MANAGEMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL CONCEPTS FOR
THE GRAND TRAVERSE BAY SHORELANDS SYSTEM

Prepared for the Shorelands Coordinating Committee
by
Sea Grant Program
The University of Michigan
Coastal Zone and Shorelands Management Project

August 1972
FOREWORD

As the result of a pilot study of the shorelands of the Traverse Bay region, the Michigan Water Resources Commission has recommended to the members of the Traverse Bay Shorelands Coordinating Committee that they adopt as a Bay-area goal the preservation of the Bay shorelands in as natural a setting as possible.

The University of Michigan Sea Grant Program, through the Coastal Zone and Shorelands Management Project, under the direction of Dr. John Armstrong, endorses the principal recommendation of the Water Resources Commission. This report outlines some considerations for an institutional arrangement within the Bay area to meet the objective of retaining a natural shoreland.

This report is deliberately brief, so as to facilitate discussion, but Sea Grant wishes to stress that this is a complex subject, requiring considerable thought on the part of local citizens. Therefore, Sea Grant is willing to provide considerable information on this subject if desired, including material on attempts at shoreland management in other parts of the country.
PART ONE: THE NEED FOR ACTION

Over the next thirty years our country faces an unprecedented increase in recreational activities, if several recent studies are correct. Considering the projected growth of population in the Great Lakes Basin, the impact upon our natural resources will be immense. When the population growth is combined with the fact that recreation is currently growing at a faster rate than population, and that recreation has become a "high impact" activity through the use of mechanized recreational equipment, it becomes clear that without action now, the remaining sections of low-density high-quality resource areas will be endangered, and perhaps lost for future generations. And of all resource areas within the state of Michigan or within the United States, the shorelands are the most endangered.

With increasing realization of the degree of potential damage, as well as the increasing importance of shorelands for many social goals, state and federal governments have recently taken steps to establish formal management systems to protect these shore areas. Also, sewage construction programs and general water quality regulations will help, along with sedimentation and erosion control, to avert some of the present potential damage.

Clearly the state and federal governments have both the right and the obligation to insure that the waters of the Great Lakes, par-
particularly close to shore, where drinking water and recreation are so important, are of high quality. Action has been taken, and proposed legislation would indicate that there is a real chance to preserve a high level of quality in the future. But of equal concern is the loss or misuse of wilderness and rural shore areas. And here it is not so clear as to the right or obligation of state or federal governmental action.

Entire patterns of recreation, contemplation and residential life-style are being lost as greater numbers of people and larger and more powerful recreational machines are drawn to the fragile shore. As trees and dunes are replaced by residential homes and parking lots, motels, high-density parks, marinas and power plants, the natural shoreland will continue to disappear. And with such a loss will go a heritage unmatched by any other state in the nation.

With the limited money and manpower of the state, and with the national interest in protecting freedom of choice for the private property owner, the future of shoreland areas rests largely with townships, counties, villages and cities. It also rests with property owners, commercial enterprises and the increasing number of people who visit the shorelands for recreation.

It is clear that the people of Michigan can destroy their resources in an undirected rush towards "development" and "economic progress." If the people of Traverse Bay follow the normal pattern of modern community development, they can all too easily convert
their unique and beautiful area into another urban-suburban center, full of cement roads and parking lots, tall buildings -- in fact, with little effort the Bay can be made to look as bad as any modern urban area.

**Concept:** If typical goals of "development" and "progress" are the predominant interest of Traverse Bay citizens, then there is no need for new institutional arrangements or for new management concepts. Several public and private groups already exist with the express mandate or desire to generate "economic growth."

This report presents as briefly as possible some possible institutional relationships and some management concepts which might aid in preserving rural character and high biological quality in the shorelands. In a series of reports being prepared in cooperation with the Traverse Bay Shorelands Coordinating Committee, we will attempt to indicate that we do not advocate a total cessation of development in shoreland areas, although it is possible that such a strategy would be of the greatest possible long-term benefit to all Bay area citizens. There is a serious need for recreational facilities, for some degree of economic employment, and until the population stabilizes, there is an unavoidable need to provide housing. But the plain fact is that any further development will diminish the
quality of the shorelands.

