

October 18, 2023

Dear Governor's Council on Minnesota's Coastal Program,

I love autumn!

There's just something about the season – brilliantly colored leaves, crisp air, cozy sweaters, and lots of good eats (can you say caramel apples... yum!)

It's also special because it's the time of year when I get together with my Great Lakes and national colleagues at two meetings: the Great Lakes Regional Meeting of Coastal Management Programs and Reserves and the Coastal States Organization in-state meeting. The learning and networking opportunities are exceptional. Both truly fill my soul and reinvigorate me for the year ahead.

There's also a chance at the meetings to tout the program's successes over the year. I could have gone on and on, but had to limit myself this year to the following:

***Our work to create healthy coastal ecosystems that anyone can use and enjoy.***

- We are working with DNR Fisheries on their existing and planned benthic habitat data collection and management. With NOAA Office for Coast Survey coming to the area, it's the perfect time to ensure knowledge sharing on everything from data formats and collection to documentation and methodologies.
- New 3DEP (3D Elevation Program) lidar is available for the Coastal Program area. It was the subject of three recent trainings hosted by the Coastal Program.
- The St. Louis River now has a national water trail, complete with maps and an advisory council.
- The Duluth Urban Watershed Area Committee kicked off work to identify options for updating local codes and ordinances affecting water resources and their ecosystems.
- With Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding, the Coastal Program is designing living shorelines at a wayside rest, public water access site and a state park.
- The City of Grand Marais has a new public water access thanks to contributions from federal, state, and local sources.

***Our work to ensure coastal communities can adapt to change and bounce back better when disaster strikes.***

- We used the 2019 Great Lakes Hardened Shoreline Classification scheme to map hardened shorelines along the entire 189 miles of Minnesota's coast.
- Draft updated coastal erosion hazard maps are available for the 10 communities that make up the North Shore Management Board.
- We hosted one tailored training on risk communication.

- We are coordinating the Minnesota Point Floodplain Challenge team for the Strengthening Coastal Community Resilience in the Great Lakes project. Our thanks to ASFPM (Association of State Floodplain Managers) and their partners for selecting us to be one of four sites.
- Silver Bay has a new stormwater management plan.
- We are working with four counties, three Tribes and one local planning agency on efforts to build resilience capacity across the region.

Again, this is only a sampling of what we accomplished through our technical assistance and pass-through grants. I hope you feel as proud as I do of what this program accomplishes!

Now, we're getting ready for a new year and new accomplishments. We're in some unfamiliar territory though as we teeter around meeting quorum. To ensure we're not in the same position as we were this month, **I'm asking each of you to get out your calendars and put a hold on January 18 (whole day)**. This is our next scheduled meeting. At that meeting, we will discuss the March meeting, tentatively set for March 27. Given the responses to the survey, it sounds like the group prefers Thursdays. Let's look at changing if it helps ensure we have a healthy attendance.

I also invite you to reach out with suggestions for meeting formats and length. If you think it's better to have two, two-hour meetings instead of one four hour one, tell us. If multiple repeated opportunities for virtual discussion makes more sense to you, let us know. There are lots of possibilities! Just because we've done it one way doesn't mean we have to always do it that way. It might be time to get creative.

Great things happen when we come together! Here's to many more opportunities, and the tremendous things that come out of it!

Best,  
Amber Westerbur  
Program Manager, Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program