

EXPLORE THE SHORES

Making Manistee County a Premier Destination for Universal Access to
Lakes, Rivers and Lake Michigan



FACT SHEET

What is *Explore the Shores*?

Explore the Shores is a new, broadly supported initiative to make Manistee County a premier destination for universal access for people of all ages and abilities to enjoy, use and learn from the County's lakes, rivers and Lake Michigan shoreline.

Explore the Shores consists of a growing system of access sites in the County that are connected by a shared focus on: the importance of universal access; the need for stewardship of water resources; and opportunities for everyone to enjoy and benefit from being outdoors on water, with an emphasis upon recreational fishing opportunities.

Who Supports *Explore the Shores*?

A number of organizations support the initiative and are Steering Committee members for the project. The Steering Committee serves to annually: solicit new sites for inclusion in the program; review and revise, as needed, prioritization criteria for ranking sites; analyze sites and rank them in priority order; oversee branding, promotion, outreach and communications about the initiative; seek funding from public and private sources to support the program. Members include representation from:

- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Office of U. S. Senator Carl Levin
- Office of U. S. Senator Debbie Stabenow
- Office of U. S. Congressman Pete Hoekstra
- Easter Seals
- National Association of the Physically Handicapped
- Great Lakes Fishery Trust
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Division
- Manistee County
- City of Manistee
- U. S. Forest Service (advisory liaison)
- Alliance for Economic Success (Manistee economic development organization)
- Manistee County Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Manistee Charter Boat Association
- Manistee County Community Foundation
- CMS Energy
- Manistee Area Public Schools

Who is Coordinating the Program and What are the Program Components?

The Manistee County Community Foundation (MCCF) is coordinating the program. Major program components include:

- Steering Committee Support, including processes to solicit nominations for sites; reviewing and ranking sites; and establishing site ranking criteria
- Program Branding, Communications and Promotion, including signage, written materials and web site development. All of these promotional and communication materials will begin to be available in late 2009.
- Program Fund Development, including grant writing and endowment development

Using funds provided under a Michigan Easter Seals grant, the MCCF has awarded contracts to coordinate the program and its various components

The goals of the branding, communications and program efforts are to:

- Support promotion of sites to maximize use by people of all ages and abilities
- Establish continuity among the sites and provide a template for existing and future sites throughout the county
- Educate users about what can be done/observed at each site
- Foster K-12 place based education that uses water resources as a theme for learning and developing stewardship
- Support tours and tourism in the county based on sport fishing.

What Sites are Included in *Explore the Shores*?

There are five access sites currently in the *Explore the Shores* program:

- First Street Beach, City of Manistee, featuring platform access to the beach
- Fifth Street Beach, City of Manistee, also featuring platform access to the beach
- Stronach Fishing Pier, Stronach, Michigan, featuring a universally accessible fishing pier near the mouth of the renown Little Manistee River

Project Funded by:



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- Lift Station, City of Manistee Municipal Pier, installed in 2009 to assist people with special needs (including persons in wheelchairs) in and out of boats
- Arthur Street Fishing Pier, City of Manistee (to be completed in 2010), featuring a universally accessible fishing pier near the mouth of the Big Manistee River, as well as new, expanded handicapper parking and restroom facilities

What New Sites are Being Considered?

The *Explore the Shores* Steering Committee has identified 17 new sites for consideration. The Fund Development Team is pursuing financial resources for most of these sites. In September 2009, funding will be sought through the Great Lakes Fishery Trust for five new sites, including:

Manistee River/Bear Creek Confluence. Located on River Road (Brown Township), this site is approximately 14.5 miles east of Lake Michigan. The site is significant as Bear Creek is the original birthplace of Pacific salmon in the Great Lakes basin.

Little Manistee Weir. Located on the Little Manistee River, southeast of Manistee Lake and approximately 9 miles east of Lake Michigan. This weir has an egg-taking station that supplies nearly all of the steelhead that are planted in the entire Grate Lakes basin.

Rainbow Bend. Located on the Big Manistee River approximately 12.5 miles east of Lake Michigan. The site is accessible off of the River Road.

9th Street Boat Launch. Located on the east side of Manistee Lake, east of the City of Manistee and approximately 2 miles east of Lake Michigan

Bar Lake Outlet. This site, on the shores of Lake Michigan, is approximately 3.5 miles north of Manistee and is extensively used for shore bound angling.

Why was *Explore the Shores* Created?

Streams, lakes and the Lake Michigan shoreline are instrumental to the economic well-being and quality of life in Manistee County.

For example, the quality of the County's sport fishery is known worldwide. The Michigan DNR reports that there were 1,441 charter excursions and a combined total of 32,463 angler hours out of Manistee County ports in 2007. They report that Charter boats took 5,848 anglers fishing on Lake Michigan and harvested 14,155 salmon or trout.

Further, while this project seeks to provide access to all people, a required focus of *Explore the Shores* is to provide access to those with special needs.

In the nation, Michigan and Manistee County, people are living longer. The chances of disability increase with age. Fifty-two percent of people age 65 and older have a disability and 37 percent have severe disabilities. By the year 2020, it is projected that 51.5% of Manistee County's population will consist of individuals who are age 65 or older, far above the projected State or national average.

With this background in mind, the need for *Explore the Shores* has its origin in Manistee County's first county-wide visioning initiative, *Envision Manistee County*. The 16-month visioning effort, completed in 2006, involved over 700 citizens, organizations and businesses. This visioning effort identified access and wise use and management of the County's Lake Michigan shoreline, lakes, rivers and streams as among the highest priorities for the economic well-being and quality of life of Manistee County.

Because of the community-driven *Envision Manistee County* process, the national Easter Seals organization selected Manistee County as an implementation site under its Rural Solutions Project, funded in part by USDA. The goals of the program were to integrate the goals of the Easter Seals organization within the priorities and action plans of *Envision Manistee County*. Within that context, the Easter Seals program, *Envision Accessible Manistee County's*, primary goal was to increase overall accessibility of Manistee County people of all ages and abilities.

Based on that project, Michigan Easter Seals made an initial grant of \$20,000 to the Manistee County Community Foundation with a vision of making Manistee County the premier destination for universal access to water resources.

Explore the Shores is also consistent with the Strategic Plan for the City of Manistee, the newly State-approved County Recreation Plan and the Strategic Plan for the Alliance for Economic Success.

Our goal is to have 1 million people visit *Explore the Shores* sites within five years.

Contact Us!

If you would like more information or would like to be involved in this project, contact the Manistee County Community Foundation at (231) 723-7269.