**Concept:** The use potential of shoreland resources is highest when the integrity of the natural systems represented by the Bay shorelands is conserved. To the extent that these systems are altered by man, the long-range utility of the shorelands diminishes.

The shorelands can be modified and altered to maximize some limited set of activities, such as dredging to facilitate better navigation, or the shore can be braced with steel to allow residential or commercial development in areas of erosion. But by doing so, other activities are diminished. As a general rule, the greater the degree of modification of the natural system, the less flexibility remains.

**Concept:** Technology allows us to make many types and kinds of alterations within the natural system, but the shorelands have certain limited tolerances which cannot be surpassed without weakening or destroying them.

If an alteration is to take place, and for the immediate future, it is probable that some development must be allowed, then special steps should be taken. If the shoreland system is to be maintained, then any activity
occurring within it will have to be designed so as to "fit" within the tolerance levels of the existent environment.

During the course of our studies, several people have indicated that they are concerned about "pollution" and environmental quality, but that they do not really believe that Grand Traverse Bay is in serious trouble. Our research through several projects would indicate that in a limited sense this is true. But there are clear indications that the shorelands are being lost through "development," and that water quality could decrease very quickly in the near future.

**Concept:** It is probable, with the projected growth in population and recreation, combined with the trend towards increased shoreland usage, that the Bay can retain its present level of quality for more than twenty years unless major steps are taken now.

Perhaps, as many people contend, it is true that eventually all such areas as Grand Traverse Bay will have to change in order to meet the growing demands of modern urban America. It is our belief that "change" need not mean a loss of scenic and biologic quality. If "development" is inevitable, its impact upon the water and
shorelands of the Bay area can be lessened or delayed if cooperative positive action is taken now. Further, we contend that the "inevitability" of development is true only if people are willing to accept it.

Goals

There is a need for citizens of the Bay to determine just what they want their shorelands to look like. Each citizen should carefully consider and then express his opinion, and some Bay organizations should tabulate the results and produce a statement of citizen goals and values. Then each and every activity could be measured against this preference, so that all may see what the effect or "cost" of a proposed activity will be upon the future appearance and quality of the Bay.

Concept: At the present time there is no organization which looks at the entire Bay, considers it a collection of fragile natural systems, and attempts to determine how necessary and desirable activities can be modified so as to allow a "fit" between man and nature. Until there is such an organization, units of government will continue to use the Bay as a "free" good, passing on to the general public and future generations the actual costs of unwise or unnecessary activities.
Concept: In the long run, if the shorelands are to be preserved as an attractive and economically valuable resource, then "development" will have to be regulated, limited, and in some cases, prohibited within shoreland areas. All human activities can be enhanced by location within the Great Lakes shorelands, with few exceptions. But the shorelands cannot support all activities. It becomes a question of balancing between "necessary" shoreland activities and a desirable level of shoreland quality.

A TIME OF CHOICE

The Sea Grant Shorelands Management Project has prepared a report for the Traverse Bay Shorelands Coordinating Committee, and for the citizens of the Bay area with the title of A Time of Choice. The choice which we discuss is rather easy to understand, even if it is not easy to make.

IN THE PAST, MAN WAS USUALLY ABLE TO ACHIEVE A BALANCE BETWEEN HIS NEEDS AND THE TOLERANCES OF THE NATURAL SYSTEMS.

Once established, this balance tended to remain in a stable condition. Many scenic resort areas and farm-orchard areas, such as those found in the Traverse Bay area, or in "traditional" fishing villages on the East or West Coast, reflect some of the more successful and attractive balances. But in recent times this balance has been lost, and in most shoreland areas of the United States, the quality of the shorelands, and the diversity of natural shore-
land systems is being lost to crowds of swimmers, campers, summer homes, power plants, motels and highways, which the shoreland, as a natural system, cannot tolerate. As a result, either the shoreland must be altered, made into an artificial configuration of concrete and asphalt, wood and steel, or else human activities occurring within the shoreland must be restricted in number and modified in design to allow the natural systems to retain their integrity.

