

THE MICHIGAN INLAND LAKES PARTNERSHIP

Governance Document

September 2011

Background

Michigan has more than 11,000 inland lakes. Most are high quality resources highly valued by society for recreation and as places to live. These cultural demands place significant stresses upon these ecosystems, often resulting in undesirable changes. How can these lakes be strategically managed to minimize undesirable changes and protect them for this and future generations?

The large number of lakes and the limited management funds and staff available calls for the use of innovative management approaches. One such approach is a partnership. A partnership is a management strategy to increase communication and collaboration among agencies and interest groups, promoting synergistic results and win/win conditions, while maximizing the use of limited funds and staff. A Partnership for Michigan's inland lakes greatly improves "our" collective efforts to protect this resource and insure we make the best use of a valuable natural asset.

Purpose of the Partnership

The purpose of the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership (Partnership) is to engage state and local agencies, Native American Nations, outreach institutions (universities and other educational institutions), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, industries and citizens in a collaborative effort to ensure the quality, sustainability and ecological diversity of lakes, while considering society's needs. The Partnership will promote communication and cooperation between partners, communities and citizens interested in the management of Michigan's inland lakes, educating leaders, and strengthening stewardship efforts.

The Partnership will support efforts to research, monitor, evaluate and regulate ecosystem impact sources, such as nutrient enrichment, exotic species, soil erosion, consumptive uses, overcrowding and others, in order to develop and promote proactive, sustainable and science-based management practices. The Partnership will encourage a system of voluntary and regulatory management approaches.

The Partnership will proactively address lake management needs. The value of lakes to society is rising rapidly; an enhanced investment of human and financial resources dedicated to lake management is appropriate. Cooperative development and support for legislation and budgets is key to increasing the scope and amount of public and private dollars and resources available for lake management.

Partnership Mission Statement

Promoting collaboration to advance stewardship of Michigan's inland lakes.

Partnership Structure

At this time, recognizing the autonomy and uniqueness of all partners, the Partnership has a democratic (shared leadership) organizational structure as opposed to a hierarchical structure with a lead organization. The democratic organizational structure will require greater commitment and solidarity from the partners to achieve a successful outcome, since all partners possess a leadership role. Therefore all partners are responsible to hold each other accountable to the meeting procedures, goals of the Partnership and working agreements.

It is the intent of the Partnership to be inclusive of all interested groups and individuals. To oversee the operation of the Partnership it is necessary to have a Coordinating Council (Council) of the Partnership. The purpose of the Council is to set goals and objectives as well as direct and facilitate the participation of all partners. The Council will be made up of governmental agencies, including Native American Nations, outreach institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) representing large stakeholder groups, to maximize representation and the opportunity for all partners to participate. All NGOs on the Council must have an internal process to receive input from and disseminate information to their stakeholders as well as a process to promote stakeholder participation.

Organizations and individuals not on the Council are an important element of the Partnership and shall be referred to as Associate Members. Associate Members may provide input to the Council and may participate in Partnership project teams/subcommittees and their names will appear on the Partnership list and website.

Partnership Duration

The initial duration of the Partnership was three-years. After this initial period and evaluation, the partners could choose either a closure or a renewal phase. . The Council voted on June 23, 2011 to renew and continue the Partnership. The Partnership is now an ongoing collaboration. The Partnership will have a Strategic Plan with a set time limit to guide Partnership efforts. At the end of each Strategic Plan the Council may assess the benefits and feasibility of continuing the Partnership.

Partnership Membership

A collaboration is strongest when all stakeholders have input to decisions and provide resources to the management effort. For the Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership, member participation is a self-selection process. State and local agencies, Native American

Nations, outreach institutions, NGOs, businesses, industries and citizens that support the purpose of the Partnership and can contribute to the goals and objectives of the Partnership as delineated in the Strategic Plan may participate in or leave the Partnership as circumstances require.

Besides the NGOs currently on the Council, other NGOs may petition to participate on the Council. NGOs wishing to join the Council should meet the following standards:

- Be a regional or statewide organization.
- Be a representative organization for multiple stakeholder groups.
- Have an interest in lakes and lake management.
- Have within the organization a process to promote stakeholder participation.
- Be able to contribute knowledge, money, equipment, political influence or implementation skills and resources to the implementation of the Partnership's goals and projects.

