



TO: Menasha Common Council
FROM: Kara Homan, AICP, Principal Planner
DATE: July 12, 2012

RE: Correspondence from Calumet County Seeking Letter of Support for DNR Lake Management Grant

Attached, please find correspondence and supporting materials from Julie Schmelzer, Director of the Calumet County Resource Management Department pertaining to a multi-county grant application for a WDNR Lake Management Grant to evaluate the best organizational structure to manage the Lake Winnebago System.

It is the intent of the Community Development department to write a letter of support on behalf of the City for the following reasons:

- The importance of the Lake Winnebago System to Menasha's recreational and economic opportunities, public health and property values.
- The current lack of a coordinated approach to managing water quality (including algae management & drinking water), fishing, lake levels/buoys, invasive species, etc.
- The current lack of information as to the best way to manage the Lake Winnebago System in a coordinated fashion.
- The proposed grant application is consistent with numerous goals and objectives found through the City's official Year 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

Don Merkes

From: Julie Schmelzer [Schmelzer.Julie@co.calumet.wi.us]
Sent: Tuesday, July 10, 2012 12:53 PM
To: Don Merkes; Stan Sevenich
Attachments: Grant App Text 070612.doc; Project Area Boundaries.pdf; Appendix A.doc; Appendix B.doc

Dear Mayor Merkes and Council President Sevenich,

I am writing about a matter I hope the City of Menasha will find extremely important to support. The project involves the State's largest inland lake: an annual fishing industry of \$300 million, drinking water for many of our residents, sufficient water quantity for our businesses in the Lake Winnebago region, and the ability to provide quality recreational assets as an integral part of the City's quality of life.

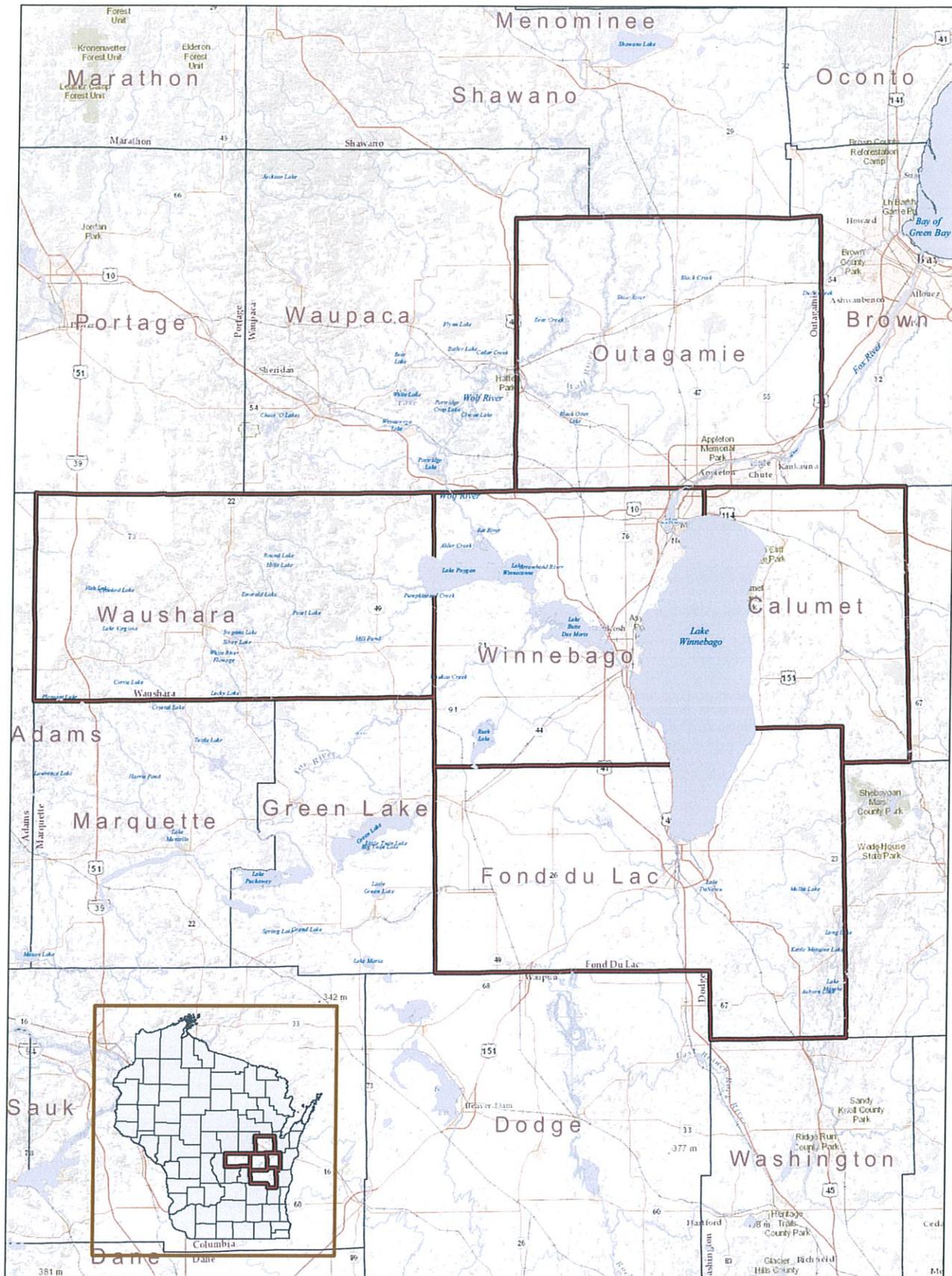
This project should be of further importance in that a coordinated approach to the Lake Winnebago System can help with pollutant trading, helping reduce costly water filtration expenses, which in turn reduce user rates, thereby making the ability to do business in Menasha more appealing.

