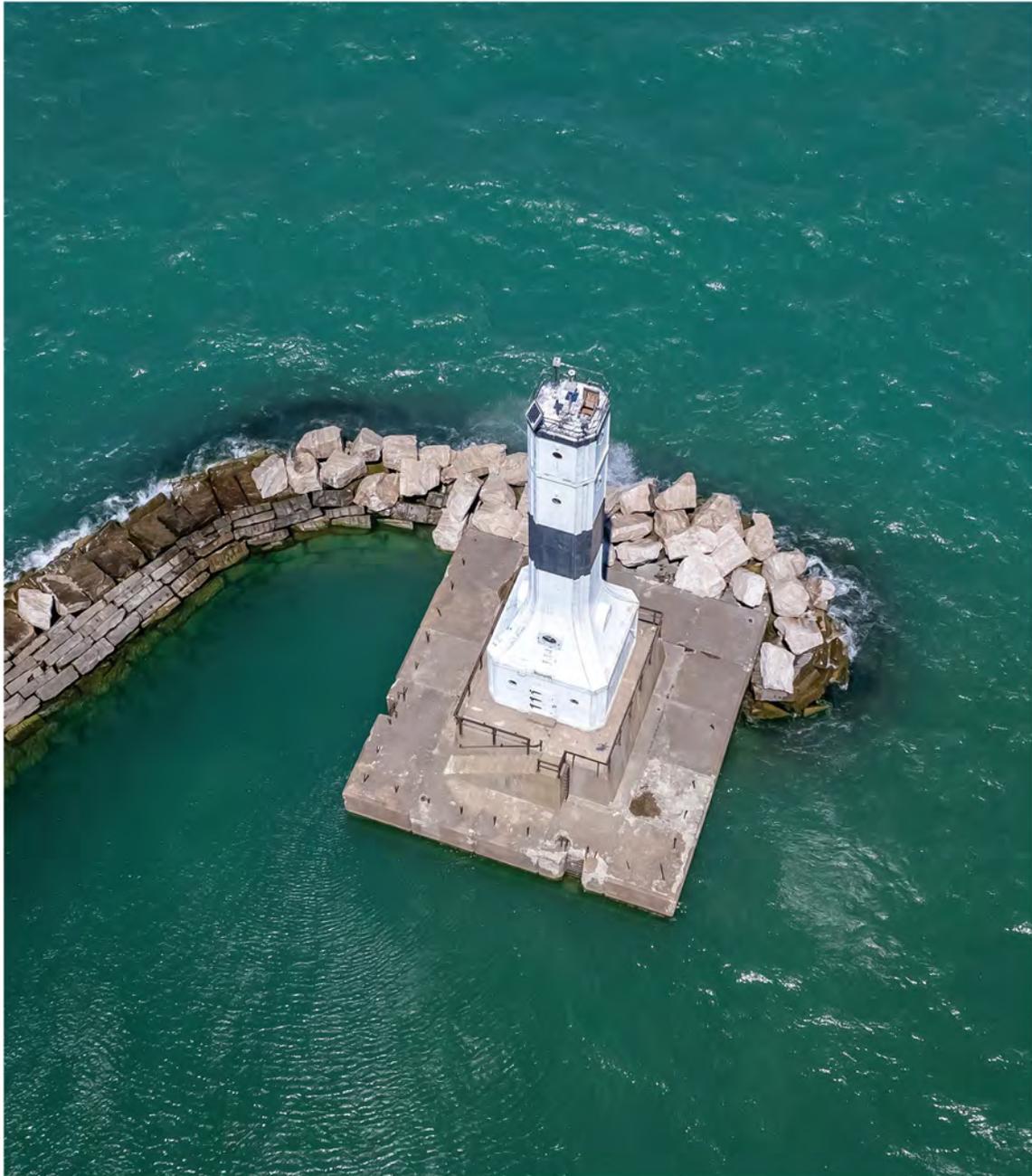


# Conneaut Port Authority

## Coastal Resilience Plan



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# ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND INITIALISMS

AJD	Approved Jurisdictional Determination
BGEPA	Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act
BMP	best management practice
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic foot/feet per second
CHEERS	Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy
CDF	Confined Disposal Facility
CN	Canadian National
CPA	Conneaut Port Authority
CSO	combined sewer overflow
CUDC	Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative
CWA	Clean Waters Act of 1972
CZMA	Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972
DCNR	Department of Conservation of Natural Resources
DOW	Division of Wildlife
EA	environmental assessment
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EIS	environmental impact statement
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ER	environmental review
ESA	Endangered Species Act of 1973
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FTW	floating treatment wetland
GLISA	Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments
GLSC	Great Lakes Science Center
GLWQA	Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement General Objectives
GSI	green stormwater infrastructure
HAB	harmful algal bloom
IBA	Important Bird Area
ITP	Incidental Take Permit
km <sup>2</sup>	kilometer(s) squared
LAMP	Lakewide Action and Management Plan

LESEMP	Lake Erie Shore Erosion Management Plan
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MCDA	Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis
MMSD	Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NWP	Nationwide Permit
OCM	Office of Coastal Management
OCMP	Ohio Coastal Management Program
ODNR	Ohio Department of Natural Resources
OEPA	Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
ORAM	Ohio Rapid Assessment Method
ORC	Ohio Revised Code
PCN	Pre-Construction Notification
Plan	Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan
PPP	Public Participation Plan
QHEI	Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index
RHA	Rivers and Harbors Act of 1970
SFHA	Special Flood Hazard Area
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SWPPP	stormwater pollution prevention plan
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USC	United States Code
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGCRP	U.S. Global Change Research Program
WISGI	Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute
WOTUS	Waters of the United States
WQC	Section 401 Water Quality Certification
WRDA	Water Resources Development Act of 1992/of 1996/of 2016

