MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING CONCEPTS FOR
THE GRAND TRAVERSE BAY SHORELANDS

PREPARED FOR THE SHORELANDS COORDINATING COMMITTEE
BY
- COASTAL ZONE AND SHORELANDS MANAGEMENT PROJECT

SEA GRANT PROGRAM
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
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INTRODUCTION

Over the next thirty years our country faces an unprecedented increase in recreational activities, if several recent studies are correct. Just considering the projected growth of population in the Great Lakes Basin, the impact upon our natural resources will be immense. When combined with the fact that recreation is currently growing at a faster rate than population, and that recreation is become a 'high impact' activity, for example through the use of mechanized recreational equipment, it becomes clear that unless action is taken now, the remaining sections of low-density high-quality resource areas will be over stressed and thus endangered, and certainly to some extent lost for future generations. Of all resource areas within the state of Michigan, or within the United States, the shoreland systems are under the most intense pressure.

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 taken recent steps to establish formal management systems to protect these zones. Also, sewage construction programs and general water quality regulations, along with sedimentation and erosion control, will help to avert some of the present potential damage.

But at least as serious as "water pollution" is the loss of wilderness and rural shoreland areas. Entire patterns of recreation, contemplation and residential life-style are being lost as greater numbers of people, in larger and more powerful machines, swarm 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, in balance with both the water and inland areas, will disappear. And with such a loss will go a unique heritage unmatched by any other state in the nation.

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

**Concept:** If typical concepts 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 some level of rural atmosphere and high environmental quality of the shorelands. A series of reports is being prepared in cooperation with the Traverse Bay Shorelands Coordinating Committee. These reports will not advocate a total cessation of development in shoreland areas, although that may be a strategy that has the greatest possible benefit to all citizens in the Bay area in the long run. They will show that there is a need for recreational facilities, for some degree of economic employment, and until the population stabilizes, an unavoidable need to provide
housing. However, in any frame of reference, further development will in fact diminish the quality of the shorelands to some degree.

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 for navigation, or shorelands can be expanded with fill or structures to allow residential or commercial development. 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 must be taken. If the shoreland system is to be maintained, then any activity or alteration will have to be designed so as to 'fit' within the tolerance levels of the existent environment.

During the course of Sea Grant studies, several people have expressed a concern about 'pollution' and environmental quality, but that they do not seem to really think Traverse Bay is in any kind of serious trouble. Research
efforts to date would indicate that in a limited sense this is true. But there are clear indications that the Bay system is entering a 'susceptible' era and that shorelands are being lost through "development." at an increasing rate.

**Concept:** It is reasonable to expect that with the projected growth in population and recreation, combined with the trend towards increased shoreland usage, that the Bay cannot retain its present level of quality and "usability" for more than fifteen to 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 not necessary that change must mean a loss of scenic and environmental quality. If development is inevitable, its impact upon the water and shorelands of the Bay area can be controlled and softened, if cooperative positive action is taken now.

**Goals:** There is a need for the 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 collections 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 program 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 is discussed 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 almost all shoreland areas in the United States
the quality of the shorelands and the diversity of natural shoreland systems is being lost to crowds of swimmers, campers, summer homes, power plants, motels and highways; the effects of which the shoreland, as a natural system, cannot always 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 ESSENTIALLY LOSE A HIGH QUALITY NATURAL RESOURCE: 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.

3. A RATIONAL APPROACH WOULD SUGGEST 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. It is contended that beyond these guidelines the citizens of the area will 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 area spokesman before outside groups.
PART TWO. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The structure of an organization obviously influences its output. Any attempt to establish a single organization (or an institutional 'arrangement' of rules, regulations, agencies, and the relationships between these elements) should always focus on the objective of the structure: Why is it being established in the first place?

Thus, before specific organizational recommendations can be made, there must be a clear idea of general Bay area intentions and goals as in the Water Resources Commission report. This report will assume that local citizens feel that preservation of a quality shoreland environment is 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 outside 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 so as to be familiar with intended activities of these groups and to exert its own influence upon their decisions.

Recommendation: Formation of an organization similar to the present Shorelands Coordinating Committee. All public and private interest groups, to the extent practical, should have representation in this organization, which for this report will be nominally called GRAND TRAVERSE BAY SHORELAND COUNCIL. The main function of this Council would be to facilitate communications among all of the interest groups who affect or can be affected by the shorelands of Grand Traverse Bay.

Major features of such an organization would be:
1. Each township, village, city, and county, together with each official planning group, should have at least one member in the GTBSC.

2. Membership should also include special interest groups such as sportsman organizations, conservation groups, commercial and industrial 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 invited to attend council meetings. The greater the type and actual number of members, 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. But one of the major functions of this particular type of organization should be to coordinate activities and attempt to reduce interest conflicts. 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 Grand Traverse Bay 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 these and other groups within the Council, 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

Below are some basic requirements for ensuring wise use of the shorelands.

1. Local citizens will need a degree of understanding of type of control over activities affecting the bay 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 unnecessary 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. Until private citizens and units of government are willing to reexamine traditional approaches to shoreland development and use, coordinated action will be difficult.

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 protections 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 Grand Traverse Bay rather than upon the Great Lakes, the state, the northwest region, or upon a single county, village, city or town. While the Bay must be seen as connected to other systems, there is a need for some organization to see the Bay primarily as a single unit with its own unique potentials and problems.
3. There is need for a citizens' organization.
   a. Where no single governmental agency has the right, 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 govern-
      mental groups, can achieve the coordination which presently
      is politically, administratively, jurisdictionally and econo-
      mically impossible within the governmental system.
   b. Citizen groups can at least occasionally go beyond partisan
      politics. While professional resource managers are not often
      strongly influenced by differing political views on resource
      matters, they must pay some attention to the views of the
      administration in power. Hopefully citizens can perceive the
      need for action and request it, even if a line agency feels that
      such action would be unpopular. It is often the case that
      government personnel cannot act unless they have strong
      citizen support.

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.
One of the major problems which local citizens will have to overcome is a general lack of confidence at the state, regional, and federal level of the ability of local units to provide effective leadership. 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 national 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 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. (pp. 71-73, Volume I, National Estuary Study)

It is unfortunate that Great Lakes shoreland communities have a national reputation for lack of responsibility. But it is made worse by the fact that there is no clear present 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. But in the meantime, only concerned citizen action by those local interests most affected by a destruction or deterioration of the present high quality can advance the cause of Bay preservation and hope to succeed.

COURSE OF ACTION

1. Consider one or more zoning, subdivision control, or building code ordinances. 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 federal agencies. Citizens should consider various possible ordinances, and to the degree felt to be advantageous, perhaps attempt to establish some minimum shorelands zoning on a uniform basis throughout the Bay area. Each political unit will be required to consider some minimal action to meet the requirements of Act 245, and it would seem a good opportunity to commence consideration of Bay-wide planning.

SUGGESTED INITIAL ACTION. The Council once formed should be given responsibility for review of all shoreland development projects. This review function would be of the same nature as township or county planning
commissions now review developments that require zoning changes, or permits. Each township or city could amend its zoning ordinances to require that developments in their jurisdiction have additional review by the Council. would have no veto or regulatory power but could view each development in a Bay-wide sense. The important function here would be exposure and public review of developments that could have Bay-wide impact.

2. The most obvious source of near-future problems is the newly-created Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. The Council 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 minimizing 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 Bay 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. There are several other problems which require study and the formulation of a Bay-wide policy. The location and extension of the Traverse City sewage line, as well as placement of regional highways, 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 local citizens and planners. 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. But 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 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.
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 COUNCIL WOULD BE TO PRESENT IN A CLEAR AND STRIKING MANNER THE ISSUES OF SHORELAND MANAGEMENT AND THE ALTERNATIVES AVAILABLE TO INDIVIDUALS, PLANNING GROUPS, BUSINESS, AND UNITS OF GOVERNMENT, SO AS TO ENCOURAGE THEIR INVOLVEMENT.

IT IS UP TO YOU

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 unique national resource, and the people of Traverse Bay have indicated an unusual sensitivity for the beauty, economic potential and historical interest in a 'natural' high-quality shoreland. But unless this sensitivity is expressed through effective action, such as through the formation of a Shoreland Council, and followed up by strong and continued citizen involvement, then the opportunity for a local voice in shorelands management will be foregone.