A NGO wishing to participate on the Council should submit a letter indicating how it meets the above standards to the Partnership Administrative Facilitator. The Facilitator will place the petition on the agenda of the next Council meeting for action. The Facilitator will then notify the NGO of the Council's action.

Small groups and individuals may participate in the Partnership through a representative organization or NGO representing their stakeholder type. They may also register with the Partnership Facilitator to directly receive all minutes and correspondences of the Partnership. The Council will hold one general Partnership meeting each year for all partners. All partners are encouraged to participate on Project Teams to which they can contribute to the success of the project. If a number of individual members join together to form a new stakeholder type, the Council may recognize it for participation on the Council. All partners recognize that the Partnership is not an informational/educational program, but a collaboration to promote quality management of Michigan's inland lakes. The Partnership has an expectation that all Partners, including those not on the Council, will contribute to the advancement of the Partnership's goals (see below).

Partner responsibilities – The expectation is that every partner, whether on the Council or not, will contribute something of value to the Partnership – knowledge, money, equipment, political influence or implementation skills and resources. Partners join the Partnership not only to learn or benefit from the Partnership, but to contribute to the work of the Partnership. All partners agree that the primary beneficiary of the Partnership is Michigan's inland lakes.

Partner benefits – The political, social and recognition benefits of the Partnership should fall approximately equally to all partners engaged in a project of the Partnership. In all reports, presentations and news releases all engaged partners will receive recognition.

Partner representation on the Council – Except for the State agencies, which have several Divisions with unique resource management responsibilities, each Council member organization will have one individual to represent the organization at regular Council meetings. In the event that this individual cannot attend a meeting, an alternate may attend. Alternates are encouraged to attend Council meetings along with the organizational representative, but should be fully briefed by the representative before attending any meetings as the sole representative. Alternates may participate in Council discussions but each Council member organization has only one vote.

It is the responsibility of the representatives on the Council to communicate with the Partnership Facilitator for a summary of any missed meeting, if they need information about the meeting before the summary is distributed.

It is expected that individuals serving on the Council will be representing the organizations to which they belong. However, commitments given by the representative will NOT be assumed to be an official commitment of the organization unless specifically stated to be so.

It is expected that members of the Council will attend 75 percent of the Council meetings either in-person, electronically, or by alternate and be present for at least 51 percent of the meeting. Because participation is fundamental to the success of a partnership, any Council partner not fulfilling this obligation will be notified of the intent to move their participation to that of Associate Membership. The partner may submit a plan to the Council for fulfilling its participation obligation. Failure to submit a plan or execute a submitted plan will result in the partner being transferred to Associate Member by vote of the Council. The Council may consider extenuating circumstances. A partner may reapply for membership on the Council with an application with the required application information and a plan for fulfilling the attendance expectation.

Ground Rules

In order to have an efficient and effective process, all Partnership representatives and alternates agree to the following basic ground rules:

1. Treat each other with respect at all times.
2. Put personal agendas aside in the interest of a successful Partnership, and work as a team player and share all relevant information.
3. Truly listen to everyone and ask if we don't understand.
4. Be open about disagreements, but be honest and tactful, and focus on the issue, not the person.
5. Everyone will participate in discussions but no one will dominate; be concise and not repetitive, and try to limit statements to a few minutes.

6. Actively look for solutions that promote win/win conditions and synergistic results.
7. Commit to issues in which we have an interest and follow through on the commitment.
8. Follow through on assignments and commitments in a timely manner.

Meeting Procedures

Facilitator – Given the number and diversity of organizations involved in the Partnership, it is necessary to have an Administrative Facilitator. The responsibility of the Facilitator is to guide the Council and general Partnership meetings, oversee the production and management of the meeting agenda, production of a written summary of the meetings, and help the partners reach consensus. At the end of each meeting, the partners will develop a tentative agenda for the following meeting. After each meeting, the Facilitator will have produced a summary of the meeting including the following: an attendance record, a summary of actions taken, written minority opinions submitted, action items, issues requiring a vote at an upcoming meeting, and other information pertaining to the deliberations. The Facilitator will distribute the meeting summary and the next meeting's agenda to all partners including those not on the Council.