# GLOSSARY

<b>Adaptive Management</b>	A “learn-as-you-go” approach to managing coastal projects. Plans are adjusted over time based on new information, changing conditions, and lessons learned.
<b>Algal Blooms</b>	rapid growths of algae in water bodies, often caused by an overabundance of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. They can cause harmful effects, creating toxic conditions in the water, leading to issues for human and animal health, and impacting ecosystems and economies.
<b>Bathymetry</b>	the measurement of depth of water in oceans, seas, or lakes.
<b>Beach Nourishment</b>	Adding sand or sediment to a beach to replace what has been washed away by waves and storms, helping protect shorelines and provide recreation space.
<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety of plants, animals, and habitats in an area. Healthy biodiversity helps ecosystems recover from stress, like storms or flooding.
<b>Bluff Stabilization</b>	Techniques (such as planting deep-rooted vegetation or using natural materials) to reduce erosion on high banks and bluffs along the Great Lakes.
<b>Breakwater</b>	A protective barrier built offshore to reduce wave action and protect a harbor, coastline, or beach from erosion, typically made of materials like stone or concrete and can be fixed or floating, and come in different types, such as vertical wall, mound, or composite structures.
<b>Buffer Zone</b>	A protective area of vegetation or natural land left between the water’s edge and human activities. Buffers filter runoff, reduce flooding, and protect water quality.
<b>Climate Change</b>	A change in global or regional climate patterns, in particular a change apparent from the mid to late 20th century onwards and attributed largely to the increased levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels.
<b>Climate Resilience</b>	The capacity of social and ecological systems to absorb and adapt to the shocks and stresses induced by a changing climate.
<b>Coastal Hazards</b>	Physical phenomena that expose a coastal area to the risk of property damage, loss of life, and environmental degradation, such as erosion, harmful algal blooms, big storms, flooding, and sea level rise.
<b>Coastal Marsh</b>	A low-lying wetland along a coastline, found in sheltered areas where land and sea meet, saturated with water and dominated by herbaceous plants like salt-tolerant grasses and creating an intertidal habitat that is periodically flooded by tides. These marshes are crucial ecosystems that provide vital habitat, improve water quality, and protect coastal areas from storms.

<b>Coastal Resilience</b>	The ability of coastal communities and coastal infrastructure to handle challenges like flooding, erosion, and changing lake levels—and bounce back stronger.
<b>Coastal Structure</b>	Any artificial construction along a coastline designed to protect land, infrastructure, and populations from erosion, flooding, and wave action by influencing sediment transport, wave energy, and coastal dynamics. Common types include seawalls to protect land, breakwaters to create calm waters, and groins to trap sand.
<b>Community Engagement</b>	A collaborative process of working with people who share a common interest or location to address issues that affect their well-being, involving building relationships and communicating with stakeholders to achieve shared goals, improve quality of life, and create sustainable outcomes.
<b>Constructed Wetland</b>	An artificial system engineered to treat water by using natural processes of wetland vegetation, soils, and microorganisms. These systems are designed to improve water quality by filtering pollutants from wastewater, stormwater runoff, or agricultural drainage through processes like settling, biological uptake, and microbial activity.
<b>Dune Restoration</b>	Rebuilding or protecting sand dunes along Great Lakes shorelines. Dunes act like natural barriers against waves and wind.
<b>Ecological Restoration</b>	The process of assisting the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded, damaged, or destroyed by human activities, with the goal of improving the ecosystem's health, integrity, and ability to provide services like clean air and water, and to restore its natural functions and biodiversity.
<b>Ecosystem Services</b>	The “free benefits” nature provides us, such as clean water, flood protection, carbon storage, and places to fish, swim, or relax.
<b>Fish Habitat Restoration</b>	Creating or improving natural areas (like reefs, wetlands, or river mouths) where fish can breed, feed, and grow, supporting healthy fisheries.
<b>Glacial Till</b>	A type of sediment deposited directly by glacial ice, consisting of an unsorted and unstratified mixture of clay, silt, sand, gravel, and boulders.
<b>Green Infrastructure</b>	Using nature or natural designs (like rain gardens, wetlands, and trees) to manage water, reduce flooding, and improve quality of life.
<b>Grey Infrastructure</b>	Traditional, engineered systems designed to manage water and provide services, such as storm drains, pipes, roads, and water treatment plants.
<b>Habitat Connectivity</b>	Keeping natural areas linked together so wildlife can move freely between them, even as lake levels rise or storms increase.
<b>High Water Mark</b>	The highest point where water reaches on the shore during flooding or storms. This helps guide where it's safe to build.
<b>Ice Push/Ice Shove</b>	When strong winds and temperature changes push large sheets of lake ice onto shore, sometimes damaging property and reshaping the coast.
<b>Incising</b>	A stream cutting vertically into its bed through erosion.

<b>Invasive Species</b>	Non-native organisms, such as plants, animals, or microbes, that can cause harm to the environment, economy, or human health once introduced to a new ecosystem. Invasive species spread rapidly, outcompete native species for resources, and can disrupt or destroy habitats, sometimes leading to extinctions.
<b>Littoral</b>	Relating to or situated on the shore of a sea or a lake.
<b>Littoral Drift/Sediment Transport</b>	The movement of sediment along a coast, primarily sand, in the direction of incoming waves.
<b>Living Document</b>	A document that is continuously edited and updated to reflect new information, ideas, or changing situations.
<b>Living Shoreline</b>	A natural way to protect shorelines using plants, sand, logs, or rock that absorb wave energy and create habitat instead of hard seawalls.
<b>Managed Retreat</b>	Moving buildings, roads, or other infrastructure away from risky coastal areas over time to reduce damage and costs.
<b>Marsh Migration</b>	As water levels change, wetlands can move inland. Protecting space for this helps wetlands survive and continue to provide flood protection and wildlife habitat.
<b>Natural Resources</b>	Materials produced by nature, such as air, water, wood, minerals, or soil, that are necessary or useful for humans and other living things.
<b>Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)</b>	Approaches that use nature (like wetlands, dunes, or native plants) to reduce flooding and erosion while also supporting people and wildlife.
<b>Nutrient Loading</b>	The excessive introduction of nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, into an ecosystem, which can cause harmful algal blooms and oxygen depletion in water bodies. These nutrients originate from both natural and human-caused sources, including agricultural runoff, wastewater, and pet waste. The resulting pollution damages aquatic habitats and can pose health risks.
<b>Riparian</b>	The interface between land and a river or stream.
<b>Riprap</b>	Large rocks placed along shorelines to reduce erosion and protect against waves. Sometimes combined with plants for added habitat benefits.
<b>Riverine</b>	Relating to or situated on a river or riverbank.
<b>Sediment Management</b>	Helping sand and soil move naturally along the shore, or adding it back where erosion has caused losses, to keep beaches and habitats healthy.
<b>Shoreline Armoring</b>	Hard structures, such as seawalls or bulkheads, built to stop erosion. These protect property but can reduce natural habitat and increase erosion nearby.