**Concept:** There are basically three choices: The citizens of Traverse Bay can decide to do nothing; they can attempt to prohibit any further alteration of the shoreland; or they can attempt to guide and direct development, eventually setting upper limits to further shoreland activity, and insuring that any activities which do occur "fit" with the shorelands.

1. **A DECISION TO DO NOTHING IS A DECISION TO LOSE A QUALITY BAY:** Perhaps not tomorrow, but certainly within fifteen or twenty years. It is also an invitation for regional, state and federal intervention as national concern for shoreland protection develops into management programs.

2. **IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT ANY ATTEMPT AT TOTAL PROHIBITION OF ALTERATION WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME.**
3. **SEA GRANT SUGGESTS THAT ATTEMPTS BE CENTERED ON LIMITING THE IMPACT OF THOSE ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL OCCUR THROUGH CHOOSING APPROPRIATE SHORELAND SITES AND DEVELOPING METHODS ALL CITIZENS CAN USE TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THEIR ACTIVITIES.**

The Water Resources Commission has prepared material which will aid in attempting to modify activities so as to retain the flavor of a natural shoreland while permitting some degree of development. But these concepts and recommendations are, at best, only partial solutions to the problems facing the citizens of the Bay region in the near future. While a major step towards shorelands preservation, these recommendations are of little use by themselves.

**Recommendation:** Bay citizens need to formulate some basic shoreland goals, on a Bay-wide basis, and need a shoreland organization both to coordinate local interests and to act as a Bay-area spokesman before outside groups.
PART TWO: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The structure of an organization tends to influence its output, and thus if one is attempting to establish a single organization or an institutional "arrangement" of rules, regulations and agencies, one should always keep in mind the objective of the structure: Why it is being established in the first place.

Thus, before Sea Grant can make specific organizational recommendations, we must have a rather clear idea of general Bay area intentions. As has the Water Resources Commission, we will assume, for the purpose of this report, that local citizens feel that preservation of a quality shoreland environment to be in their best interest, and will adopt it as their major objective.

If preservation, or protection, is the objective, then a Bay organization must be at least familiar with all of the elements, both in and out of the Bay area, which can harm the shorelands. If protection is desired, the organization must further have operational linkages with local, regional, state and federal governmental groups; both to be familiar with intended activities of these groups and to exert its own influence upon their decisions.

Recommendation: We suggest the formation of an organization similar to the present Traverse Bay Shorelands Coordinating
Committee. All public and private interest groups, to the extent practical, should have representation in this organization, which we will refer to as a Citizens Shorelands Council (CSC). The main function of the CSC would be to facilitate communications among all of the interest groups who affect or can be affected by the shorelands of Grant Traverse Bay.

1. Each township, village, city, and county, together with each official planning group, should have at least one member in the CSC.

2. Membership should also include special interest groups such as sportsman organizations, conservation groups, commercial groups and civic organizations.

3. Area personnel of such agencies as the Soil Conservation Service, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and the Coast Guard should be observer members. The more people, and the greater their diversity, the more difficult it will be to achieve any concrete results, and thus there may be some interest in forming special study and executive committees. However, coordination and cooperation will be facilitated by including as many interest groups as possible, at least in some of the meetings,
even though this will increase the "cost" of attempting to achieve positive results.

4. The present Shorelands Coordinating Committee is a natural starting point for such an organization. But it will need increased local membership and cooperative participation by various federal, state and regional groups to become effective.

5. The Traverse City Regional Planning Commission is currently the largest planning group in the Bay area. As with Mission Peninsula and other areas which are planning for their own interests, particular care must be taken to include such groups within the CSC, both so that their knowledge and experience can be shared and so that such activities can be coordinated with a general Bay planning effort.

BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The following are some basic qualities of a citizens' attempt at preserving the shorelands in as natural a state as possible.

1. Local citizens will need a degree of understanding of the Bay region, which does not presently exist at any level of government.

