

**ONEKAMA COMMUNITY WATER ACCESS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**  
**Proposal to the Michigan Coastal Management Program**  
**May—2010**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

***Purpose:***

The Onekama Community Water Access Development Project (OCCAD) will enable the Onekama community (including the shores of Portage Lake and Lake Michigan) to become a central component of *Explore the Shores*—the county-wide, multi-jurisdictional initiative in Manistee County that is making this region a “*Premier Destination for Universal Access to Water by people of all needs and abilities.*” It will link the eleven parks in the Onekama community in a systematic way, creating water access opportunities for a diverse population from young to old as well as for multiple uses from fishing, to boating, to shoreline recreation, to ecosystem education. Universal access will be the common link between the eleven parks on the shoreline of Portage Lake. The project will also serve to implement priorities of the new Onekama Community Master Plan as well as the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan.

For the purposes of this project, universal access is about the ability of all people to reach, enjoy, use and learn from the County's water resources. This includes people of all ages, gender and ethnic heritage and people that may have special needs encompassing their sensory, physical or cognitive capacities. Universal access is as much about children as it is about people with mobility issues or those in need of assistance to meet their daily living needs.

This proposal requests funds to provide site design and preliminary engineering to optimize coastal parks and water access points in the Onekama community that will meet diverse community needs and goals as well as to provide access, education and stewardship opportunities to the Portage Lake Watershed and Lake Michigan shoreline. Universal access will provide the framework in which these designs and plans will be developed. The project will be forward-looking and plan for the future use and enjoyment of these publicly owned land and water interfaces by all, including tourists, and incorporate a best-practice analysis to create a system of access that is truly world-class.

Project Goals Related to the Vision of Universal Access in Manistee County:

- Grant funds through the Michigan Coastal Management Program (MCMP) would support the prioritizing and preliminary design of universal access sites within the Onekama Community, consistent with the overarching vision and missions of the Explore the Shores initiative.
- Site identification and preliminary design would be used to develop financial resources to establish universal access destinations to water resources around four themes: water stewardship; the life cycles of native and non-native migratory fish species; “teach a person to fish;” and the importance of universal access to our quality of life and economic well being—within the goals and objectives of the new Onekama Community Master Plan and Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan.
- Use of the designs and plans from this project will enable the OCCAD Leadership Team to define and develop options for long-term access management and development, including endowments and inter-governmental agreements. The designs and preliminary engineering will position all of coastal parks for development through public

and private sources, as well as philanthropy, including volunteerism.

**Project Background:** In 2008, a committee was formed (partially funded through Great Lakes Fishery Trust funds awarded to the Alliance for Economic Success and an Easter Seals grant awarded to the Manistee County Community Foundation and in 2010 from the MCMP) to develop a plan and leverage resources to make Manistee County the premier destination for universal recreational access by people of all needs and abilities to the exceptional water resources in the county. This initiative was branded, “Explore the Shores” and it has established its goal to have a system of 50 universally accessible sites in Manistee County that will attract 1 million new visitors by 2020.

In 2006, GLFT funded the first sites in Explore the Shores initiative on Manistee Lake. The first site was the universally accessible fishing pier at Stronach on Manistee Lake which was opened in November, 2008. The second site (the universally accessible fishing pier at Arthur St.) is also located on Manistee Lake and is scheduled to be completed early 2010. Three other sites have received funding from the Great Lakes Fishery trust and work will begin in 2010 (Bar Lake Outlet on Lake Michigan, Rainbow Bend on the Manistee River, and the confluence of Bear Creek and the Manistee River). With nearly \$1 million in support from public and private organizations, thirteen sites in all have been developed in the Explore the Shores system that now or will soon provide outstanding support for people of all ages to fish for migratory salmon and trout and enjoy other recreational pursuits.

The partners on the “Explore the Shores” steering group includes: DNR Fisheries, U. S. Forest Service, Manistee County, City of Manistee, Manistee Convention and Visitors Bureau, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Manistee Area Public Schools, Kaleva Village Planning Commission, Manistee County Community Foundation, Manistee Alliance for Economic Success, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, Michigan Sea Grant, Manistee Charter Boat Association, Manistee County Sport Fishing Association and others.

**Site Background.** The village of Onekama and Onekama Township, share one of Michigan’s crown jewels, a high-quality inland lake connected to Lake Michigan, and are committed to developing a plan to protect and sustain their quality of life and economic well-being. This commitment has been demonstrated by their completion of the Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan in 2008 (See page 5 for further detail). This experience in community-driven planning and dedication to preserving its outstanding water resources was a major impetus for the two governing bodies to develop a groundbreaking Joint Master Plan (completed and approved in March, 2010). More detail about the Joint Master Plan can be found on page 5. The Village of Onekama and Onekama Township are now exploring resources to consider options for consolidating their governmental entities. If this should occur, it would be a first in Michigan’s history.