<b>Special Improvement District</b>	A special improvement district is a provision in Ohio’s administrative code that allows for the creation of a district for the purpose of developing and implementing plans for public improvements and public services that benefit the district. A district may be created by petition of the owners of real property within the proposed district, or by an existing qualified nonprofit corporation.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	A person with an interest or concern in something.
<b>State Wild and Scenic River</b>	Rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values. designated to be preserved in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Rivers may be designated by Congress or, if certain requirements are met, the Secretary of the Interior. Wild and scenic rivers are administered by either federal or state agencies.
<b>Storm Surge</b>	A temporary rise in water levels caused by strong winds and low pressure during storms. In the Great Lakes, storm surge can raise water several feet, flooding low areas.
<b>Stormwater Pollution</b>	Rainwater or melting snow that picks up contaminants like oil, fertilizer, trash, and chemicals as it flows over land and goes into storm drains. This polluted runoff is often not treated before it enters rivers, lakes, and streams, which can harm aquatic life, degrade water quality, and pose health risks.
<b>Stormwater Runoff</b>	Precipitation that doesn't soak into the ground, flowing over hard surfaces like roofs and roads, and carrying pollutants like trash, oil, fertilizers, and sediment into nearby water bodies.
<b>Waters of Lake Erie</b>	The warmest and shallowest of the Great Lakes, flowing from Lake Huron via the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers and exiting into the Niagara River.
<b>Wave Attenuation</b>	The slowing down of waves as they move through wetlands, reefs, or other natural features, reducing erosion and flood damage.
<b>Wetland Restoration</b>	Re-creating or improving marshes and swamps along the lakes to absorb floodwaters, filter pollution, and provide wildlife habitat.
<b>Working Waterfronts</b>	Shoreline areas that support jobs and community activities, like fishing, boating, shipping, and tourism, while also building resilience to climate impacts.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conneaut, Ohio has been experiencing climate-related impacts for years, particularly along its shoreline near Conneaut Port and harbor. Conneaut's shoreline is affected by more frequent and severe storms, droughts, and flooding impacts from both land and sea. Inland development channels untreated rainwater runoff containing nutrient and sediment pollution directly into the lake, adversely affecting water quality. Erosion occurring at bluff residences west of the Port is putting residents and critical infrastructure, such as roads, at risk of coastal erosion and flooding from increased storm events and wave action.

In 2023, with a vision centered on community, and an awareness of emerging economic drivers and opportunities, the Conneaut Port Authority (CPA) initiated the planning and design of the Marina Redevelopment Project. This conceptual revitalization, known as the Master Plan, encompasses several key components: economic enhancements, such as the development of commercial properties; safety and access improvements, including pedestrian walkways and road upgrades; the expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities, such as the addition of boardwalks for birdwatching; and ecological restoration and climate resilience initiatives. Recognizing the need for better coastal protections for both the public, the newly recommended socioeconomic developments, and the fish and wildlife, the CPA proposed to lead a coastal resilience planning effort – resulting in the Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan, a separate but related planning effort to the Master Plan.

The Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan is a strategic initiative led by the Conneaut Port Authority (CPA) to address climate change impacts and enhance the ecological and economic resilience of a six-mile stretch of Lake Erie shoreline in Conneaut, Ohio. The Plan integrates community engagement, scientific research, and nature-based solutions to mitigate environmental threats such as shoreline erosion, flooding, and habitat degradation while supporting economic and recreational development. The Plan aims to prepare Conneaut for climate-related changes by protecting people, ecosystems, and the economy through long-term resilience planning. It emphasizes inclusive public engagement, nature-based restoration, and strategic collaboration with governmental entities.

The key objectives of the Plan are:

1. **Protecting People and Communities:** The Plan aims to safeguard vulnerable communities from the health, safety, and economic impacts of extreme weather events by ensuring that infrastructure, homes, and businesses are better prepared for such conditions.
2. **Safeguarding Ecosystems and Biodiversity:** The Plan focuses on preserving natural habitats, protecting biodiversity, and ensuring that ecosystems continue to provide essential services like clean water and carbon sequestration.
3. **Economic Stability and Growth:** By planning for resilience, the Plan seeks to reduce economic risks posed by climate change, ensuring long-term sustainability and supporting local economies.
4. **Fostering Sustainable Development:** The Plan emphasizes making informed decisions about land use, energy consumption, and resource management to balance economic, environmental, and social objectives.



The CPA's focus on infrastructure improvements, environmental protection, and thoughtful planning supports a future where Conneaut thrives. These efforts lay the foundation for a community rooted in pride, environmental responsibility, and economic vitality.

5. **Reducing the Costs of Inaction:** Proactive measures are highlighted to prevent costly damage from extreme weather events and other climate impacts.
6. **Building Adaptive Capacity:** The Plan aims to develop skills, knowledge, and infrastructure that allow the community to respond to changes and ensure long-term stability.

Anticipated outcomes of the Plan include fostering community input, developing feasible green infrastructure projects, providing resources for funding applications, and creating a living document adaptable for future updates and emulation by other organizations. Through continued community and stakeholder engagement, the Plan identified 11 potential green design, nature-based projects that will utilize a variety of resilience strategies (such as green stormwater infrastructure, coastal wetland restoration, and beneficial use of dredge material). These projects are preliminary in nature and are subject to change based on public and stakeholder input, feasibility, permitting and compliance, and available funding. Additional projects may be added in the future, as the Plan is intended to be a living document – a document that is continuously edited and updated to reflect new information, ideas, or changing situations. The following bullets directly correspond to each project’s description within Section 5 of this Plan.



Figure 1. Conneaut, Ohio, Aerial

- **Coastal Marsh Rehabilitation:** Restoration of degraded littoral wetlands involving hydrologic reconnection, invasive species removal, native vegetation replanting, sediment removal or reshaping, and installation of erosion control measures. ([Section 5.1](#))
- **Marina Drive Reconstruction & Constructed Wetland:** Reconstruction of Marina Drive extension and adjacent shoreline, and creation of a barrier island in the harbor, to address infrastructure protection, water quality, and safety/access concerns. ([Section 5.2](#))
- **Naylor Drive Green Infrastructure:** Installation of rain gardens and educational signage along the shore between the road and future harbor to intercept and treat runoff before reaching the Lake. ([Section 5.3](#))
- **Living Shoreline at Canadian National:** Restore Lake Erie shoreline and fish habitat by removing old train cars, installing green infrastructure for erosion control, and creating spawning habitat for smallmouth bass. ([Section 5.4](#))
- **Beach Replenishment East of Conneaut Harbor:** Restore the natural beach profile by replenishing beach sand east of the harbor, planting native vegetation, and installing sand fencing. ([Section 5.5](#))
- **Wetland Park & Boardwalk:** Construction of a wetland to collect and treat inland runoff before reaching the Lake, and installation of a recreational boardwalk and educational signage. ([Section 5.6](#))
- **Restoration Plan for Kelsey’s Run Watershed:** Creation of a plan that investigates and documents the current conditions of the Keley’s Run Watershed and provides ecological

restoration recommendations to the City of Conneaut to help restore natural hydrology. ([Section 5.7](#))