For the past several years several staff people have been meeting to discuss what, if any, type of management entity could exist on the Lake Winnebago System to address the myriad of issues the System encounters. In January staff started meeting with all of the County Executives/Administrators to see if they would support a grant application to try and address the issues cohesively. The Executives/Administrators agreed to apply for a planning grant to have an outside consultant tell us what organizational entity would best fit our needs (due to the multi-jurisdictional complexity, and reality there is not much support for a taxing entity, we needed someone who is familiar with unique organizational structures, and can offer us some creative recommendations on how best to organize and fund such an effort).

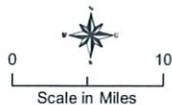
Calumet County is applying for a large scale lake management grant from the DNR. The application is on behalf of 5 counties - Waushara, Winnebago, Fond du Lac, Outagamie, and Calumet - to explore the possibility of creating a central authority (like a lake 'alliance', 'partnership', 'commission' or lake 'district'--although the latter two haven't been very popular at this point) for Lake Winnebago and its pool lakes. The organization would oversee things to make sure we are all coordinating and not duplicating services or fees, and, serve as an arm to get grant monies for things of common interest, like hovercraft or dredging perhaps. The application is attempting to be extremely comprehensive incorporating several issues such as economic development, tourism, nutrient management/soil erosion/water quality, invasive species, navigation safety, uniform codes, launch fees, lake levels, bouys, and health issues (drinking water, blue-green algae coordination) throughout Lake Winnebago region.

At this stage of the project, we are hoping to get letters of support from regional stakeholders, such as the cities directly impacted by this project. If possible could you submit a letter of support for this grant application? Do we need to talk about this? If so we should talk soon since the grant application deadline is August 1. Letters would need to be addressed to myself. Attached is a very preliminary draft of the project which can provide you with more information.

Julie A. Schmelzer, Director
Resource Management Department
Calumet County, WI
www.co.calumet.wi.us



Section VI.A.3 : Lake Winnebago System
Project Area Boundaries



Map Prepared 06/2012 by
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- Hydro Features
- Calumet County
- Fond du Lac County
- Outagamie County
- Waushara County
- Winnebago County

Sources: 2012 MCO boundaries & 2010 24k Hydro - WDNR
Base layers: USGS Topo Maps via www.arcgis.com

This data was created for use by the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission Geographic Information Systems Department. Any other use application of this information is the responsibility of the user and such use is not to be held against the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. No liability is assumed for any use other than for East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission business.