**Need:**

At a national, state and local level, the need to preserve, protect and develop access to our limited coastal resources is recognized as a high priority. While mindful of this overarching need and priority, this project also has areas of special focus.

Access for the Disabled. While this project seeks to provide access to all people, an important goal of the project is to provide access to those with special needs. This project will help ensure that everyone has exceptional universal access to enjoy, use and learn from the Onekama community’s Portage Lake and Lake Michigan coastlines.

One out of five U.S. Residents, 19 percent, report some level of disability according to the U. S. Census Bureau. 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. Between 1990 and 2000, the U. S. Census data shows the Onekama community's total population increased by nearly 20 percent while the increase in residents 65 years and older increased by 25 percent, and those between the ages of 45 to 54 increased by over 60 percent. By the year 2020, it is projected that 51 percent of the population of Manistee County will be age 65 or older. A great deal of the population growth of this area is attributed to people who retired to the area specifically for the enjoyment of the proximity to water recreation. These facts point to the increased need for universal access to water. . All of the sites included in this project will focus on universal design and best practice to ensure that the sites offer maximum opportunities to everyone.

Youth. A study survey conducted in 2005 in conjunction with Envision<sup>1</sup> Manistee County reflected youth appreciation and concern for the natural environment of the County, particularly its water resources. Youth identified recreational opportunities, including water access as their second greatest concern, only slightly behind their concern for future job opportunities in the County. Place-based education about water is an important component embedded into the science curriculum of the Onekama School District. Students have supplied over 13 years of water quality monitoring data for Portage Lake and the recently completed Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan. Teachers consistently report that student learning has been enhanced through connections to the community's water resources. Each of the project sites will be specifically designed and have interpretive resources to support school-based and community-based learning. School personnel will be on the Leadership Team for this project to ensure that sites are relevant to student learning experiences and to assist with curriculum integration.

Economic Development. There are a growing number of businesses that are focused on travel and travel plans for individuals with limitations. For example, the website "Wheelchair Accessible Travel Resources" identifies hundreds of travel services and tours focused solely on people who rely on wheelchairs for mobility.

In addition, recreational fishing for migratory sport fish is an important component of the Manistee County and Onekama community economy, as is general recreation and tourism. It is estimated that visitors to Manistee County enjoy nearly 1.4 million pleasure trip nights in the County, resulting in nearly \$75 million in direct expenditures. With regard to recreational fishing, it is estimated that nearly 50,000 salmon and steelhead are harvested annually in the Little and Big Manistee Rivers, in addition to fish harvested in the open Lake.

The significance of this becomes even greater in view of Manistee County's rate of unemployment and median household income that traditionally lag behind that of the other nine northwest Michigan counties and the State of Michigan.

This system of 11 coastal park access sites will be a catalyst for a tourism-based economic development strategy for the Onekama community as part of its efforts to promote the "Gateway to M-22 as the starting point for immense and diverse recreational and tourism opportunities in Michigan.

---

<sup>1</sup> Envision—Manistee County's first county-wide visioning initiative, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. This 16-month visioning effort, completed in 2006, involved over 700 citizens, organizations and businesses and a team of 12 volunteers who co-chaired work groups that unified the County around a set of visions and strategies for the future.

Readiness. Often times, when Requests for Proposals are released by funders, little time is available to develop site plans and accurate estimates for engineering and construction. Even when time is adequate, financial resources are often not available to contract with qualified professionals to complete the work in the timeframe. Funding from MCMP would enable the OCCAD Leadership Team to have the site plans and estimates in a state of readiness for possible grant opportunities. One of the components of this project is to also prioritize the Onekama community park sites for development. In this way, the community and the funder can be assured their financial resources are being applied to the park site most worthy of development and their funding would be used to support a universally accessible park system. Criteria for prioritizing would include:

- Physical attributes desirable to universal design (i.e. low slopes, close proximity to water)
- Need (number of existing facilities with similar characteristics)
- On-going maintenance considerations
- Cost of development
- Potential users
- Potential use (diversity of use should be created around the lake to include boating, kayaking, swimming, scenic viewing, fishing, walking, bird watching, etc.)
- Density of use

### **Essential Project Elements**

Steering and Collaboration. A leadership team will be formed to steer and provide collaboration for the project. The team will: 1) develop an RFP for a project consultant with technical engineering and architectural expertise necessary for the project; 2) identify possible access sites on public lands; 3) advise and assist in the design of universal access preliminary designs; 4) explore long-term resource development and maintenance options; 5) ensure the involvement and participation by all interests in the process; and 6) see that best practices are defined and considered in developing the sites plans and preliminary engineering.