The Facilitator will maintain a roster listing the names and contact information for all partners. The Facilitator also may provide the partners with additional information to enhance the progress of meetings and decision-making, as appropriate.

Decision Making Process

Partners proposing specific actions from the Partnership are encouraged to develop a briefing statement that concisely summarizes the proposal and the argument for Partnership support (see Appendix A for an example). This briefing statement should be provided to the Facilitator for distribution to the Partners at least one week prior to the next meeting.

The Partnership will operate primarily by consensus and decisions will be made only with concurrence of all members represented at the meeting. Consensus prevents the “tyranny of the majority”, and allows building of trust and the sharing of information. Consensus does not necessarily mean that everyone is equally pleased with the decision, but all accept that the decision is the best at that time.

The Partnership will employ “decision rule making” at any time to select a decision process other than consensus. Depending upon the circumstances the Partnership may use consensus, consensus minus one, supermajority, simple majority or some other process for decision making including electronic voting.

In any significant collaborative effort there is often the need to make many minor and/or repetitive decisions. To address these issues the Council may use “decision rule making” to suspend normal decision making procedures including the opportunity for absentee voting and take immediate action on an issue.

When using consensus decision-making, the Partnership will use a process known as “degrees of agreement” to arrive at consensus. The process uses a voting scale, which allows partners to clearly communicate their perspective on the issue and assess the agreement that exists. For the Partnership, the following five-point scale will be used:

1. Endorsement (I like it),
2. Endorsement with minor objections (I basically like it),
3. Agreement (I can live with it),
4. Stand aside (I don’t like it, but will not hold up or participate), and
5. Block (I veto it)

The Facilitator will measure the partners’ consensus on a given proposal by polling the partners present. The levels of consensus are:

- Consensus – all partners present rate the proposal as a 1, 2, or 3.
- Consensus with major reservations – all partners present rate the proposal as a 1, 2, or 3, except at least one partner rates it as a 4.
- No consensus – any partner present rates the proposal as a 5.

The number of partners standing for or against any proposal will not be reported.

Absentee Voting

In order to include as many Partners as possible in the decision making process, the Partnership will take a number of steps to communicate issues and include the votes of Partners unable to attend meetings where voting occurs. If a vote is expected at an upcoming meeting, the Facilitator will inform all Partners prior to the meeting, and those Partners unable to attend the vote in person should provide their vote to the Facilitator before the meeting. If an unexpected vote takes place at a meeting, the outcome of the vote will be included in the meeting minutes, and Partners absent from the meeting may communicate their vote to the Facilitator within two weeks after the missed meeting. Absentee votes will be communicated to the Partnership no later than at the next meeting, and any change in the Partnership’s decision based on absentee votes will be addressed at that time. Minority opinion rules (see below) apply to absentee votes.

Minority Opinion

To promote clarity and understanding any partner who rates a proposed action as a 4 may specify their dissent in a written statement of 500 words or less for inclusion

in the meeting summary. If any partner rates a proposed action as a 5, and the issue is not resolved and consensus reached during the meeting, that partner must specify their dissent in a written statement of 500 words or less for inclusion in the meeting summary. The written statement will help all the partners delineate the concerns and identify options, which will facilitate consensus-building at the next meeting.

Meeting Schedule

The Council will attempt to meet at least quarterly at times and locations of its choosing. One of the quarterly meetings will be a general meeting of all partners.

Email

Distribution of meeting agendas and summaries and other materials to partners will be by email whenever possible. Partners should make an effort to bring their own hard copies of meeting materials to meetings, in order to minimize costs to the Partnership.

Strategic Plan

The Partnership, led by the Council, will develop a Strategic Plan (Plan). The Plan will be a flexible, “living” guidance document providing direction and structure to the Partnership’s efforts. It will not be used as a standard to judge or compel the performance of any partner. Projects undertaken by the Partnership should have unique value. They should be projects that can’t be done by individual partners, but be high synergy projects with a high level of interest among multiple partners.

Project Teams

One or more Council members will be identified to lead each project identified in the Plan. Additional partners should make significant contributions to the completion of the project. The partner(s) may form a Project Team to facilitate implementation. Partners not on the Council are encouraged to participate on Project Teams.

Evaluation of the Partnership

The Partnership will conduct an evaluation of the Partnership’s progress toward goals described in the Strategic Plan, as well as the Plan itself, this Governance Document, and the collaborative process. The evaluation will consider the following:

Progress Toward Goals

- Have Michigan’s inland lakes benefitted from Partnership activities?

- Has the Partnership reached, or made progress toward, the goals described in the Plan?
- What obstacles were encountered?
- Are the benefits to lakes that are directly attributable to the Partnership great enough to continue the Partnership?

Collaborative Processes

- Did Partners feel that they benefitted from collaborating in the Partnership? In what way?
- Does the structure of the Partnership encourage collaboration? If not, how could it be improved?
- What communication and meeting processes were successful? What caused problems?
- Are there potential Partners that could contribute to the Partnership's success that are not currently involved? How can we encourage their participation?

Governance Document

- Is the structure of the Partnership effective?
- Did all Partners feel engaged to their satisfaction?
- Are the meeting and decision-making processes efficient and effective?
- Did the Governance Document help the Partnership protect Michigan lakes?
- What problems were encountered using this Plan, and how were they addressed?

Strategic Plan

- What tasks in the Plan are complete? Incomplete?
- Did the Plan help the Partnership protect Michigan lakes?
- What problems were encountered using this Plan, and how were they addressed?
- Are new issues that should become Partnership goals? Or additional performance measures under existing goals?

Following this detailed evaluation, the structure of the Partnership, Governance Document, and Strategic Plan will be updated to reflect the evaluation results.

There will be a brief annual review. This annual review should be part of the first Council meeting of the calendar year. The annual review will evaluate the goals and projects in the Plan for appropriateness, and identify successes for celebration and failures or problems in order to learn from them. Annual reviews may be used to make adjustments in the Plan or the Partnership's processes.

Changes

Changes to this governing document can be made at any meeting of the Partnership by a consensus procedure.

Appendix A: Example Issue Briefing Statement

Issue Statement
Michigan Inland Lakes Partnership
September 2008
Prepared by: The Nature Conservancy

Type of Action: Decision (Note: this could also be “discussion” or “information only”)

Suggested Time Frame: 20 minutes

Labeled Decision Style: Degrees of Agreement per Governance document

Sideboards needed: A decision must be made on this issue to better communicate our intentions with the entire partnership. (Note: many times sideboards are not needed. A good example of a sideboard could also be that a decision to move forward will require funding to complete)

Issue: Initial Strategic plan development included Goals and Objectives that were deemed appropriate in the first meeting, but not included in the final selection in the second meeting. Both meetings involved different Council members. It would be beneficial to revisit this issue now that our Governance document is complete, and that we understand the consensus process and our opportunity for input.

Background: At the January 2008 meeting the membership present conducted an initial exercise to identify possible goals and issues for the Partnership to address. This was a very good start and perhaps led to a draft list that was not only comprehensive but ambitious. In April additional work was conducted by those present to further define and agree upon a reasonable list of Goals and objectives. Four separate Goals and 10 objectives total within those Goals were selected by the membership present to move forward.

Additional objectives or performance measures were noted in the Strategic plan that needs to be considered. These issues were important with the membership in January, but not as important with the membership in April, perhaps due to different members being present at the two meetings. Now that the Partnerships Governance document is completed, the Council should formally discuss and adopt the Goals and objectives that the Partnership will commit to working on in the three year trial period.

Option 1: The Council will live with the 4 Goals and 10 Objectives discussed in April and June, 2008 as the final list in the Strategic Plan.

Option 2: The Council will amend the 4 Goals and 10 Objectives discussed in April and June, 2008 by:

- Adding as described any of the performance measures or objectives described as in need of consideration in the June draft Strategic Plan.

Option 3: The Council will amend the 4 Goals and 10 Objectives discussed in April and June, 2008 by:

- Deleting select Goals or Objectives as described in the notes.

Decision: