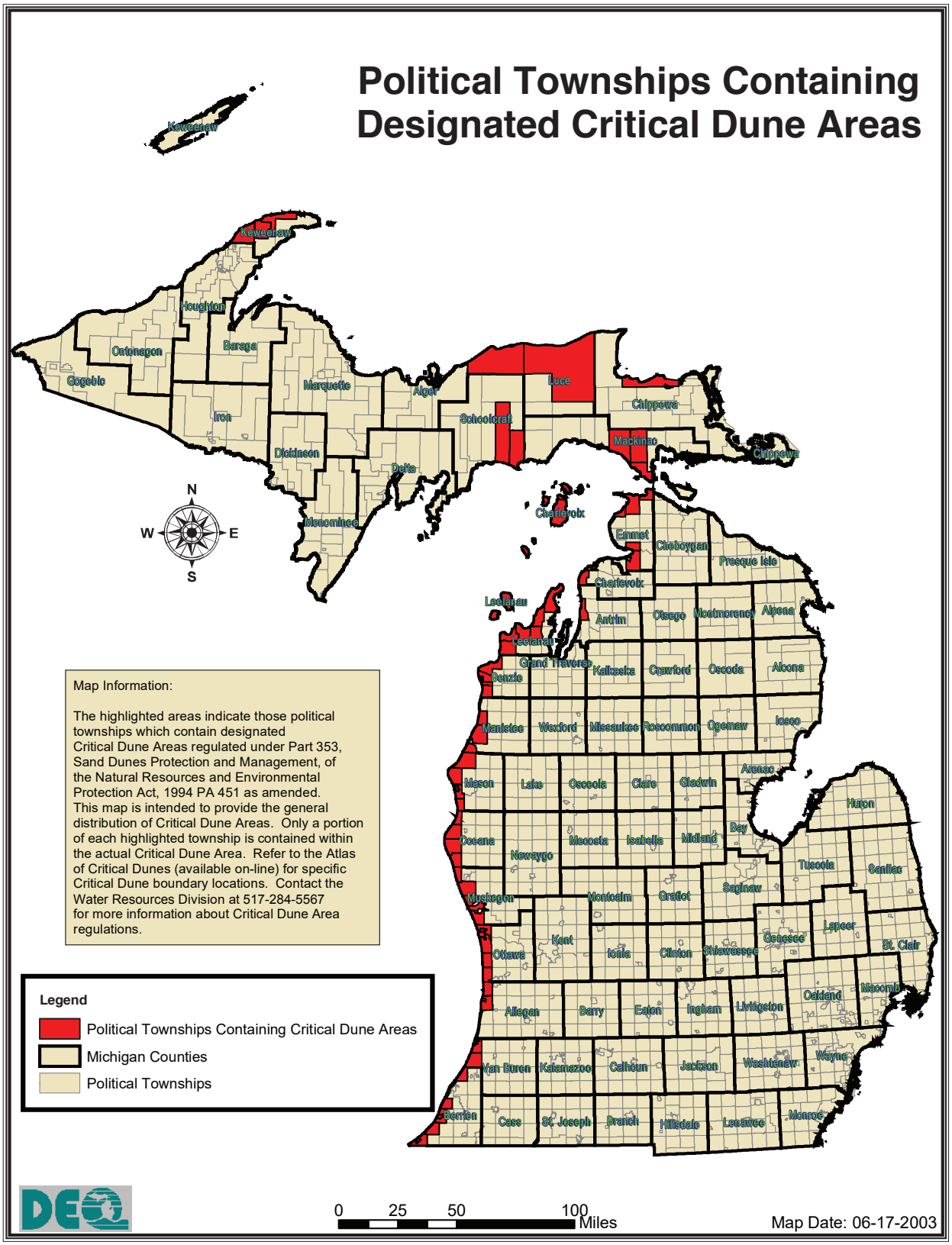
Residents throughout the Great Lakes, be they Canadian or U.S., are suffering, as are the communities in which they live. Loss of property values, diminished levels of tourism, as well as mounting restoration and repair costs are creating a significant economic and environmental crisis for coastal communities, Canadian and U.S. alike.

It is time for the IJC to do their job. Interested citizens can contact the International Joint Commission by visiting their website at https://ijc.org/en/contact for an online message form, or write to them at the following address:

International Joint Commission
1717 H Street, N.W., Suite 835
Washington, DC 20006

FEMA UPDATING FLOODPLAIN MAPS IN MANISTEE COUNTY

Due to proposed floodplain remapping in Manistee County by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), homeowners who were not previously in a floodplain may be in one now. It's safe to assume that other counties will also be remapping. Homeowners that will be included in the new map should immediately contact their insurance agent. It may be required to get flood insurance as part of the process for obtaining a loan for shoreline protection. Flood insurance is mandated if your property is located in the flood zone map.



COALITION APPOINTS U.P. REPRESENTATIVE

At a recent Board of Directors meeting the Board appointed Wende Mueller as Representative Ex-Officio from the Upper Peninsula. With Lake Superior being at near-record levels and with more and more damage reports coming in from U.P. members, the Board felt it important to have a representative on-site to report on conditions and damage assessments. Wende comes to us with excellent Lake Michigan shoreline credentials as her mother Priscilla Mueller was a founding member of the Coalition back in 1986. Priscilla served as Director and Coalition Secretary for many years. After recently moving back to Michigan from Arizona, Wende now lives in the U.P.

LETTER OF SUPPORT

The Coalition recently sent a letter of support to the New Buffalo Regional Water Advisory Committee. The group, formed in and around New Buffalo and Berrien County, Michigan, have been voicing their concerns about the spills from the Indiana steel mills to lawmakers and steel company officials. They are working toward minimizing and/or eliminating these spills in order to protect our precious Lake Michigan water quality. The Coalition felt it important to lend our support to their efforts.

MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

Coalition President Ron Wilson recently met with officials of the Michigan Municipal League. They are interested in how the high water levels are affecting harbors, roads and bridges. Ron made a presentation and will speak and present a written article at their conference. Ron has also met with lobbyists and state representatives regarding lowering lake levels.

COASTAL DUNES SYMPOSIUM

The Michigan Environmental Council's Coastal Dunes Symposium was held in Lansing on October 3, 2019. Coalition President Ron Wilson was in attendance. Presentations were made of old photos along with new photos showing present conditions. Michigan State University is conducting an age study of the dunes similar to the one done by Grand Valley State University. Michigan has a new Commissioner of Outdoor Recreation. A question posed: What if there were: NO beaches? NO marinas? NO harbors?

If you have not already done so, time to renew your membership for 2020, 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
Contributions are deductible to the full extent of the law

NAME_____

MAILING ADDRESS_____

LAKE PROPERTY ADDRESS IF DIFFERENT _____

_____

_____

E-MAIL ADDRESS_____

SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTION: _____$35 _____$50 _____ $100 _____Other

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

GREAT LAKES COALITION
Michigan/Lake Michigan Chapter
For Shoreline Preservation
P.O. Box 429
Saugatuck, Michigan 49453
TEL (269) 857-8945 * FAX (269) 857-8945
www.greatlakescoalition.org
info@greatlakescoalition.org

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.