2. An organization, or set of organizations, with sufficient knowledge and influence to prevent or monitor activities which are
clearly of harm to the shorelands would be of little use unless coupled with a general shift in attitude by potential and existent users of the shorelands.

3. If the citizens of Traverse Bay wish to protect their shorelands, they will have to forego certain opportunities either currently enjoyed or which may in the future be proposed. In the long run, successful protection of a high-quality shoreland environment will be dependent upon such willingness.

FURTHER REQUIREMENTS

1. There is a need for an organization which is focused upon Traverse Bay, rather than upon the Great Lakes, the state, the northwest region, or upon a single county, city, town or village. While the Bay must be seen as connected to other systems, there is a need for some organization to view the Bay primarily as a single complete system with its own unique potentials and problems.

2. There is a need for an organization whose main objective is to preserve the Bay and its quality attributes. There are existing pressures in both public and private sectors that would, if unrestrained, quite rapidly develop the Bay shorelands.

3. There is need for a citizens' organization. Whereas no single
governmental agency has the responsibility, time, or personnel to concentrate upon all of the aspects of the shorelands necessary to insure protection, numerous citizens, joining together in cooperation with various governmental groups, can achieve the coordination which presently appears to be politically, administratively, jurisdictionally and economically impossible.

4. There is the need for a local Bay-area organization. Increasingly, the local unit of government is seen by professional managers and planners as obstructing necessary action. Local citizens need an effective Bay organization both to protect against attempts at taking over local choice and to provide some mechanism through which federal, state and regional groups can provide support, information and guidance.

**Concept:** One of the major problems which local citizens will have to overcome is a general mistrust, at the state, regional and federal level of local interests and local abilities. There is a very real possibility that unless changes occur at the local level, significant amounts of local control will be lost. An impressive seven-volume study of natural shoreland problems concluded that local communities within the Great Lakes are basically incapable of protecting their own resources.
The majority of local communities are unable or unwilling to provide adequate protection to the environment and the associated living natural resources of the estuaries and the areas of the Great Lakes within their jurisdiction (italics added), even though broad social values to the people of the State and Nation are involved... Most local communities tend to favor those residential or industrial developments of land and water areas which provide the highest direct return... It is apparent that primary responsibility for management of the estuaries and comparable areas of the Great Lakes should be vested in the States. The local governments are not in a position to exercise this responsibility adequately (italics added). Volume I, pp. 71-73.

National Estuary Study

It is unfortunate enough that Great Lakes shoreland communities have been so described in a national report. But it is made worse by the fact that there is no clear evidence that state or federal action is any more likely to preserve the Great Lakes, without basic changes in values and organizational structures.

Concept: At the present time there is no state agency which can insure that the bay will not in the future be "modified" or "developed" to meet some "pressing" state or federal need. No state agency has the power, the mandate, the time, the money, or the necessary personnel to carry out the job. With pending state and federal land-use planning and coastal zone planning legislation, this may
change; in the meantime, only concerned citizen action
enhanced by state and federal support can advance the cause
of Bay preservation and hope to succeed.

COURSE OF ACTION

1. In examining zoning, subdivision control or building code or-
dinances, it is apparent that there is considerable resistance
to such regulations within the area, and there is some doubt as
to the long-range effectiveness of such techniques. But these
are important concepts of potential short-range protection, and
they are given strong support by some state, regional and fed-
eral agencies. Citizens should therefore consider possible or-
dinances, and if advantageous, perhaps should attempt to estab-
lish some minimum shorelands zoning on a uniform basis through-
out the Bay area. Each political unit will be required to con-
sider some minimal action to meet the requirements of Act 245,
and it would seem a good opportunity to commence consideration
of Bay-wide planning.

2. The most obvious source of near-future problems is the newly
created Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The CSC should
conduct a study of the park, attempting to determine potential
impacts upon the shorelands, and then to gain some cooperation
from regional, state and federal groups in avoiding or minimiz-
ing any possible damage.

