

Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA)

Explanation of Working Document “Implementation / Prioritization Framework” (Approved by MRWA Executive Board – 7/11/02)

Purpose

The MRWA “Implementation / Prioritization Framework” is a working document that was developed by the MRWA Resource Committee to define, in part, the committee’s broad scope and establish methods by which the MRWA could prioritize and implement projects in the watershed. The framework is intended to be a guide and will evolve as the MRWA gains more knowledge and experience in its use and as issues/needs in the watershed change.

Development / Content

The MRWA Resource Committee is an open volunteer committee representing a wide variety of environmental interests including (but not limited to): MDNR Fisheries Division, MDEQ Surface Water Quality Division, U.S. Forest Service, USDA/NRCS, Timberland RC&D, Muskegon Conservation Club, Trout Unlimited, W. MI Walleye Club and MRWA Board Members & staff. The Resource Committee met seven (7) times from February – August 2002 over numerous evening hours to develop and finalize the framework.

The “Implementation / Prioritization Framework” consists of six (6) sections and an appendix, which are listed next:

- 1) Broad Scope for Resource Committee
 - 2) Natural Resource Issues (Categorized & Prioritized / Illustrated in Appendix A)
 - 3) Identifying Areas of Need (How to go about it)
 - 4) Prioritizing Potential / Future Projects (internal & external projects / 2 ranking methods)
 - 5) MRWA Strategic Plan Objectives (Resource Committee assigned responsibilities)
 - 6) Incorporating Project Outcomes (How information / data can be used)
- Appendix A – MRWA Natural Resource Issues Ranking Method

Essentially, the entire framework represents the committee’s “Broad Scope”. The committee spent the majority of its time identifying, categorizing and prioritizing “Natural Resource Issues” in the watershed. Appendix A represents 1 of 2 ranking methods developed by the committee to help prioritize natural resource issues (and future projects) by assigning either a high(H), medium(M) or low(L) priority to each issue identified. These assigned rankings are also **bolded** on pages 1 and 2 of the framework for each (same) issue in addition to Appendix A. Natural resource issues were ranked to provide the MRWA and its partners a broad guideline as to where we should be focusing our efforts. Using Appendix A, the merits of any potential project can quickly and broadly be assessed as to whether it would address a high, medium or low priority natural resource issue in the Muskegon River watershed.

A second, more intricate prioritization “scoring criteria” methodology was developed to evaluate and rank individual projects / proposals relative to each other and / or the MRWA’s mission, strategic objectives, and other factors.

MRWA Working Document
Implementation / Prioritization Framework
(Approved by MRWA Executive Board 7/11/02)

Broad Scope for Resource Committee

- Categorizing (Natural) Resource Issues
- Identifying Areas of Need
- Prioritizing Potential / Future Projects (internal & external)
 - natural resource focus
 - historic implications
 - cultural implications
- Implementing Strategic Plan Objectives (identified tasks, sub-tasks)
- Incorporating Project Outcomes

Priority Scale

H = High Priority
M = Medium Priority
L = Low Priority

Natural Resource Issues

1. Habitat Related
 - a. Hydrology / Land Use
 - H** Surface runoff / ground seepage (drains, ditches, infiltration, road crossings)
 - H** Riparian / Floodplain corridors, lake littoral zone & shorelines
 - H** Discharge & alterations (includes flooding)
 - H** Forested / Agriculture / Urban landscapes / Wetlands
 - H** Groundwater / Aquifer
 - M** Quantity
 - b. Water Quality
 - H** Pollution / nutrients / turbidity
 - M** Water temperatures
 - M** Dissolved oxygen
 - c. Channel / Basin Dynamics
 - H** Instream or lake basin cover
 - H** Alterations (dams & impoundments, seawalls, docks, dredging, filling)
 - M** Bedload sediment
 - L** Width / Depth
 - d. Air Quality
 - e. Geology & Soils
2. Biological Related
 - H**.. a. Aquatic vegetation, lakes & streams
 - H**.. b. Terrestrial vegetation
 - H**.. d. Invertebrates (insects, mussels, crayfish)
 - M**.. c. Fish (walleye, white bass, sturgeon, musky, river redhorse)
 - M**.. e. Amphibians (turtles, frogs)
 - M**.. f. Reptiles
 - L**.. g. Birds
 - L**.. h. Mammals
 - L**.. i. Undesirable Exotic Species

- 3. Social Related
 - H.. a. Education
 - H.. e. Human Health Issues
 - M.. b. Quality of Life (recreation, aesthetics)
 - L.. c. Economic (importance to communities & region)
 - L.. d. Legal (regulations governing use)
 - L.. f. Cultural / Historical
 - L.. g. Conflicts

Identifying Areas of Need (how to go about it)

1. From Identified Gaps in Data, Research, Inventories, Education & Resource Assessments
2. From Other Management Plans (e.g. Muskegon River 319, local, state, federal organizations)
3. Taking into Consideration Past / Existing Projects & Partner Base
4. Based on Available Resources (funding sources, partner & volunteer recruitment)
5. May Require Detailed Work Plan(s)
6. By Using MRWA prioritization process

Prioritizing Potential / Future Projects (scientific, educational, physical & organizational / internal & external / natural resource focus)

1. Scoring Criteria Method (select only 1 rating for each lettered category)

- a. Project’s compatibility with MRWA mission:
 - Preserve, protect, or maintain natural resources;20 pts.
 - Restore or rehabilitate natural resources;15 pts.
 - Enhance, mitigate natural resources or social benefit;10 pts.

- b. Project’s compatibility with MRWA strategic objectives:
 - Strengthen the organizational structure & capacity of the MRWA;
 - Incorporate sub-watershed & local group activities into the MRWA;
 - Position MRWA as the recognized forum to address watershed issues;
 - Conduct outreach & education programs throughout the watershed & connect with regional or national watershed organizations;
 - Establish & maintain repository & databases for MRWA & public use;
 - Identify & fill gaps in research & inventories;
 - Develop resource remediation & protection programs;
 - Establish at least one land conservancy program;
 - Work with municipalities on land stewardship & land use planning;
 - Seek funding to support the above goals & objectives.

Project does NOT address MRWA objectives..... (0pts)
 Project reasonably addresses MRWA objective(s)... (10pts)
 Project clearly addresses MRWA objective(s)..... (20pts)

- c. Project's potential to address specific resource issue(s) in a positive way:
(can select 1 potential rating for Habitat, Biological or Social Issue if applicable)
- Habitat Related Issue (as defined in framework)
 - Low potential.....(0pts)
 - Medium potential.....(10pts)
 - High potential.....(20pts)

 - Biological Related Issue (as defined in framework)
 - Low potential.....(0pts)
 - Medium potential.....(10pts)
 - High potential.....(20pts)

 - Social Related Issue (as defined in framework)
 - Low potential.....(0pts)
 - Medium potential.....(10pts)
 - High potential.....(20pts)
- d. The extent to which this project is needed in the watershed:
- Low priority.....(0pts)
 - Medium priority.....(5pts)
 - High priority.....(10pts)
- e. Value of project to watershed / river environment and resource users (i.e. low cost, substantial benefits to resource users).
- Poor value.....(0pts)
 - Good value.....(5pts)
 - Excellent value.....(10pts)
- f. Project will provide benefit(s) to the watershed / river environment and / or public for:
- Less than 5 years.....(5pts)
 - 5-10 years.....(10pts)
 - More than 10 years.....(15pts)
- g. Overhead costs as a percentage of total project cost [overhead = project administration & planning (non-engineering)]
- High (More than 20%).....(0pts)
 - Medium (15 – 20%).....(5pts)
 - Low (Less than 15%).....(10pts)
- h. Quality / Completeness of application (ability of reviewer to determine project scope, materials, budget, timeline & clarity, etc.)
- Poor quality.....(0pts)
 - Good quality.....(5pts)
 - Excellent quality.....(10pts)
- (Proposals that are not satisfactorily complete or are unclear as to their scope, timeline, budget & use of materials may not be reviewed or scored)

i. Evaluator’s judgment_____ (0 – 20 pts)

j. In the space below, provide any additional written comments on the proposal (do you recommend this project / proposal?):

2. Natural Resource Issues Ranking Method

This method of prioritizing potential / future projects is more broad in scope and general in application to any specific project, relative to the “Scoring Criteria Method”. The “Natural Resource Issues Ranking Method”, illustrated in Appendix A, is a barometer of what the MRWA Resource Committee views as the most important issues affecting the Muskegon River watershed. The merits of any potential project can quickly and broadly be assessed as to whether it would address a high, medium or low priority natural resource issue.

In addition to Appendix A, the same “Natural Resource Issues” listed at the beginning of this framework have been labeled with either an “H” (High), “M” (Medium) or “L” (Low) designation reflecting their relative priority.

Strategic Plan Objectives

1. Resource Committee assigned tasks & sub-tasks

Incorporating Project Outcomes (how information / data can be used)

1. Build upon existing research, inventories, information database
2. Identify future resource / project needs
3. Communicate outcomes to stakeholders, partners, members, etc.
4. Modify /update MRWA Strategic Plan as needed