This map shows the approximate relative location of property boundaries but was not prepared by a professional land surveyor. This map is provided for informational purposes only and may not be sufficient or appropriate for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.

VI.A.7.a. Project Area

This project is to define the best lake management entity, and prioritize issues for action, for the Lake Winnebago System. The System includes the State's largest inland lake, Lake Winnebago, and Little Lake Butte des Morts, Lake Butte des Morts, Lake Winneconne, Lake Poygan, parts of the Upper Fox River, Lower Fox River, and Wolf River.

This project involves, initially, four counties adjacent to the Lake Winnebago System, one county heavily reliant on the System for its drinking water, and the System itself. As action items are developed, other counties within the watershed will need to be involved, especially with matters such as pollutant trading, nutrient management and other issues affecting water quality.

The Lake Winnebago System is 258 square miles in lake surface area--it is almost 1/5 of Wisconsin's total lake area. It covers 167,000 acres. It has 160 miles of shoreline in four counties (the four counties are part of the project--Calumet, Fond du Lac, Waushara and Winnebago). Bordering its shores are four cities, four villages and 20 towns. A fifth county is part of the project area as well in that almost 75,000 of the county residents rely on Lake Winnebago for their drinking water. Due to the volume of consumers of the lake water, this fifth county has been included in this project (Outagamie). The county is connected to the System via the Upper Fox River.

The five counties comprise 522,000 persons and covers 2737 acres of land, much of which is in the Lake Winnebago watershed.

VI.A.7.b. Problem to be Addressed by Project

For decades plans have been developed and strategies implemented to address the environmental facets of the Lake Winnebago System. Some of these efforts have been completed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources through their fisheries program or by means of the *Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan*, and, a substantial amount of work accomplished by the area County Land and Water Conservation Departments. Other county departments, some municipalities, and nonprofit organizations have also worked at addressing environmental and water quality issues, but the efforts have been fragmented and not uniform.

As more regulations or programs affecting the environment or economy go into effect, each county must address the required changes. A cohesive approach would ensure programs are implemented consistently throughout the System to provide maximum benefit to the environment and economy, avoid duplication of services, and prove to be more cost effective.

A coordinated approach to the System is needed in several areas, such as safe and convenient navigation, public health and safety (e.g Blue Green Algae alerts), aquatic invasive species education and control, aquatic plant management, citizen action activities, uniform zoning codes, shoreland restoration, manure management, lake levels,

emergency service and complaint mitigation, launch fees, ice regulations, trails around the System, and drinking water issues.

A cohesive approach to manure management and erosion control in the five counties and the watershed can help with water quality, and reduce costs for water utilities. Drinking water is becoming more of an issue as more municipalities use water from the System as their drinking source. Approximately 200,000 residents use water from the System for their drinking water; another 42,000 are scheduled to use this source as well. Supply becomes an issue in addition to residential needs. Many businesses, especially manufacturing, need a substantial water supply for production.

Test results from late June revealed 95 million Blue Green Algae cells per ml. The World Health Organization urges caution above 20,000 cells per ml. The same testing revealed E. coli was at 2419 colony forming units (cfu) per 100 ml. The level that prompts beach closing is 235 cfu/100 ml. Even further tests from the same period reveal a drastic drop in dissolved oxygen occurring in Lake Winnebago. Concerns over phosphorous leaching from the bed, plant destruction, and fish kills are imminent. The need to address these issues, as well as warn the public, should be the function of a lake management entity and its partners.

Aside from the environmental issues, there are other needs for a coordinated management approach to the Winnebago System to avoid duplication of efforts and to maximize on the economic development potential of the System and five counties. For example, a 2007 report revealed the economic impact of angling on the Lake Winnebago System accounted for \$234 million annually and 4300 jobs. To protect that economic engine, not only do the fisheries need protection, but consideration needs to be given to the management of aquatic plants, and, adjacent land uses used by anglers need cohesive marketing to maximize the angling industry.