- **Bank Stabilization at Kelsey’s Run:** Restoration of highly visible stream bank erosion and incising in Township Park, and installation of educational signage. ([Section 5.8](#))
- **Conneaut Creek Shoreline Restoration:** Stabilization of Conneaut Creek streambanks within a 2-mile corridor. ([Section 5.9](#))
- **Bluff Protection in Reach 10:** Investigation into the local conditions within Reach 10, outreach and coordination with property owners, creation of a protection plan, and work towards the establishment of a Special Improvement District. ([Section 5.10](#))
- **Turkey Creek Bluff, Ravine, & Riparian Stabilization:** Restoration of lakeside bluff, riparian and ravine environments around the confluence of Turkey Creek and Lake Erie to reduce erosion, incising, and nutrient loading. ([Section 5.11](#))

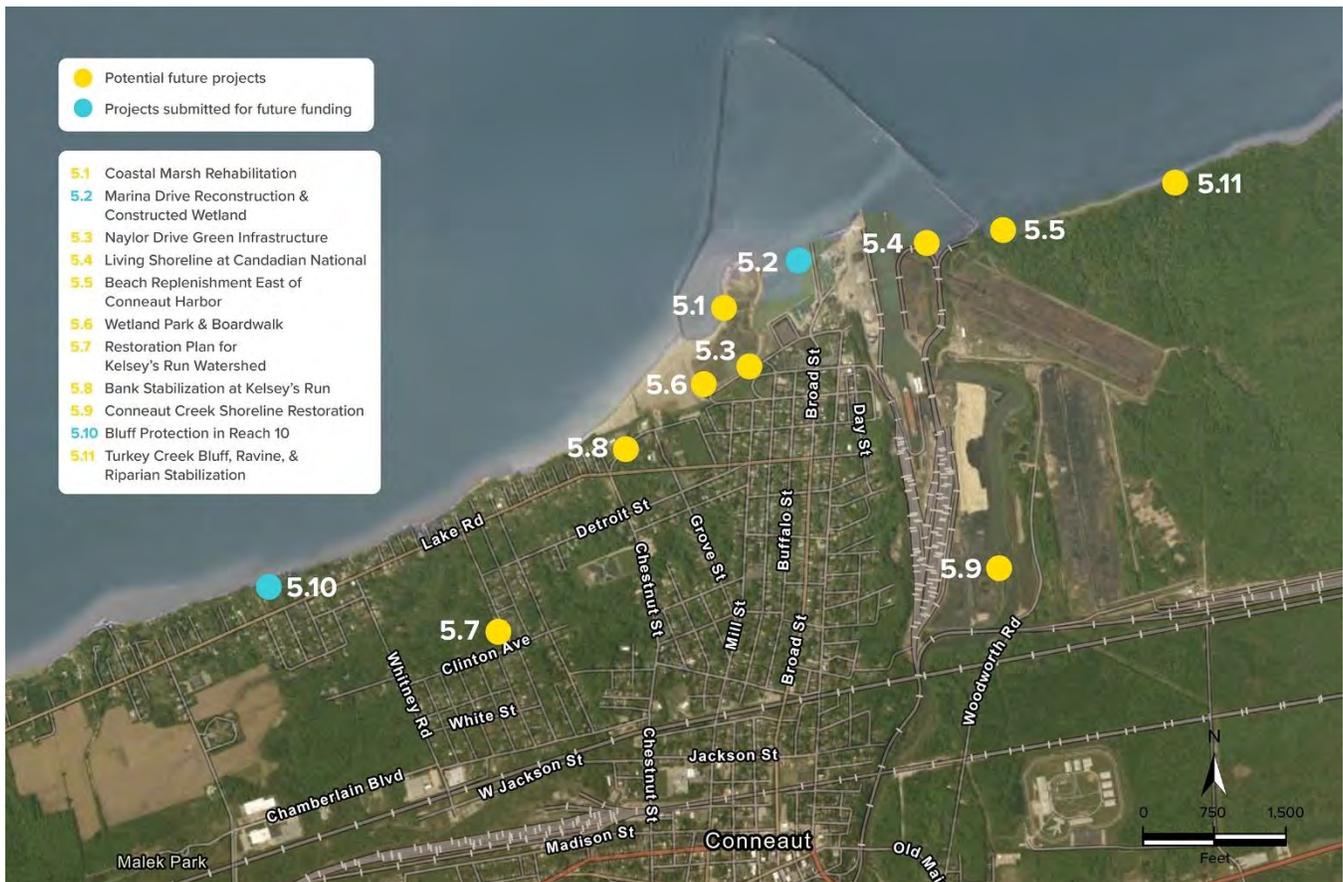


Figure 2. CPA Resilience Plan Projects Map



# Introduction



# 1 INTRODUCTION

The Great Lakes Basin<sup>1</sup> is one of the largest freshwater ecosystems in the world, serving as a vital resource for millions of people, wildlife, and ecosystems. The Basin contains 84 percent of North America’s surface freshwater and approximately 21 percent of the world’s supply of surface freshwater (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] 2025). These bodies of water are a critical source of drinking water, recreation, transportation, agriculture, and economic activity for the surrounding states and communities. However, the increasing effects of climate change threaten the delicate balance of this ecosystem, exacerbating existing environmental challenges and creating new risks. Rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events are altering water quality, threatening biodiversity, and impacting the livelihoods that depend on the lakes (U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, n.d.). Issues such as harmful algal blooms, invasive species, shoreline erosion, and flooding are becoming more pronounced as the climate continues to change. These challenges not only affect the ecological health of the lakes but also have significant social and economic implications for the communities that depend on them.



Figure 3. Great Lakes Basin

The city of Conneaut, Ohio, on the southern shore of Lake Erie in Ashtabula County, has been experiencing climate-related impacts for years, particularly along its shoreline near the Conneaut Port and harbor; Conneaut’s shoreline is affected by more frequent and severe storms, droughts, and flooding impacts from both land and sea. This area contains critical maritime and commercial infrastructure, with the port and rail system serving as a major receiving hub for commodities including iron ore, steel, aggregates, minerals, limestone, and food and farm products. Waterborne transportation facilitated by the harbor supports \$180.5M in business revenue, 771 direct, indirect, and induced jobs, and \$56M in labor income each year (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers [USACE] 2024).

