

Collaborative Planning and Governance

DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR GREAT LAKES COASTAL WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS FOR WATERFOWL HUNTING, BIRD WATCHING, AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Michigan Sea Grant, Michigan State University and Michigan Department of Natural Resources



A sign welcomes duck hunters near the Harsens Island Ferry (photo: MDNR), Tawas Birdwatching Festival (photo: MI SG), A young duck hunter sets a decoy (photo: MDNR).

CORE QUESTIONS:

- How do coastal wildlife management area stakeholders (e.g., waterfowl hunters, bird watchers, and local community leaders) differ in their attitudes, preferences, and values?
- How do coastal communities benefit from economic activity generated by outdoor recreation at wildlife management areas?
- What are the opportunities for coordinated goals and action plans for conservation and management of coastal wildlife management areas and community development?

OVERVIEW

Great Lakes coastal wildlife management areas are generally purchased and managed with funds from hunting licenses, however these areas are also destinations for non-hunting recreation (e.g., bird and other wildlife watching, fishing, paddling, hiking, etc.). Coastal communities benefit from these recreational visits, yet little research has been done to understand how non-hunters may value these wildlife areas, their preferences and importance in communities. If trends of increasing non-hunting recreational users and decreasing waterfowl hunters continue, it is unclear how the current model of conservation and livelihoods of coastal communities will be impacted by the changing nature of investments in wildlife management.

The livelihood of coastal communities and sustainability of wildlife resources are interconnected and both could benefit from collaborative planning, however, no formal assessment of community planning needs and opportunities exist for evaluating approaches for collaborative governance. From 2017 to 2021, we will evaluate characteristics, stewardship motivations, and economic contributions of diverse users of coastal wildlife

management areas, value key ecosystem services provided by these areas, and assess needs and opportunities for collaborative governance of wildlife resources and coastal community development.

OBJECTIVES

This research project will use a combination of quantitative (e.g., surveys, economic input-output analysis), qualitative (e.g., focus groups, interviews), and other social science methods to address the following objectives on six coastal state and federal wildlife management areas from Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay to western Lake Erie. Stakeholder engagement will be done throughout the project to address these objectives:

- Compare demographics, attitudes, preferences, and values of waterfowl hunters, bird watchers and other key outdoor recreationists, and local community leaders for stewardship and management of the six coastal wildlife management areas, and to document the economic impact of visitor uses of these areas.

- Determine human benefits and stakeholder values of key ecosystem services (e.g., floodwater storage, shoreline protection, human-nature connection, etc.) resulting from management of state and federal coastal wetland areas.
- Analyze community planning processes, needs, and opportunities relative to interdependence on wildlife management areas along Great Lakes coasts as a hub for ecological and economic activity.
- Determine potential collective goals across a landscape of publicly and privately owned lands for wildlife management, and associated coordinated action planning to achieve goals for conservation and community development along Great Lakes coasts.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Investigators expect the project will contribute to advancing knowledge in theory, methods, policy, and practice. Some examples include:

- Provide a better understanding of the stakeholders associated with coastal wildlife management areas.
- Understand how coastal wildlife management areas can be hubs for ecological and economic activity.
- Increase collaboration of wildlife management areas and local communities through engagement with local governments and incorporation of wildlife management areas into community planning.
- Inform community and stakeholder engagement processes.
- Provide best practices for implementation of collaborative planning and governance.
- Inform the evolving model of wildlife management in North America and build on established collaborative governance principles.



LOCATIONS

The project will focus on 6 state and federally owned and managed aquatic-based coastal wetland sites from Lake Huron's Saginaw Bay south to western Lake Erie. Michigan DNR lands will include 5 managed waterfowl hunting areas: Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area (SWA), Fish Point SWA, Shiawassee River State Game Area (SGA), St. Clair Flats SWA-Harsens Island Unit, and Pointe Mouillee SGA. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) land will include the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

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