Currently two of the five counties partner on tourism promotions for the System, while other counties market in a fragmented approach. A universal marketing strategy can result in a greater economic impact for the tourism related businesses in the region.

One outcome of this project will be a recommendation on a specific type of management entity for the Lake Winnebago System so efforts are uniform, cost-effective, and do not sacrifice environmental protection for the sake of other benefits. A management entity will oversee activities making sure efforts don't cancel the benefits of each other.

A detailed list of problems to be addressed by a lake management entity are listed below. This preliminary list summarizes issues previously identified in plans, surveys, and from past meetings. It is expected other issues exist which have not been identified herein. This project should help identify more issues via surveys, focus groups and public meetings. These 'problems' are viewed as 'opportunities' to improve the System.

Problems/Opportunities:

Need to Provide for Safe, Convenient Navigation

- Upgrade buoy placement and markings to be consistent with Coast Guard standards
- Develop and implement a system-wide boat launch fee and sticker system
- Pursue grants to improve and maintain boat launches
- Develop a system to minimize and resolve user conflicts
- Work with local governments and DNR to determine the need for adding or removing no-wake zones
- Produce and distribute navigation maps
- Sponsor boating safety classes
- Coordinate, sponsor, and/or administer law enforcement boat patrols
- Coordinate Sheriff services and equipment throughout the System
- Uniform noise and speed regulations during winter months
- Uniform harbor/channel lighting during ice conditions

Need to Address Public Health and Safety Issues

- Coordinate hazardous Blue Green Algae (BGA) monitoring/surveillance
- Coordinate BGA notification of local health departments and veterinarians
- Coordinate effective dissemination of BGA educational materials
- Promote protection of groundwater resources
- Coordinate bacteriological monitoring of beaches
- Water quality needs to be addressed more extensively as more consumers are using the System for their drinking water (clean water will also save the utilities money and reduce the rising expenses to filter the water)
- Discussion of whether public sewer and water should be installed around the System to eliminate improper wells and failing private on-site wastewater treatment systems

Water Resource Management Coordination

- Pursue grant funding for water resource and habitat enhancement projects
- Coordinate and cooperate with DNR and user groups on the development and implementation of water quality and habitat enhancement projects
- Advocate for clean water by coordinating and sponsoring information and education activities on stormwater management, reduction of runoff pollution, establishment of shoreline buffers, low oxygen levels, protection of aquatic habitat, etc.
- Work with local non-governmental organizations, schools, and universities to sponsor periodic Lake Winnebago System conferences
- Address lake level concerns

Comprehensive Coordination of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Activities

- Coordinate boat inspection and education personnel for the 50+ boat landings on the lakes
- Provide consistent AIS signage at boat landings advising boaters of AIS laws and exclusion practices
- Coordinate volunteer surveillance monitoring for AIS
- Provide information and education coordination for anglers, boaters, schools, boater safety classes, marine contractors, etc.

- Development and/or management of AIS decontamination sites at or near boat launches
- Create a lead Coordinator vs. a county by county approach to AIS

System-wide Aquatic Plant Management Coordination

- Development of a system-wide aquatic plant management plan
- Purchase and operation of aquatic plant harvesters for maintaining navigation lanes and removal of uprooted mats of vegetation
- Provide general education on the role of plants in healthy lakes
- Provide education to help protect specific areas containing important aquatic plant habitat
- Ensure other lake efforts to address aquatic plant management don't destroy critical fish habitat

Economic Development

- Work with local chambers of commerce and tourism groups to develop recreation maps and promote lake-based recreational opportunities
- Provide periodic updates of attractions, facilities, and events through publications and web sites
- Promote and/or sponsor events consistent with the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway

Ordinance Enforcement

- Ensure zoning and land and water codes are consistent, adequate, and uniformly enforced to address the nutrient management and soil loss concerns, as well as issues with shoreline development and removal of vegetation
- Develop consistent hunting regulations to avoid varying codes in an area where municipal boundaries are unknown (e.g duck hunting codes by boat)

