

Focus Group Meetings *Combined Summary*

- **Property Owners** (11 participants)—March 19, 2007, from 7–9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Educators** (4 participants)—March 20, 2007, from 11 AM–12 PM at Onekama School
- **Agriculture and Land Developers/Managers** (13 participants)—March 26, 2007, from 9–11 AM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Natural Resource Managers** (14 participants)—March 26, 2007, from 2–4 PM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Local Government** (9 participants)—March 26, 2007 from 7–9 PM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Recreation, Tourism, Business and Civic Organizations** (7 participants)—March 27, 2007, from 9–11 AM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Youth/Students** (15 participants)—May 22, 2007, from 10:30–11:30 AM at Onekama School (Mr. Hunter’s Earth Science class)
- **Community Forum** (38 participants)—May 29, 2007, from 7-9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Seasonal Residents** (35 participants)—June 28, 2007, from 7-9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center

Question 1: What are some of the things that you do in the watershed?

Recreate

- Fish (inland, Great Lakes, ice fishing)
- Swim
- Snorkel
- Boat (pleasure, fishing, sail, personal water craft, tube)
- Hunt (deer, upland bird, ducks)
- Go to beaches
- Go to parks
- Use public access
- Use marinas
- Go to piers
- Access Lake Michigan through the channel
- Camp
- Camp fires
- Enjoy woods and variety of trees
- Watch the sunset
- Get inspired and refresh spirit
- Light fireworks
- Enjoy music, art, and entertainment
- Paint lake scenes
- Photograph
- Walk the beaches
- Picnics
- Garden
- Walk, hike, run
- Ice skate
- Cross-country ski
- Snowshoe
- Snowmobile
- Sled
- Take our kids to play/youth recreation
- Sightsee/enjoy natural beauty/enjoy the views
- Drive
- Transportation
- Fall color tour
- Bicycle/bicycle tour
- Golf
- Bird watch
- View wildlife
- Watch stars
- Hunt mushrooms
- Enjoy the local history
- Visit Portage Point Inn and Camp Tosebo
- Go to restaurants/eat
- Shop
- Visit library

Question 1: What are some of the things that you do in the watershed?

Live and Work

- Live/have our homes
- Return year after year
- Raise families
- Send our kids to school/go to school
- Work/make a living
- Volunteer
- Run businesses
- Agriculture/farm
- Organic farming
- Fruit farm/orchards
- Eat/pick local produce and fruit
- Raise livestock
- Shop (hardware, necessities)
- Drink water (wells, artesian wells)
- Irrigation
- Excavate
- Promote tourism
- Alter the land
- Sell/develop real estate
- Store fuel and other chemicals
- Apply fertilizer, pesticides, and other chemicals
- Drill for oil and gas
- Brine injection
- Dispose of waste and/or sewage (septic systems)
- Pick up garbage
- Heat and cool houses/buildings
- Appreciate clean air
- Enjoy small, safe, friendly community

Educate, Manage, and Protect

- Build and maintain roads and related structures
- Pave, salt, and brine roads
- Manage timber
- Stock fish
- Educate the community
- Use wetlands to clean water
- Protect water quality
- Teach/use as an outdoor classroom (Salmon in the Classroom, water quality monitoring, service learning, school forests)
- Monitor water quality
- Pass regulations/zoning/ordinances

Question 2: What do you consider to be some of the biggest problems facing the Portage Lake Watershed right now?

Information, Education, and Outreach

- Lack of complete/accurate/up-to-date information or water quality monitoring data
- Lack of education/awareness/understanding of how actions impact water quality
- Feeling “out of the loop” when not living in the area
- Lack of control because can't vote (seasonal residents)
- Communication challenges between seasonal residents and community
- Lack of a single source of factual information
- Resistance to change and new ideas
- Apathy
- Reaching/educating seasonal residents and tourists

Quality of Life

- Unmanaged/mismanaged public access to Portage Lake
- Channel filling in/no dredging
- Not enough/adequate public access and parking for boaters and other users
- Lack of family-oriented facilities and access
- Lack of current job opportunities and future opportunities for youth
- Lack of support for economic development in the watershed
- Lack of local capacity and resources to manage land use challenges
- Rising taxes make it difficult for average income people to live here
- Lack of affordability and economic opportunity
- Lack of population diversity
- Lack of resources and money
- Population changing to retirees and fewer young families (school enrollment declining)
- Unknown future of school
- Road conditions/past repairs
- Overuse by boaters
- Lack of community drug store/gathering place