Inland development channels untreated rainwater runoff containing nutrient and sediment pollution directly into the lake, adversely affecting water quality (EPA 2003). For example, waterways such as the drainage systems in Conneaut Township Park and Conneaut Creek are experiencing bank and slope erosion, leading to accelerated sediment transport and nutrient loading in Lake Erie, particularly in areas surrounding the port and marina (Roloson 2005). Erosion is also occurring at bluff residences west of the Port. These residences face risks of coastal erosion and flooding due to increased storm events and wave action, as do nearby roadways, Lake Road and Naylor Drive, which provide access to homes and community infrastructure, including schools, local government facilities, churches, and the marina.

In addition, this area provides some of eastern Ohio’s most accessible outdoor recreation opportunities, which is at risk due to natural hazards. Over the past 50 years, eastern Ohio’s economy has shifted from manufacturing and heavy industry (e.g., coal) to the service sector, and opportunities in the outdoor tourism industry have grown (Shields 2018). Conneaut’s beaches are a popular warm-weather destination for people in the region, and the Conneaut marina serves both commercial and recreational boaters and anglers throughout the spring, summer, and fall. Conneaut harbor is considered one of Lake Erie’s legendary birding hotspots, according to the Ohio Ornithological Society, with “scores of rarities” being observed such as the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) a federal endangered species within the Great

<sup>1</sup> Figure 3 source: <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/water-resources/water-inventory-planning/great-lakes-compact>.

Lakes with breeding habitat along the Conneaut shoreline, Red Phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*), Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*), and Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) (Ohio Ornithological Society, n.d.). Conneaut Harbor is stop #1 on the Lake Erie Birding Trail (within the Ashtabula Loop), a trail program administered by the Ohio Division of Wildlife within the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) (ODNR 2025). Being the first stop on a state-recognized birding trail highlights Conneaut Harbor as a premier destination for wildlife viewing, especially birding, which is a growing sector in nature-based tourism. It underscores the harbor's ecological significance and its role in outdoor recreation and conservation.

Conneaut also boasts a thriving recreational fishing industry with many charter companies launching from the marina, and fly fishermen frequenting Conneaut Creek, a State Wild and Scenic River. Conneaut Creek supports over 78 species of fish, 32 species of amphibians and reptiles, and 30 unique plants and plant communities (ODNR n.d.). Salamander mussels (*Simpsonaias ambigua*), a state threatened and federally proposed endangered species, are also known to inhabit the area (Welte 2020).

CPA's focus on infrastructure improvements, environmental protection, and thoughtful planning for recreational and economic development lays the groundwork for a future in which Conneaut thrives as a hub of community pride, environmental responsibility, and economic vitality.

In 2023, with a vision centered on community, and an awareness of emerging economic drivers and opportunities, the Conneaut Port Authority (CPA) initiated the planning and design of the marina redevelopment project. This conceptual revitalization, known as the Master Plan, encompasses several key components: economic enhancements, such as the development of commercial properties; safety and access improvements, including pedestrian walkways and road upgrades; the expansion of outdoor recreational opportunities, such as the addition of boardwalks for birdwatching; and ecological restoration and climate resilience initiatives. Climate resilience refers to the capacity of social and



Figure 4. Master Plan Resilience Projects

ecological systems to absorb and adapt to the shocks and stresses induced by a changing climate, thereby positioning themselves to respond more effectively in the future. Climate resilience involves not only enduring climate impacts but also thriving in an evolving environment. Incorporating climate resilience elements such as living shorelines, functioning wetlands, dune and beach enhancement, etc., into the Master Plan was a focus of CPA's, following their mission statement to *"provide Conneaut a safe and environmental-friendly community through development and recreational opportunities in collaboration with community partners"*. In the Master Plan, five specific areas within the larger redevelopment footprint are identified as possible locations for climate resilience projects: the sandbar (B), Marina Drive extension (G), Canadian National Lakefront (H), the shoreline east of the port, and the lagoon (H & I) Figure 4).

## 1.1 Plan Purpose

Planning for a climate-resilient future is about preparing for the inevitable changes ahead, protecting current and future generations, and ensuring that people, ecosystems, and economies can continue to thrive despite the challenges posed by natural hazards. A dedicated advocate for community resilience, the CPA, following their mission statement and understanding that public and stakeholder engagement will provide the necessary collaboration and support for a successful redevelopment, decided to build upon the Master Plan and develop the Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan (Plan). This plan's purpose is to identify the climate impacts along Lake Erie, assess how these impacts may affect CPA's redevelopment efforts, and establish the priorities for CPA and the community in adapting and protecting the coast. It focuses on identifying viable strategies for resilience that are both practical and equitable.

Long-term planning is a proactive way to enhance preparedness for the impacts of coastal hazards and account for the variability of the Great Lakes water levels, coastal storms, and changes to the system associated with a changing climate. A resilience plan enables coastal communities to prepare for and adapt to environmental changes, thereby protecting residents, supporting the economy, and preserving natural resources while ensuring long-term sustainability. Planning for a climate-resilient future is critical for several important reasons:

-  **Protecting People and Communities:** As climate change brings more frequent and intense weather events, such as floods, storms, heatwaves, and wildfires, planning for resilience helps protect vulnerable communities from the health, safety, and economic impacts of these events. It ensures that infrastructure, homes, and businesses are better prepared for extreme conditions, reducing the risk of loss of life and property damage.
-  **Safeguarding Ecosystems and Biodiversity:** Resilience planning can help protect natural habitats, preserve biodiversity, and ensure that ecosystems continue to provide vital services, like clean water, food, and carbon sequestration, which are essential for human survival.
-  **Economic Stability and Growth:** Extreme weather events and climate impacts can disrupt economies by damaging infrastructure, agriculture, and supply chains, leading to financial losses. By planning for resilience, communities and businesses can reduce the economic risks posed by climate change, ensuring long-term sustainability. This includes adapting agricultural practices to changing weather patterns and investing in resilient infrastructure that can withstand future climate challenges.
-  **Fostering Sustainable Development:** Climate resilience is closely linked to sustainability. Planning for a resilient future ensures that development today does not undermine the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This involves making informed decisions about land use, energy consumption, and resource management, which helps balance economic, environmental, and social objectives in the face of climate change.



**Reducing the Costs of Inaction:** The cost of not planning for climate resilience is far greater in the long run. Without proactive measures, the damage caused by extreme weather events, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts will continue to increase, leading to costly repairs, health crises, and economic instability. Investing in climate resilience today can prevent far more expensive damage in the future, helping to protect both people and economies.



**Building Adaptive Capacity:** Planning for resilience helps individuals, businesses, and governments build the adaptive capacity needed to respond to changes. It includes developing skills, knowledge, and infrastructure that allow people and systems to bounce back after disruptions, reducing the need for recovery and ensuring long-term stability.

## 1.2 Goals & Objectives

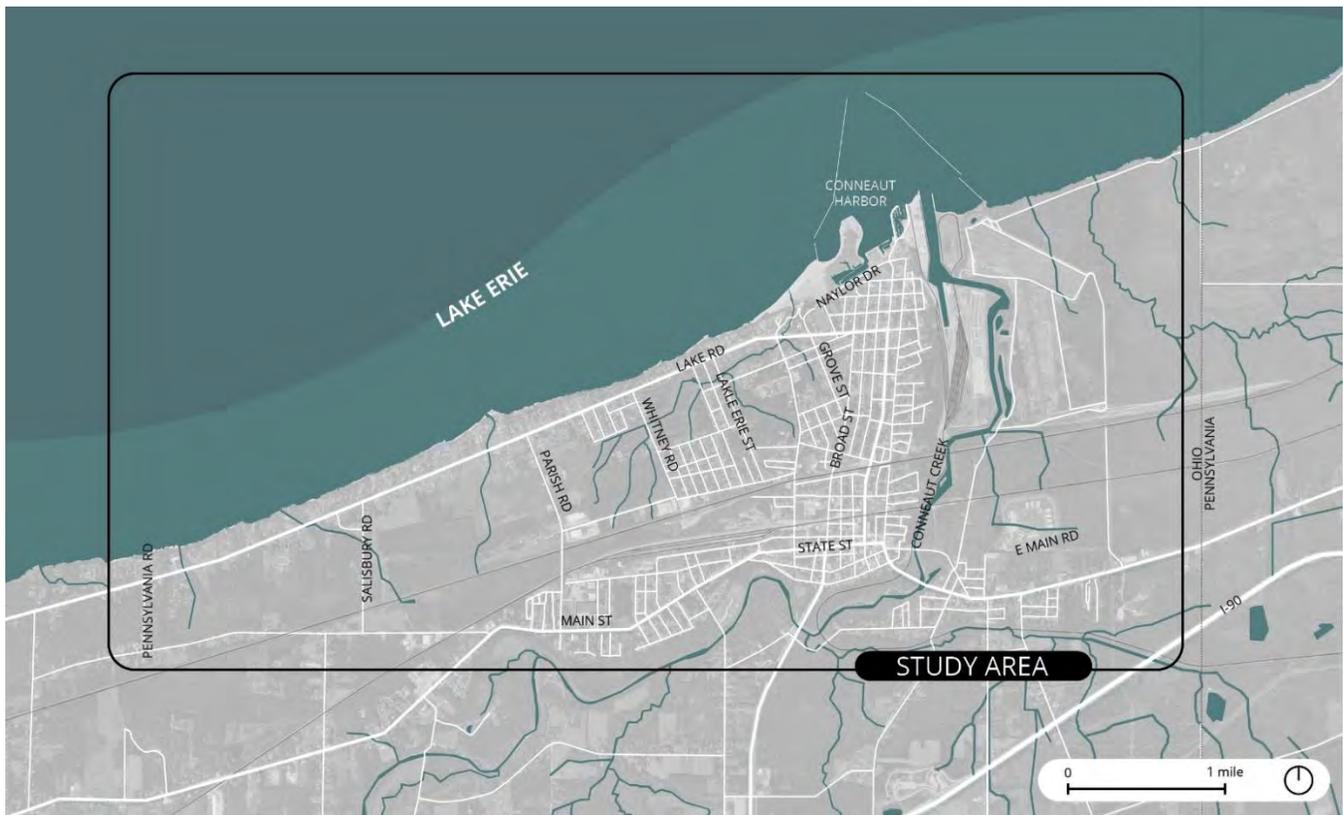


Figure 5. Plan Boundary and Study Area

This Plan addresses the coastal resiliency issues impacting a 6-mile section of Lake Erie coastline at the easternmost end of Ohio (Figure 5). The study area is approximately centered on Conneaut Harbor and features various shoreline conditions; The western portion includes high bluffs with residential areas, while the harbor area consists of an impounded beach, coastal marsh habitat, and a reinforced industrial port. The six-mile study area was selected due to its direct influence on the CPA and the community of Conneaut as well as its alignment with the divisions outlined in the Lake Erie Shore Erosion Management Plan (LESEMP) developed by ODNR (ODNR 2020a).

The goal of the Plan is to identify, describe, and prioritize potential green infrastructure coastal resilience projects within the six-mile study area to provide fish and wildlife benefits and enhance long-term community resilience and in Conneaut, Ohio. To achieve this goal, the CPA has identified the following Plan objectives:

- Foster meaningful and inclusive public engagement by providing transparent, accessible and collaborative opportunities for community and stakeholder input into the development of the Plan.
- Develop feasible, nature-based restoration, conservation, and resilience priority projects in and around Conneaut.
- Provide community organizations with project descriptions that can be used to apply for and receive design, permitting, and implementation funding.
- Provide a strategic pathway for state, federal, and local entities to restore, enhance, and protect coastal infrastructure and habitats and advance the state and local resiliency goals set forth in various national, state, regional, and local planning documents.
- Create a living document that can be emulated by other Port Authorities and similar organizations for future resilience planning work.

### 1.3 Plan Structure

The Plan utilizes a funnel structure (Figure 6) to provide the reader with a strategic framework that begins broadly with overarching restoration concepts and regional project examples and progressively narrows in focus to specific resilience actions and site-specific projects. This organization ensures that the Plan is both visionary and actionable, moving from high-level direction to ground-level implementation. It also enables flexibility for future amendments and updates, facilitating adaptive management by maintaining overarching objectives while specific actions and projects can be adjusted as needed. This approach essentially creates a dynamic and evolving document.



Figure 6. Resilience Plan Funnel Structure

It's important for the readers and users of this Plan to understand the national, regional, and state resilience efforts that have occurred, as this Plan should build off previous scientific and strategic work. There are many tried and true restoration and resilience strategies that CPA and other organizations can rely on for mitigating the impacts of climate change and natural hazards. Describing the existing and future environmental conditions of the Conneaut area provides context why certain resilience and restoration strategies were ultimately selected for site specific projects.