The leadership team will be recruited to include representation from:

- Village of Onekama government
- Onekama Township Government
- Onekama Community Planning Commission
- The Portage Lake Forever Watershed Council
- The Alliance for Economic Success of Manistee County
- Onekama Public Schools
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- Manistee County Sport Fishing Association
- Manistee County Charter Boat Association
- Senior Center/Council on Aging
- U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Area business interests
- Michigan Easter Seals
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Environment
- Technical experts on universal design, including but not limited to resources that have been involved with the Kellogg Foundation's Access to Recreation project and the Universal Access Committee of the DNR-E

Technical Assistance. A consultant(s) will be selected to assist the leadership team in developing site concepts and designs, preliminary drawings and cost estimates for universal access sites. In doing so, the consultant will identify, assess and apply best practices for universal access and for developing linked systems of coastal access that accommodate diverse needs and populations.

The leadership team will assess options and develop recommendations and action steps for the long-term management and continued development of universally accessible sites on Manistee County's waterways. This will include consideration of endowments and intergovernmental agreements as tools for sustainability.

Resource Development. Engineering and construction designs are critical in the development of successful grant proposals. The outcomes of this project will enable community leaders to pursue public and private funding opportunities. It is anticipated that when the OCCAD project is completed, funding will be sought for access and/or related infrastructure and materials from:

- Great Lakes Fishery Trust, beginning with their fall 2011 access site grant cycle
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources, various programs and divisions
- U. S. Forest Service
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U. S. Department of Agriculture
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Manistee County Community Foundation
- Private Foundations
- Other public and private organizations that have resources to support: place-based education, curriculum development, universal access, land and water resource preservation, outdoor recreation and others.

**Alignment with local or regional land use plans, community master plans, development plans, recreation plans, zoning, etc.**

Alignment with MCMP. The OCCAD project fits with the grant priorities of the MCMP, including the MI Great Lakes Plan:

- It is focused on developing universal public access to the Great Lakes and other waters within the coastal boundary.
- It will build and rely upon collaboration among and between local governments as well as state and federal governments, nonprofit organizations and businesses.
- It has a distinct focus on sustainability.
- The project is as much about economic development as it is about recreation and education.

Alignment with the Explore the Shores (ES). In January of 2010, the *Explore the Shores* committee invited nominations from the public for sites to be included and/or developed in the *Explore the Shores* Initiative. The committee used a structured process to identify and rank potential development sites. Criteria included:

- Alignment with Envision Manistee County, Envision *Accessible* Manistee County and the State-approved County Recreation Plan;
- Potential for universal access;

- Enhancing stewardship through place based education;
- Access to migratory fish species;
- Recreational opportunities for residents and tourists;
- Opportunity for diverse recreational activities;
- Possibility for preserving, protecting and enhancing resources while minimizing environmental impacts;
- Consistency with other plans and programs;
- Opportunities to leverage other resources;
- Cost and complexity of long-term site management;
- Perceived support for the project;
- Perceived benefit v. cost; and anticipated cost.

The OCCAD project was among the highest ranked proposal. Consequently, this proposal was developed to secure funding.

Onekama Joint Master Plan. In 2008, the Village of Onekama and Onekama Township began a collaborative, community-driven process that resulted in a Joint Master Plan (approved March-2010) encompassing the village and township. The venture received funding from the Oleson Foundation, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality-Coastal Zone Management Program, and the Manistee County Community Foundation (through a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant). This collaboration in planning between a rural village and township is serving as a model for communities across Michigan and the United States.

The two local governments were committed to protecting and sustaining their quality of life and economic well-being through the Joint Master Plan. Objectives included:

1. To use a collaborative, community-driven process that unites the community around a vision, community goals and a Master Plan that will result in action and implementation to attain the vision and goals.
2. To provide the framework under which the community can a) increase commerce, b) plan for public services, c) preserve natural resources, d) build strong neighborhoods, and e) guide new development including informing local land use regulations and zoning ordinances.
3. To establish priorities for public and private funding.
4. To use the Joint Master Plan development process to develop capacities in the community and an infrastructure that will assist in managing the processes to develop and implement the Master Plan.
5. To become a model that utilizes economies of scale to provide for efficient management of resources and recognizes cross-jurisdictional issues and opportunities involving adjacent townships, Manistee County, the state of Michigan and others.