Health of Fishery and Other Aquatic Life and Wildlife

- Changes in fish population and increased weeds
- Invasive and exotic species (plants and animals—zebra mussels, weeds, cormorants, swans, impact on food web)
- Boat/ship waste
- Development too close to the lake/fragile environments
- Shoreline development
- Increasing development and pressure to block views and access
- Increased population/growth rate

Question 2: What do you consider to be some of the biggest problems facing the Portage Lake Watershed right now?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough/changes in fish stocking • Not enough/no long-term plan for water quality monitoring • Fish disease • Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses • Nutrient loading (specifically phosphorus)/speeding up the natural aging process • Leaf burning • Atmospheric deposition of chemicals • Uncapped/abandoned wells • Mud in well water due to gas/oil drilling • Chemicals entering aquifers • Road salt • Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses • Slant drilling under Portage Lake • Loss of/filling/building on wetlands • Lack of a public water supply system/numerous individual wells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased runoff due to new developments/subdivisions • Increased storm water runoff/storm sewer overflow • Loss of trees due to development/management • Road and stream bank erosion • Erosion in general • Loss of public lands • Inability of aquifers to filter water as fast as it is being contaminated • Unmanaged tourism/use • Potential for water withdrawal • Low lake water level • Overuse by anglers • Lack of management of hydrology • Lack of stewardship (boaters, anglers, residents) • Old trash in gulleys (cars, appliances, fuel tanks)
Body-Contact Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improperly functioning/maintained septic systems • Lack of sewer system around the lake • Dog and other animal waste entering water/on beaches • Presence of <i>E. coli</i> • Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses • Increased weeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nutrient loading (specifically phosphorus)/speeding up the natural aging process • Unmanaged tourism/use • Garbage on beaches • Blight/garbage • Lack of stewardship (boaters, anglers, residents)
Regulation and Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of unity among property owners on goals • Lack of communication among various local government agencies • Differences in views between seasonal and permanent residents • Inconsistent application/enforcement of various government regulations • Confusing/multiple/complex government regulations and multiple jurisdictions • Lack of enforcement resources/police 	

Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

Information, Education, and Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify facts • Develop fact-based solutions • Provide accurate data/information • Additional/continued air and water quality monitoring • Gather additional information/data about watershed concerns • Provide a central source for current, factual information sharing • Develop a comprehensive website including maps and information about the health of the watershed • Increase community outreach and education • Leverage existing communication/education/outreach opportunities • Educate visitors and seasonal residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education about exotic and invasive species and how they can be managed • Distribute information from MSU Extension and Manistee Conservation District • Increase communication and collaboration among stakeholders • Establish an environmental ombudsman • Achieve attitude and behavioral change • Messaging/branding of value of watershed • Positive social pressure to be a good watershed steward • Submit article to the Michigan Township Association Newsletter • Increase boater/other user education and stewardship • Increased community engagement and volunteering in watershed
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Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate public/watershed users/landowners/tourists about watershed problems and what they can do to help Explore expanding mailing of “Grapevine” Promote relationships of various watersheds (subwatersheds, Lake Michigan, Great Lakes Basin) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education about impacts of septic systems and fertilizer practices Study current status of and options for sewage treatment (pros, cons, cost) Enclose educational information in tax bills Build community capacity through periodic meetings related to watershed plan
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Money/resources Money to support local government capacities Securing grants and donations to address problems Resources to support local government regulations Leverage school resources/increased engagement of youth Integrate water into all aspects of school curriculum Develop a paid/intern program and/or after-school for students Promote/increase awareness of local amenities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community organizing, leadership development, facilitation Vibrant economy with jobs to support young families More jobs Economic development planning Affordable housing Increased family-friendly vacations/visits/recreational opportunities Continue to dredge the channel to allow access to and from Lake Michigan Endowment funds Development of a strategy for access Promote Monday night music programs Offer boat and bike rentals
Health of Fishery and Other Aquatic Life and Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation in hazardous waste disposal days Environment-friendly alternatives to road salt (beet juice) and brine (soy) Lake-friendly fertilizer/phosphorus-free fertilizer Get soil tested to determine fertilizer needs Land protection/assist those interested in learning more about their options Protection of public lands and strategy for land protection Development of a strategy for public lands Identify and adopt best practices for land use and watershed stewardship Protect feeder creeks and groundwater Restoration of critical lake habitat Maintain buffer strips along lake and streams Protect biodiversity of plant and animal life Continue/increase fish stocking Get rid of swans Develop long-term water quality monitoring strategy and increase involvement of Onekama School and residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt forest management practices Reduction of agricultural runoff through education and voluntary action More storm water retention ponds Management of exotic and invasive species Clean Marina Program Public water supply Predictive modeling (to determine impacts of land use on water quality) Inventory uncapped wells Explore costs/benefits of alternative energy sources Pave eroding roads Develop practical solutions Management for the “total health” of the watershed and everything in it Increase/continue use of local resources (MSU Extension, Conservation District, Groundwater Stewardship program, Little River Band, etc.) Promote low impact activities like canoeing, kayaking and sailing Clean streets and storm drains in Village Develop a plan to control oil and gas drilling and to cap abandoned wells
Body-Contact Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify inadequate septic systems Septic system ordinance Options for sewage treatment needs Clustered septic systems Extend the sewer system around the lake Mandated hook-up to sewer Expand trash options (days and locations) Expand/advertise recycling options Offer yard waste drop off and use for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get soil tested to determine fertilizer needs Reduction of agricultural runoff through education and voluntary action Fix/upgrade storm sewers to help with overflow More storm water retention ponds Increased beach maintenance/cleanup Management of exotic and invasive

Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compost Lake-friendly fertilizer/phosphorus-free fertilizer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> species Clean Marina Program Identify and adopt best practices for land use and watershed stewardship
Regulation and Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land use planning/planned growth (cluster developments) Attend citizen planner/land use education training Update/develop township master plans Develop effective/focused regulations Planned developments to maintain trees Develop unifying, responsive plans among various units of local government Convene local units of government to discuss unifying goals Continue County Summits Community consensus on goals and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation Zoning Ordinances Enforcement of regulation, zoning, ordinances Increased awareness of governmental regulations, zoning, ordinances Additional, sensible zoning Use of the political process/legislation (local, state, federal) Political pressure Support local, state, and federal legislation that will help the watershed

Question 4: Have you ever had a conflict with other people who use the watershed differently than you do?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal watercrafts/other water users Boats and personal watercrafts/swimmers Sewer/septic systems (costs, concerns about population increase) Clear cutting/preserving trees Snowmobilers/other watershed users Private property rights/government regulation Seasonal residents/permanent residents Population growth and increased use/water quality Growth/no growth Development that would block views of lake/preservation of views Development and impact on trout streams Outdoor wood stoves/air quality Car races cause noise pollution Road ends that are public access sites Public access adjacent to private property (trespassing) Bicyclists and drivers (no bike lanes) Conflicts between governmental agency regulations and watershed maintenance (i.e., MDEQ critical dune designation and beach and public access maintenance) Fishermen/other recreational users Over fertilization of property Projects that remain unfinished Commercial/private interests Public parking on private property Kids jumping off channel wall (drugs, drinking, no security or life jackets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of angler stewardship (overharvest, keeping undersized fish, disposing of undersized or undesired fish) Boaters and no wake zones (in channel too) Native American fishing rights Wind energy/blocking views Portage Point Inn/permanent residents Oil/gas drilling/impacts on well water quality Agricultural practices (fertilizer, pesticide application) that don't promote sustainable agriculture Road maintenance/road users Pro- and anti-development Land developer/community relationship Competing land use interests Enforcement issues/lack of enforcement resources Development/subdivision covenants Wetland fill/preservation of wetlands Complex/multi-layers of government and regulations Regulatory conflicts and inconsistencies Misguided regulation Perception/fact Dog waste and beach users Wounded water fowl Duck season is disruptive (sound, safety) Hunting season/difficult to walk and feel safe Large power boats/quiet time 4th of July activities start sooner and last longer
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Question 5: Are there certain cultural, historic, or environmental sites or resources that you think should be protected?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little Eden well ALL Parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Library Camps
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- Glen Park
- North Point Park
- Gazebo at Portage Point Beach
- All parks
- Trails
- All public access/boat launches
- Conservancy-owned land and access
- Beaches
- Access through channel to and from Lake Michigan
- Sailing and races
- Charter boat industry
- Views of the lake
- Aesthetic quality of watershed
- Open space
- Green space
- Trees
- Farming/agriculture
- Orchards
- Centennial farms
- All registered historical sites (5)
- Historic homes
- Historical artifacts
- Tribal resources
- Portage Point Inn
- School
- Timberline around watershed
- Keep the remaining sand roads as sand (rural character)
- County fair grounds
- Economy/economic base
- Tourism
- Commercial development/property
- Dunes
- Wetlands
- Marshes
- Groundwater
- Springs
- Artesian wells
- Feeder creeks and streams
- Fishery
- Fish stocking
- Wildlife
- Fish and wildlife for consumption
- Lake water quality
- Air quality
- Health of everything in the watershed (natural resources, people, economy, etc.)
- Current or similar population densities
- Arts and culture
- Morals and values of community members
- Private property owners willing to provide access to lake
- Rights of all people in the watershed
- Knowledge of historic and ancient shorelines of Portage Lake and Lake Michigan
- Walk-in health clinic

Question 6: How do you get most of your information about the Portage Lake Watershed?