Coordinate Citizen Action Activities

- Develop and administer a system-wide litter pick up day
- Administer volunteer citizen lake and stream monitoring programs
- Sponsor lake appreciation events or festivals
- Develop a bike/ped trail around the System to highlight the System, businesses and communities

VI.A.7.c. Project Goals and Objectives

There are numerous plans completed throughout the five county region which identify goals and objectives for the Lake Winnebago System (*Appendix A*). Many of those plans stress the need for a lake management entity for the Lake Winnebago System. Specific goals and objectives for the project which is the subject of this application **however are as follows:**

VI.A.7.d. Methods and Activities

This project is two-fold. The first part involves hiring a consultant knowledgeable in complex, multi-jurisdictional lake management authorities throughout the United States and other countries. The consultant will analyze the numerous System plans completed (*Appendix A*), what has been accomplished, currently occurring, and scheduled to be

completed. The analysis will involve detecting the overlapping activities and the gaps where more could be done, by whom, and how. They will also begin interviewing community leaders to gauge the political climate and receptiveness to the various forms of entities. From this research the consultant will make a preliminary recommendation on the best organizational structure for the Lake Winnebago System. This preliminary recommendation shall include details such as how the structure shall be governed, membership, how funded, prioritizing activities, and a timeline for implementation of the recommendations. It should be noted preliminary discussions showed little to no support for a taxing authority; therefore, several, and creative, options for management will need to be reviewed, and tested for public acceptance, by the consultant prior to making a recommendation.

The second part of the project involves the various stakeholder groups. Staff has already begun compiling a database of the various stakeholders and their contact information. The consultant will meet with each stakeholder group at least once to seek their input on the preliminary recommended organizational structure to gauge public acceptance of the initial thoughts, hear concerns, their recommendations, and, to identify potential complexities and how they should be addressed. They will also identify what the stakeholder groups identify as critical action items and how they propose the issues be addressed by the organization. The groups will help prioritize action items and offer input on funding strategies and other mechanics which must be addressed to complete the administrative part of this project, as identified in the above paragraph.

VI.A.7.e. Project Products or Deliverables

A. Feasibility Analysis

A Feasibility Analysis will be completed by a consultant and will recommend, based on the various stakeholder groups, issues, funding sustainability options, and the best organizational structure for the Lake Winnebago System. Of obvious considerations will be a Commission, District, Authority, or Alliance, but a skilled consultant will uncover other options for management, conduct a comparative analysis of all options, and make a recommendation in the Feasibility Analysis. The Analysis is to be used in draft form during the first round of stakeholder meetings, finalized after those meetings, and presented as part of a Final Report at the second set of meetings before the governmental jurisdictions. An electronic version of the draft Analysis shall be presented to the Chief Executive Officer of each of the five counties prior to conducting surveys, focus groups or meetings. After the surveying, focus groups and first set of government meetings, a final Analysis shall be provided in electronic format to the Chief Executive Officers.

B. Stakeholder Survey

Some stakeholder groups will be surveyed and some will be involved via focus groups, the method and degree of engagement to be determined by the consultant. Stakeholder surveys will be conducted to determine issues, priorities for action, funding ideas. The methodology (e-survey, paper survey, etc.) of the survey will be determined by the consultant.

C. Stakeholder Focus Groups

As explained in B above, focus groups will be organized to determine public opinion on the recommended structure, issues, priorities identified by the survey, funding options and obstacles, to generate ideas, recommend the role the stakeholders will play in the organization, and to gauge continual commitment to the recommended organization.

D. Public Meetings

Each non-governmental stakeholder group will be met with at least once to share the proposed structure and associated findings from the Analysis, survey and focus groups. From these meetings additional information will be gathered which will help define the final list of issues, priorities, timeline, and above all, the recommended structure and to help define the future of its sustainability.

Two meetings will be held in each county for all governments within that jurisdiction. The first round of meetings are to include a powerpoint presentation by the consultant and be open forum to solicit public input on the preliminary recommendations and on the draft list of priority issues developed as a result of the stakeholder surveys, focus groups and meetings. The first meeting will be similar content as the public meeting for the other stakeholder groups; the second meeting shall be to present the Final Report, which includes the Feasibility Analysis and the Action Plan.

E. Action Plan

The Action Plan, with the Feasibility Analysis, will comprise the Final Report. The Plan will explain how the organization should be structured, role the stakeholders will play, where housed, how funded, how staffed and administered (e.g. Board of Directors, membership, appointment and terms of the Board), list issues to be addressed by the organization, prioritize them, define who will address them, when, how and with what funds. An electronic version of the draft Action Plan shall be presented to the Chief Executive Officer of each of the five counties for comment prior to being finalized. After a 30 day comment period ceases, the Plan shall be finalized. (It is expected the Chief Executive Officers will discuss the draft at one of their meetings and submit feedback to the consultant.)

F. Final Report

As explained, the Final Report includes the Feasibility Analysis and the Action Plan. The Final Report shall be approved by resolution by each of the five counties prior to the organization being established. Without a resolution, the commitment to the project will be weak. County commitment is critical to give the organization the political support necessary to develop and maintain the organization.

G. Website

A website will be created to provide information to the public about the project, the System, and issues that have been identified. The draft Feasibility Analysis, stakeholder surveys, meeting schedules, draft Action Plan, and Final Report will be posted on the website. It is anticipated this website will morph into the website for the organization.

VI.A.7.f. Data to be Collected

A substantial amount of data (*Appendix A*) has been collected on the Lake Winnebago System. This data will be analyzed by the consultant to gain a thorough knowledge of the lake and its issues, gaps in management, and opportunities for improvement. It shall be the responsibility of the consultant to gather more data via research, surveying, focus groups and public meetings.

At the onset of the project the consultant shall research and provide examples on the various multi-jurisdictional lake authorities in the United States and other countries. The data will include types of entity, how organized, funded, and functions. This data, along with findings via the surveys, focus groups and meetings, will be used to compile a recommendation on the type, design, function and funding of the best lake management organization for the Lake Winnebago System.

Stakeholder opinion on the recommended organization, lake issues, organization and lake concerns, stakeholder involvement, funding and sustainability, and other critical information is to be gathered by the consultant.

A clear directive of how the organization is to be created, staffed, managed, funded and tasks and timeline will be created and included in the **Final Report**.

VI.A.7.g. Existing and Proposed Partnerships

(For a list of known stakeholders, please see *Appendix B*. This list is not exhaustive.)

For several years a core team of individuals have been meeting to further the idea of a regional management entity for the Lake Winnebago System. The core group includes:

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (Rob McLennan)
- University of Wisconsin Extension (Catherine Neiswender and Chad Cook)
- University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (Mike Lizotte)
- East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (Eric Fowle)
- Calumet County Staff (Julie Schmelzer and Dani Santry)
- Fond du Lac Lake Association (Paul Holland)
- Senator (Jessica King)

These partnerships will continue as they have proven critical to providing background, technical expertise, differing perspectives, and political support. Members of this core group will serve as an advisory team to offer technical expertise as well as process development (e.g. assist in organizing the focus groups, facilitating meetings, arranging interviews).

In 2012 the five counties, represented by their Chief Elected Officials, and some staff, began meeting with all or a portion of the core team. The Officials are engaged in the process and have committed their support to apply for a grant for this project. Each county is passing a resolution qualifying their commitment.

Other groups began attending the meetings as well, and are considered partners. At the meetings there has been representation from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation and a local Assembly representative (Penny Bernard Schaber).

In addition to the Officials, other county departments which have been meeting about System issues, and will remain partners on this project are the following: the Land and Water Conservation Departments (primarily for water quality purposes, e.g. nutrient management and soil loss issues); Parks Departments (launch fees); some of the Sheriff's Departments (sharing rescue equipment); and although they don't meet, the Health Departments are involved due to the Blue Green Algae issues.

The following have completed extensive work to address issues affecting the System, and are considered 'new' partners:

- Wisconsin Lakes Association can help with numerous issues, such as education, testing, shoreline demonstrations
- Winnebago Lakes Council has completed a draft aquatic invasive species control plan and done some surveying of shoreland owners and users of the System
- Northeast Wisconsin Stormwater Consortium (NEWSC) addresses stormwater and erosion control via education and model ordinances
- Fox Wolf Watershed Alliance (FWWA) focuses on water quality and watershed education
- Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway promotes a water trail (scenery and tourism)
- International Business Economic Development Council already does several tourism promotions of the System, but limits the promotions to the counties which are members

VI.A.7.h. Role of Project in Planning and/or Management of Lake

The result of this project is a lake management entity that can oversee activities to ensure a prioritized list of issues are addressed in the most coordinated, cost effective approach of maximum benefit to the environment and stakeholders. That entity will, in coordination with its partners, be responsible to ensure all adopted plans for the management of the System are implemented.

As *Appendix B* portrays, there are a wealth of surveys, reports, and plans that document needs, issues, and recommendations for management. Key plans that address the management of all or a portion of the System are as follows:

- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' *Winnebago Comprehensive Management Plan*
- All five county's *Land and Water Management Plans*
- *Smart Growth Plans* for the following communities: Calumet County, Outagamie County, Waushara County, Winnebago County, Town of Friendship (Fond du Lac County), Village of North Fond du Lac, City of Fond du Lac, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (ECWRPC)
- Winnebago Lakes Council draft *Aquatic Invasive Species Strategic Plan for the Winnebago Pool Lakes*
- ECWRPC *Lower Fox River/Winnebago Pool Long-Range Plan*

VI.A.7.i. Timetable of Implementation of Key Activities

The following is the proposed timeline, but may be altered depending on recommendations from the consultant or per the contract with the consultant.

- *October 2012*—Grant announcement; request for Proposals (RFPs) sent to nationwide search of qualified consultants
- *November 2012*—RFPs reviewed and selection narrowed to an interview list; interviews scheduled; contract drafted
- *December 2012*—Consultant selected; contract signed; meets with core team to discuss project; existing data (plans and stakeholder lists) forwarded to consultant; staff creates website (updates on-going throughout project); local media alerted of the project
- *February 2013*—Consultant meets with core team to share draft findings for Feasibility Analysis; revisions as necessary
- *March 2013*—Stakeholder survey and compilation
- *April 2013*—Focus Group meetings
- *May 2013*—Meetings in each of the five counties to solicit more information; stakeholder meetings begin
- *June 2013*—Stakeholder meetings continue; Feasibility Analysis finalized and sent to Chief Elected Officials
- *July 2013*—Draft Action Plan finalized; reviewed by core team; presented to Chief Elected Officials for comment (30 day comment period)
- *August 2013*—Action Plan finalized; Final Report finalized; potential budget impacts known
- *September 2013*—Final Report to each of the five counties; core team shares report with stakeholder groups
- *October-November 2013*—Resolutions passed by counties
- *December 2013*—Grant closeout; those identified in the Action Plan begin organizational structure discussions and required activities commence (December-April)
- *April 2014*—Organization fully established and in operation

VI.A.7.j. Plan for Sharing Project Results

- The consultant shall be responsible for sharing all draft and final documents with the Chief Elected Official in each of the five counties. It shall be the responsibility of the Chief elected Official to share any documentation with those within their county as they see appropriate.
- The consultant shall also deliver an electronic version of the Final Report to each city, village and town within each of the five counties, and the libraries in the cities of the five counties. Where electronic format is not an option, a paper copy shall be delivered by the consultant.
- The consultant shall share an electronic version of all documents with the core team. The core team shall be responsible for sharing it with any partners, stakeholders, and local media.
- County staff shall post all documentation to the website and forward an electronic version to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

VI.A.7.k. Other Information

Watershed

DRAFT