This plan champions further development and improvement of local parks and recreational opportunities to attract visitors and meet local community goals. *“Because of abundant outdoor recreation activities and scenic view sheds, the natural environment for recreational pursuits is a major economic base and income generator for the Onekama community. The plan goes on to state... “It is the intent of the plan that these areas (i.e. Village and Township owned parks and open spaces and properties owned by the State and Nature Conservancy) will remain as park and open space for the enjoyment of the Onekama Community.”*

Portage Lake Watershed Forever Plan (PLWFP). This Watershed plan was completed in 2008

through a community-driven process facilitated by Public Sector Consultants and enabled by funding from the Manistee County Community Foundation (through a W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant) and the Michigan Coastal Management Program. The PLWFP reflects stakeholders' belief that the health of the watershed is essential to their quality of life and economic well-being. During several community forums, participants were clear in identifying "parks and public access sites" as those locations that should be protected. In response to the question, "Imagine the Portage Lake watershed 50 years from now, what do you want it to look like?" one of the top two responses was "Enhanced and more parks and public access and trails."

Two goals of the PLWFP that are directly related to the OCCAD proposal are:

1. *Goal #3—Water-Based Recreation:* Protect and enhance the quality of and access to water-based opportunities within the Portage Lake Watershed for people of all ages and abilities.
2. *Goal #4—Natural Resources and Cultural Assets:* Invest in protection and enhancement of land-based natural resources and related cultural assets that provide recreational and educational benefits unique to the watershed and contribute to the quality of life and economic well-being of local residents while expanding the vacation experience of visitors.

Alignment with Envision Manistee County. The need for this project has its origin in Manistee County's first county-wide visioning initiative, Envision Manistee County that was supported in part by the MCMP. The 16-month visioning effort, completed in 2006, involved over 700 citizens, organizations and businesses and a team of 12 volunteers who co-chaired work groups that unified the County around a set of visions and strategies for the future.

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 the County. It also emphasized the need for stewardship to protect and preserve the County's water resources.

Alignment with Envision "Accessible" Manistee County. In 2007, the National Easter Seals organization, in partnership with their Michigan Chapter, selected Manistee County as one of two sites in the nation for a case study funded by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The goal of that study was to integrate the universal access missions of Easter Seals with a county-wide visioning initiative. The Easter Seals organizations worked in Manistee County for nearly one year with teams of diverse county participants to complete "Envision Accessible Manistee County."

That effort identified strategies and actions for blending universal access goals into the county-wide visioning initiative. Because universal access to the County's water resources was identified as a high priority, the Easter Seals organization made a grant of \$20,000 toward this project.

Alignment with Onekama Township Recreation Plan. This proposal is in alignment with the 2008 Recreation Plan approved by Onekama Township. This includes providing opportunities for utilizing beaches and accessing waters of Portage Lake and Lake Michigan, improving and enhancing marine facilities to attract Great Lakes, resident, and seasonal recreational boaters and fishermen, and promoting healthy living for residents and visitors by providing new facilities and enhancing existing facilities for enjoying other water or lake side sports.

Since 2006, several related strategies and planning efforts have underscored the importance of this project:

- Manistee County’s Recreation Plan—funded through the Community Foundation with a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation has been approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and recognizes the need to develop and ensure universal access to the County's waterways.
- The strategic plan for the Alliance for Economic Success, (AES) the economic development organization for Manistee County, specifically recognizes this project as being of significant economic benefit to the County, further differentiating the County as a destination of choice for visitors, families and others.
- The updated Master Plan for Manistee County—completed in 2010.

**Approvals Required for Implementation:**

There are no approvals required to carry out the work performed under this grant application. Permits and approvals will be required for access sites that are defined and subsequently developed as a result of this project.

**Detailed Budget:**

Project Component	MCMP	In-Kind	Total
Steering and collaboration	\$ 2,000.	\$15,000.	\$17,000.
Technical Assistance	\$40,000.	\$12,000.	\$52,000.
Project Administration	\$4,000.	\$ 2,000.	\$ 6,000.
Resource Development	\$4,000.	\$5,000.	\$ 9,000.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$50,000.</b>	<b>\$34,000.</b>	<b>\$84,000.</b>

This project is a site planning, design, and engineering project. The planning, design, and engineering are critical components needed to leverage resources for development. Proposed sources of funding can be found on page 3.

**Note:** MCMP funds would be expended from the point authorization is received in 2011 through March 31, 2012.

**Completion schedule on following page...**

<b>Project Component</b>	<b>Schedule for Completion</b>
<b>Steering and Collaboration</b>	
Recruitment of Leadership Team	<b>Jan—Feb 2011</b>
Development of RFP for Project Consultant	<b>Mar 2011</b>
Selection of Project Consultant	<b>Apr 2011</b>
Review by leadership team	<b>Mar 2011-Mar 2012</b>
<b>Technical Assistance</b>	
Identification and prioritizing of sites	<b>May—Sept 2011</b>
Engineering and construction design	<b>Oct 2011—2012</b>
<b>Resource Development</b>	
Development of funding sources for implementation	<b>Jan 2011-Mar 2012</b>
<b>Project Administration &amp; Final Reporting</b>	<b>Jan 2011-Mar 2012</b>