

Planning for Prosperity in River Hydro Communities

Muskegon River Group: Rogers, Croton, and Hardy

Stakeholder Meeting

April 19, 2024 | 9:00am – 12:00pm

Mecosta Township Hall
19729 11 Mile Rd
Big Rapids, MI 49307

Attendees

- Big Prairie Township
 - Big Prairie Township Parks
 - City of Big Rapids
 - Croton Township
 - Ferris State University
 - Fremont Area Community Foundation
 - Great Lakes Fishery Commission
 - Joe Lunch Box
 - Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
 - Mecosta County
 - Mecosta County Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - Mecosta County Parks
 - Mecosta County Park Commission
 - Mecosta Township
 - Michigan Department of Natural Resources
 - Michigan House of Representatives
 - Michigan Hydropower Relicensing Coalition
 - Michigan Senate
 - Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
 - Newaygo County
 - Newaygo County Economic Development Partnership, Powered by The Right Place
 - Newaygo County Parks
 - Newaygo County Park Board
 - River Country Chamber of Commerce of Newaygo County
 - The Right Place
 - Trout Unlimited
 - West Michigan Shoreline Regional Development Commission
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Overview of Consumers Energy River Hydro Engagement and Charge to the Group

- Overview and Detailed Review

An overview was provided regarding the river hydro fleet details, challenges for Consumers Energy, considerations for regulatory agencies.

A detailed review was provided regarding safety, compliance, cost of operation and bill impacts, environmental impact, community prosperity, and preservation of recreational features.

- 2022 Community Engagement Overview

An overview of community engagement actions and collection of feedback was provided. A summary of community member feedback included understanding of impact of dam removal, how properties will be affected in the event of dam removal, qualifications of potential buyers, and further interest in updates, engagement, and participation in prosperity groups.

Introductions

- Introductions were made for Consumers Energy representatives, Public Sector Consultants, and Omni Tech Intl. Community members were asked to introduce themselves, share their affiliation/role, and what they believe **a successful outcome of the convening** looks like. A summary of the participant responses is captured below. Numbers in parenthesis indicate the total number of responses.

- Education/understanding/sharing of all facts, information and options from all perspectives; mitigate the rumor mill **(11)**
 - Everyone understands what land/activities might look like without an impoundment, potential for land and water
- Plan for and preserve the park system, tourism, fishing/wildlife, and recreation; with or without the dams **(9)**
 - Inspire a national park for Hardy
 - Resource for future generations
- Everyone knows they have been heard/has a voice (including fish and wildlife) **(6)**

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- Work collectively to sustain/grow economic and environmental viability; understand and mitigate negative impacts (environmental aspects of back water, impacts of dams to other areas) **(5)**
- Partners understand how to support the work **(4)**
- Concern for/and communication with property owners/residents **(3)**
- Best outcome/solution for the most people **(3)**
- Maintain access to water **(2)**
- Everyone maintains respect regardless of opinions **(1)**

How Do You Want to Function as a Group

- There was discussion around meeting attendance, ground rules regarding respectful behavior and listening, and what additional expectations the community members had for themselves and others. The following Ground Rules/Meeting Expectations were adopted for future work:
 - Check your ego at the door
 - Listen for understanding
 - Assume positive intent
 - Ask questions; share perspectives and ideas
 - Make space/take space
 - Disagree respectfully
 - Keep meeting to under 2 hours (if possible) so the group can maintain focus
 - All meetings are in person
 - Attend all meetings if possible; read materials to get caught up if missing a meeting

Community Asset Mapping

- Activity: Mapping Community Assets

Participants were grouped by dam location and/or interest (Rogers, Croton, or Hardy). Participants worked individually and then together using handouts and a poster to develop a comprehensive list of community assets related to Nature, Economy, and People.

Rogers Assets	Croton Assets	Hardy Assets
NATURE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White pine trails recreation • Accessible, free for all Parks • Biodiversity • Centrally located 	NATURE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River and Croton Pond • Water access • National forest • Peace of mind with tranquility on the river 	NATURE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watershed • Outdoor activities • Safe environment for kids to grow • Habitat- butterfly • Fishery, sturgeon

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four season community • Fishing, snowmobiling <p>ECONOMY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airport expansion • Property taxes • Industry • Sports • School systems & Ferris • Unique history <p>PEOPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce, talent • Inclusive and diverse community • Local and seasonal residents • Consumers Energy <p>OTHER/ALL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Branding • Quality of Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large conservation land parcels • Cold water habitat • Largest salmon spawning area in MI • Access to nature • Hiking trails, North Country Trail Natl. Park • Dragon Trail • River ecology, high gradient river • Sea Lamprey blocked • Lake Sturgeon <p>ECONOMY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxable value • Fish stocking price & recreational fishing • Fishing tournaments • Tax revenue for schools • Multiple campgrounds • Township business district • Short term rental ord. • Employment opportunities, tourism industry <p>PEOPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 650 homes on the pond • Multiple communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underdeveloped public land • Deer, bear • Dragon trail • Campgrounds • Marinas • Cold water that comes from Hardy <p>ECONOMY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Bikers, campers • New businesses coming in • Stability for existing businesses • Taxes from sales and property • Historical significance, possibility of national park <p>PEOPLE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly people, excellent culture
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- Individual Group Report Out

Rogers, Croton, and Hardy individual groups reported out on community assets. Asset posters were used to capture the feedback, Omni Tech Intl. and Public Sector Consultants took detailed notes and collected the posters to compile the feedback.

Wrap-up

- Future Meetings

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Future meeting times were discussed for June, September, and October/November, and the proposed agenda items include continued asset mapping, learning topics, priorities, and future of the communities with or without a dam.

- Survey

Participants were asked to complete the post-meeting paper or online survey in order to better facilitate future meetings. The meeting was adjourned.