3. As discussed in a special report on recreation prepared for the Shorelands Coordinating Committee, there are several potential problems connected with the Traverse Bay recreational industry. Many years ago local and state action was taken to develop the Bay area as a recreational center, with little if any consideration as to the long-range impact of such action upon the shorelands. A study should be made of the policies of various federal, state, regional and local groups which affect the recreational pressures upon the Bay, and residents should formulate a policy on recreation. Through this approach, increased economic gain and long-range protection of the resource base of this industry can perhaps be secured.

4. As the need and pressure for increased regulation zoning and planning develops, the CSC can, through discussion by its members, develop guidelines, recommendations and procedures of aid to individual political units. When there is some question as to the advisability of a particular activity, or how the impact of a desirable activity can be lessened, the CSC can perhaps obtain the services of professional planners, architects, lawyers, builders, and others, many of whom reside within the Bay area.

5. The CSC could help to initiate an environmental impact process
throughout the area. It could act as a clearinghouse of advice and information provided by public agencies, scientists and research literature. Future Sea Grant material will discuss this particular concept in greater detail.

6. There are several other problems requiring study and the formulation of a Bay-wide policy, and there are several specific functions which a CSC could take on. The placement of regional highways, the possible future location of a shoreland sewage system for the entire Bay, the possibility of lake-level stabilization by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and Coast Guard ice clearing policies are examples of issues which a Bay-wide citizens' council could study, and in time influence.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Given the increasing disenchantment at the state and federal level with the ability and willingness of local government to protect valuable public resources, it is possible that future legislation dealing with shoreland or land-use planning will not have such generous provisions for local participation, and indeed may aim at regional management by "professional planners" rather than citizens. Local opposition to planning, zoning, and other forms of regulation, in an understandable attempt to preserve personal freedom of action, may in the short run prolong the period of personal choice in matters of land use. It
is possible that it will also hasten the time when such regulations are no longer a matter of choice, and no longer left to local control.

SHORELAND AREAS ARE BECOMING SO POPULAR, SO CROWDED AND SO VALUABLE TO THE PUBLIC, THAT REGULATION AND MANAGEMENT CANNOT BE AVOIDED. IT BECOMES A CHOICE BETWEEN LOCAL ACTION, BASED UPON LOCAL VALUES AND NEEDS, OR SOME FORM OF REGIONAL OR STATE CONTROL AT A FUTURE DATE, DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF SOME VAGUE "GREATER PUBLIC."

EFFECTIVE PROTECTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IS THE BEST WAY OF INSURING A HIGH ECONOMIC AND AESTHETIC ENJOYMENT OF THE SHORELANDS, AND THE BEST WAY OF PREVENTING DIRECT EXCLUSIVE MANAGEMENT BY STATE OR REGIONAL GROUPS.

IN THE FUTURE, INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM OF ACTION WITHIN SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS SUCH AS THE SHORELANDS OF TRAVERSE BAY WILL BE CONDITIONAL UPON THE INDIVIDUAL'S WILLINGNESS TO PROTECT THESE RESOURCES, AND IN SOME CASES, TO POSSIBLY SACRIFICE SOME OF HIS OWN INDIVIDUAL SHORT-TERM FLEXIBILITY.

BY THEIR VERY NATURE, ACTIONS NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE SHORELANDS WILL BE UNPOPULAR, AND THEY WILL REQUIRE BOTH THE COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF BAY CITIZENS. ONE OF THE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE CSC WOULD BE TO PRESENT IN A CLEAR AND STRIKING MANNER THE ISSUES OF SHORELAND MANAGEMENT, AND THE ALTERNATIVE AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS,
PLANNING GROUPS, BUSINESS, AND UNITS OF GOVERNMENT, SO AS TO ENCOURAGE THEIR INVOLVEMENT.

Considering that there is currently a strong national debate over the conflicting values of economic growth and resource protection, it would not be surprising if Traverse Bay were no different. But, in fact, the Bay is different. It is a resource of unique value, and the people of Traverse Bay have revealed to us a growing sensitivity for the beauty, economic potential and historical significance of a "natural," high-quality shoreland. But unless this sensitivity is now expressed through effective action, such as through the formation of a Citizens' Shoreland Council, and followed up by strong and continued citizen involvement, then the shorelands will surely be lost.