The projects outlined in this Plan are the result of extensive research, site visits, and input from the public and stakeholders. The cornerstone in developing the Plan has been community engagement, which has given CPA the ability to consider diverse

perspectives and experiences, to advocate for the importance of climate resilience planning, promote the use of green design, and build support for marina redevelopment. The engagement efforts (outlined in Section 2) provided stakeholders and the public multiple opportunities to express their concerns about and support for the redevelopment, propose potential nature-based solutions and project ideas, and provide comments on the Plan. The overall engagement work that has been completed to date illustrates to future project funders CPA's dedication to public input and participation.

### 1.4 Previous Planning Efforts

To capitalize on the extensive benefits of prior planning efforts, technical research, and resilience resources, the planning team reviewed numerous relevant studies and documents that align with CPA's

scope, goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. Multiple planning and analysis initiatives by federal, state, and local governments, agencies, and organizations have been undertaken to assess existing waterfront resources and to explore strategies for safeguarding, reinforcing, and enhancing these resources for the future. These technical documents provided valuable insights into the development of nature-based coastal resilience projects within the Plan. Additionally, the Plan draws upon previous stakeholder contributions, including information from existing conditions reports, guidance documents, and manuals focused on reducing erosion, stabilizing shorelines, improving and building wetlands, and implementing ecological restoration in the Great Lakes region. Below is a subset of the documents reviewed and referenced during the Plan's development.

#### 1.4.1 Ashtabula County Coastal Management Plan, Ashtabula County (2013)



Figure 7. Ashtabula County Coastal Management Plan

The Ashtabula County Coastal Management Plan examined major opportunities and challenges associated with the county's 30 miles of Lake Erie shoreline, and identified ways in which residents and communities can make informed decisions on how to protect, develop, and benefit from the resources provided by the Lake. Conneaut Port was identified as a Priority Development Area, and Conneaut Township Park was identified as a Priority Conservation Area (Ashtabula County 2013). The coastal management plan also highlighted the importance of tourism, especially environmental tourism, as an economic generator for the County.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.4.2 City of Conneaut 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update, City of Conneaut (2018)

Conneaut's comprehensive plan is a set of policy statements intended to guide future land use and physical development. This work built on the elements of previous plans while looking 10+ years into the future. The plan's policy framework includes strengthening the economy, highlighting the importance of expanding housing and recreational offerings while embracing tourism, and identifying Conneaut Port as a priority economic development area. The plan's policy framework also includes preserving, conserving, and managing green space, highlighting several waterfront resources as critical for management and protection, and identifying Conneaut Township Park as a priority conservation area. This Plan relies on some of the goals and desires of the residents, specifically targeting the framework and actions for management of critical water resources near the Port and Township Park.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 8. 2017 Comprehensive Plan Update

#### 1.4.3 Conneaut Charrette Harbor Plan, Kent State Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (2016)

As a follow up to the 2014 *Conneaut Charrette Report*, Kent State's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative developed design proposals for improvements along Conneaut's harbor. The plan

<sup>2</sup> Figure 7 source: Ashtabula County, Ohio, <https://www.ashtabulacounty.us/>.

<sup>3</sup> Figure 8 source: City of Conneaut, Ohio, <https://conneautohio.gov/>.

included enhanced crosswalks, new parking, a public outdoor deck, a renovation of the existing fisheries building, event space, a waterfront pavilion, multi-use retail storefronts, a new housing development, and a redeveloped public park featuring marsh and wetland rehabilitation as well as the expansion of nature-based recreational opportunities. This collaboration served as a basis for the design and creation of the coastal marsh rehabilitation, and the marina drive reconstruction listed in Section 5.

#### 1.4.4 Conneaut Charrette Report, Kent State Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (2014)

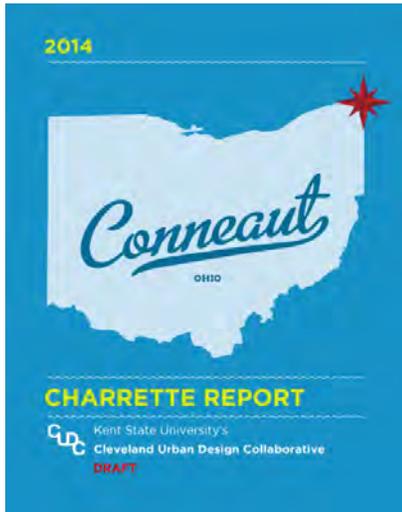


Figure 9. Conneaut Charrette Report

Students, staff, and alumni from Kent State University’s Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative (CUDC) worked closely with community members in Conneaut, Ohio to generate a shared vision for the city’s future. The main goals for the project mostly overlap with the focus and intended outcome of this Plan, and included: (1) focus on lakefront assets; (2) increase tourism by connecting Conneaut to regional destinations and attractions; (3) Connect existing assets within Conneaut by linking sites of interest from the lake to the highway; (4) promote year-round outdoor activity; (5) enhance scenic routes for cycling; (6) encourage multiple modes of transportation through identification of opportunities for bikes, snowmobiles, and golf carts; (7) diversify and expand housing options through attracting tourists to become residents; (8) reveal Conneaut’s history and identity by developing wayfinding and public art strategies; and (9) revitalize key nodes by reinforcing important places that embody Conneaut’s heritage. CPA’s redevelopment efforts and this Plan will help achieve these goals proposed over eleven years ago.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1.4.5 Guidance for Considering the Use of Living Shorelines, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (2015)

In 2015 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) developed in an agency-wide effort, the Guidance for Considering the use of Living Shorelines, to clarify NOAA’s encouragement for the use of living shorelines as a shoreline stabilization technique along sheltered coasts (coasts not exposed to open ocean wave energy). The document outlines NOAA’s guiding principles an organization should consider when taking into consideration living shorelines as a resilience technique, how and why NOAA is encouraging the use of living shorelines, and how to navigate potential regulatory permitting when planning for shoreline projects (NOAA 2015). The proposed living shoreline project outlined in Section 5 draws from the techniques listed in this guidance document.<sup>5</sup>

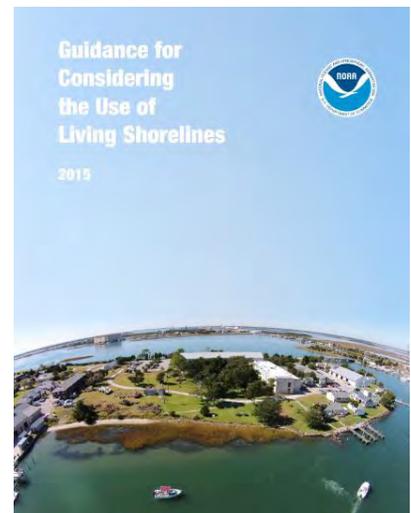


Figure 10. Guidance for Considering the Use of Living Shorelines

#### 1.4.6 Lake Erie Shoreline Erosion Management Plan, ODNR (2020)

The LESEMP is a partnership through ODNR between the Office of Coastal Management (OCM), Division of Wildlife, and the Division of Geological Survey. LESEMP is an

<sup>4</sup> Figure 9 source: Kent State University - Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative 2014, [https://webgen1files.revize.com/conneautoh/Document%20Center/Department/Planning%20&%20zoning/2014\\_Fall\\_Conneaut\\_Report\\_DRAFT\\_small%20\(002\).pdf](https://webgen1files.revize.com/conneautoh/Document%20Center/Department/Planning%20&%20zoning/2014_Fall_Conneaut_Report_DRAFT_small%20(002).pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Figure 10 source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, [https://www.habitatblueprint.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NOAA-Guidance-for-Considering-the-Use-of-Living-Shorelines\\_2015.pdf](https://www.habitatblueprint.noaa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/NOAA-Guidance-for-Considering-the-Use-of-Living-Shorelines_2015.pdf).



Figure 11. Lake Erie Shore Erosion Management Plan

ongoing effort to assist local communities and individual property owners in the management of coastal erosion. The LESEMP encompasses a comprehensive array of information and subjects, including coastal geology, erosion processes, critical habitats, and the cultural attributes of local communities, and defines locations along the Lake Erie shoreline as “reaches”. Conneaut is described within reaches 10, 11, and 12 (ODNR 2020a). It also explains the various causes of shoreline erosion and provides general erosion rates for each coastal county. Ashtabula County, as detailed in plan, has lost approximately 82 feet of shoreline from 1877 to 1973, and approximately 28 feet

from 1973 to 1990, indicating that the rate of erosion has increased from nearly 1 foot per year to about 1.6 feet per year (ODNR 2020a). The plan further details specific recommendations to mitigate the impacts of erosion that are intended to serve as a best practices for the management of erosion along Ohio’s coast. These erosion control measurements include beach nourishment, bulkheads, drainage systems, dune construction, regrading/terracing, revetments, sand bypassing, seawalls, and planting of vegetation. The prioritized resilience projects in Section 5 relied on the LESEMP to select suitable strategies to mitigate erosion. Specific projects such as the beach replenishment east of the port and the reconstruction of the marina drive and construction of wetland, were chosen based on selected LESEMP erosion control methods and reach designation.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.4.7 Lake Erie 2019-2023 Lakewide Action & Management Plan, Environment and Climate Change Canada and US Environmental Protection Agency (2021)

The Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management Plan (LAMP) is an ecosystem-based strategy for protecting and restoring the water quality of Lake Erie, the St. Clair River, Lake St. Clair, and the Detroit River.<sup>7</sup> The LAMP was developed and implemented by the Lake Erie Partnership, led by EPA and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) and in collaboration with other federal, state, provincial, tribal, First Nation and local watershed management authorities (ECCC 2021). The LAMP reports on the status of the Lake and the status of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement General Objectives (GLWQA). The conditions of habitats and native species, nutrients and algae, invasive species, and groundwater impacts were reported as “poor” and considered priority threats to the waters of Lake Erie. Actions to target these threats were developed by the LAMP and are grouped into the following categories: (1) preventing and reducing nutrient and bacterial pollutions, (2) preventing and reducing chemical contaminant pollutions, (3) protecting and restoring habitat and native species, and (4) preventing and controlling invasive species. Several of the projects outlined in Section 5 of this Plan align with the actions listed under each strategy of the LAMP. For example, the Conneaut Creek shoreline assessment project falls under the actions to prevent and reduce bacterial, chemical, and nutrient pollution through science, surveillance, and monitoring. The

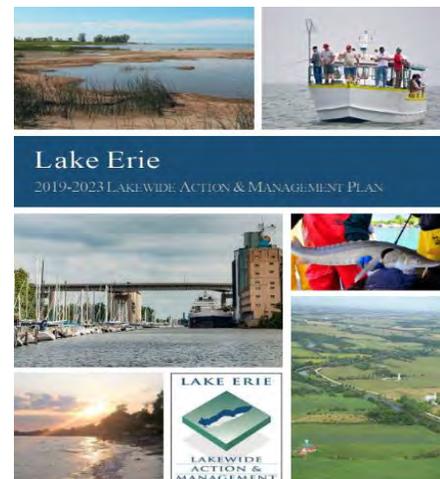


Figure 12. Lake Erie 2019-2023 Lakewide Action and Management Plan

<sup>6</sup> Figure 11 source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/coastal-management/coastalpropertyowners/LESEMP-documents>.

<sup>7</sup> Figure 12 source: Lake Erie Partnership from <https://binational.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/EN-2019-2023-Lake-Erie-LAMP.pdf>

wetland park and boardwalk project falls under the actions to prevent and reduce nutrient and bacterial pollution through the management of surface water runoff through green infrastructure.

#### 1.4.8 Living on the Coast - US Army Corps of Engineers, University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute (2003)

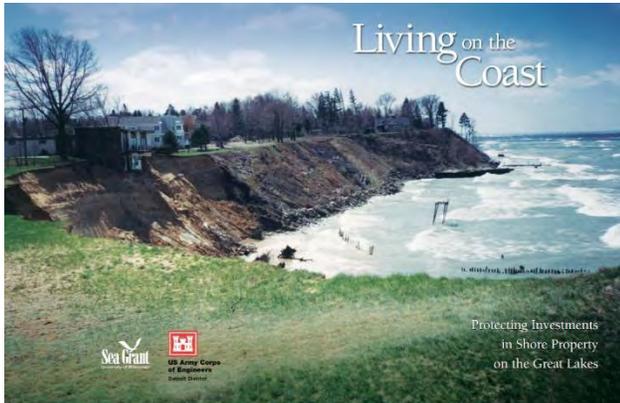


Figure 13. USACE's Living on the Coast Report

In 2003 USACE partnered with the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute (WISGI) to explore the results of natural processes, plausible climate change scenarios, and human influences affecting Great Lakes coasts.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this investigation was to better understand the risks from natural coastal hazards when owning, buying, or building residential, commercial, or industrial developments along the shoreline. