



CHRIS ABELE, MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
JOHN DARGLE, JR., DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

Date: August 30, 2016

To: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman, County Board of Supervisors

From: John Dargle, Jr., CPRP, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture (DPRC)

Subject: **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Funds (ACTION)**

POLICY

Authorization for the DPRC to accept Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding for Milwaukee County Park System improvement projects.

BACKGROUND

The GLRI was launched in 2010 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to accelerate efforts to protect and restore the Great Lakes, the largest system of fresh surface water in the world. Working through GLRI Action Plans, Federal agencies use GLRI resources to strategically target the biggest threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem and to accelerate progress toward long term goals. A major focus has been on cleaning up Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOC).

The U.S.-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (Annex 1 of the 2012 Protocol) defines AOCs as "geographic areas designated by the Parties where significant impairment of beneficial uses has occurred as a result of human activities at the local level." An impairment of beneficial uses means a change in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the Great Lakes system. Examples of beneficial use impairments (BUIs) include degraded fish and wildlife populations, restrictions on drinking water consumption or taste and odor problems, and beach closings.

There are 27 U.S. AOCs in the Great Lakes basin, including the Milwaukee Estuary AOC. The EPA provides direct funding to states for implementing the AOC program. The state then distributes those funds to local groups to implement the AOC program. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is tasked with implementing the AOC in Wisconsin. In performance of that role, the DNR has taken the initiative to apply for GLRI Noncompetitive AOC funds on behalf of the DPRC for the following projects:

South Shore Park Water Quality Improvements (\$350,000)

Improvements to the South Shore Park beach and water quality have been identified as important projects to address the Beach Closings/Recreational Restrictions BUI in the Milwaukee Estuary AOC. The 1.7 acre South Shore Park Beach regularly ranks among the worst in the nation in water quality testing and closures. The DNR has secured \$350,000 to hire a qualified consultant to perform planning, design, bidding and permitting services to study and make recommendations that address beach-related BUIs at the park. The goal of the project is a reduction in the frequency of beach closings there. The beach study would complement efforts already underway by the DPRC to improve aging facilities, repair failing infrastructure and update the design of the South Shore Park waterfront area to better accommodate facility users. The latter effort will also improve water quality by making extensive use of green infrastructure best management practices.

Kletzsch Park Dam Fish Passage (\$550,000)

Kletzsch Park Dam Fish Passage has been identified in the Remedial Action Plan for the Milwaukee Estuary AOC as a necessary fish and wildlife habitat restoration project. The DPRC is proposing that a fishway be constructed that would re-establish aquatic species connectivity in the Milwaukee River by removing the last barrier to the movement of native warm-water fish species (including but not limited to lake sturgeon, walleye, northern pike and other important game and non-game fish) between Lake Michigan, the Milwaukee River Estuary, 25 miles of river, 29 miles of tributary and 2,400 acres of wetlands upstream of the dam.

Although the dam is in generally good condition, it will be undergoing planned repairs in response to minor operational deficiencies identified during a 2013 DNR site inspection. In addition, the DPRC is planning to reconstruct the dam overlook in order to provide improved public access to the dam and to the river, specifically addressing limited access for physically disabled individuals. The coincident timing of the planned dam repairs and the overlook reconstruction presents a unique, limited opportunity to also construct fish passage. This is due to the fact that the shoreline will only need to be disturbed once, and there shouldn't be redundant construction/mobilization costs.

The proposed scope for the requested funding is to design and construct the fish passage structure. The total estimated cost for the fish passage is \$750,000. The DPRC has been awarded \$200,000 by the Fund for Lake Michigan for the project. Hence, with the \$550,000 in GLRI funding, the County's contribution to the project will consist of staff time related to project management and oversight.

Little Menomonee River Corridor Habitat Restoration (\$500,000)

Habitat restoration within the Little Menomonee River Corridor has been identified in the Remedial Action Plan for the Milwaukee Estuary AOC as a necessary fish and wildlife habitat restoration project. The DPRC along with the DNR, proposes to prepare restoration plans for the Little Menomonee River Corridor. This 631.5 acre, 6 mile corridor, stretching from Brown Deer Road to the confluence with the Menomonee River, is owned almost entirely by Milwaukee County.

The proposed scope for the requested funding is to plan the habitat improvements for the entire corridor. At minimum, the work product will be a concept plan and cost

estimate for the improvements. It will also include a comprehensive ecological restoration and management plan for the corridor based on existing DPRC Ecological Restoration and Management Plan models. The outcome of this planning will be a product that could move the project to an implementation stage (i.e. a concept plan that could be used to produce final construction plans, if needed, with subsequent construction and/or a finalized management plan that directs restoration activities).

To accomplish the proposed work, the County will hire a qualified consultant to perform design, bidding, permitting, and construction services on its behalf. DPRC would also undertake a sizable portion of the planning directly, in coordination with DNR. The concepts will be submitted for vetting to USEPA to ensure that any practices would be consistent with the approved remedial actions on site.

RECOMMENDATION

The DPRC recommends that it be authorized and directed to enter into an agreement with the DNR to accept the offered GLRI funds and implement the three park improvement projects identified above.

Prepared by: Bill Waldron, Natural Resources Specialist, DPRC

Approved by:


John Dargle, Jr., CPRP, Director

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