- Newsletters
- *Grapevine*—Portage Point Summer Resort Corporation newsletter
- Portage Lake Association newsletters and website
- Internet
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
- MSU Extension
- NOAA
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- USDA
- Michigan Land Use Institute
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
- Mike Acton
- Word of mouth
- Portage Lake Garden Club
- Homeowner/subdivision meetings
- Past Studies of Portage Lake and watershed
- Onekama School's water quality monitoring reports
- Teachers and students at Onekama Schools
- Local government meetings and minutes
- Township offices
- Manistee County offices
- Community/public meetings
- Onekama Township Planning Commission and Master Plan
- Rumor
- Innuendo
- Manistee Conservation District
- Health Department
- Tosebo News Chain
- People who use the watershed
- *Manistee News Advocate*
- Bulletin boards
- Community websites
- Library
- Realtors

Other ideas for how to get information to the public?

- Include in tax bill
- Could adopt *Grapevine* newsletter to entire community
- Mailings/newsletters/web sites of various lake associations and community organizations
- Brochures
- Contact with property owners
- Contact with other townships

- Local media (newspaper, radio, public access channel)
- Websites
- Thematic signage when entering Portage Lake Watershed
- Post in the community
- Extend cable internet

Question 7: Are there certain sources of information you consider more trustworthy than others?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All are trusted but there is no central source for fact-based information • US Army Corps of Engineers • Mike Acton • MDNR • MDEQ • Manistee Conservation District • Colleges/Universities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries researchers • Health department • Avid fishermen • Past studies • Data collected by the school and students • <i>Grapevine</i> newsletter • MSU Extension |
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Question 8: Imagine the Portage Lake Watershed 50 years from now (2057)—what do you want it to look like?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a lot different/a lot like it does right now/similar landscape • Not overpopulated or overdeveloped • Fewer weeds • Same or higher water levels • Improved property values • Protected parks • Enhanced/more parks and public access • Access to and from Lake Michigan via the channel • Better than now • Big yachts on Portage Lake • Enhanced streetscapes • Vistas/views of lake as drive/walk around • Views of the lake and landscape • No condos blocking views of lake • More condos • More and safe trails (bike, walking, hiking) • Still see trees • More paved roads and less dirt and erosion • Better zoning • Village has progressed with planning • Lake still takes on the colors of the sky • Abundant wildlife • Economic opportunities—place for future generations to live and work • Proper/sufficient infrastructure • Proper plans in place • Planned growth and development resulting in green space and views of the lake • Open space • Forests/woods • Protected and wisely planned community • All watershed interests are engaged and benefit • Progress • Unity/stakeholders focus on common good of lake • Well paying jobs • More enticing employment for young people | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central sewer system • Land preservation and plans • Thriving fishery • Continued fish stocking • Lack of exotic and invasive species • More and diverse jobs • Viable, year-round businesses • Entrepreneurs • Support for businesses that fit watershed goals • Good neighbors • Lake is aging at a natural pace • Sustained public access • Habitat that supports fish and wildlife • Universal access boardwalk • Universal access for all types of activities • Clean, fresh drinking water • Abundant water • Strict, enforced zoning ordinances • Enforcement • High water quality • Healthy, outstanding schools with water curriculum/first-class school • Natural setting • Protected fragile environments • Quality and safe swimming • Sustainable community • Families/multi-generations • Activities for multi-generations • Healthy, vibrant tourism economy • Thriving business community • Vibrant cultural focus • Bible camps • Attractive lighthouse at mouth of channel • Farms and agriculture remain • More entertainment for youth • No litter or waste • No blight |
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Question 8: Imagine the Portage Lake Watershed 50 years from now (2057)—what do you want it to look like?

- Good air quality
- Historic restoration
- Affordable housing
- Future generations hold community meetings to discuss managing growth and development
- Rural feel (farms, orchards)
- Emergency first aid
- More bicycles and fewer cars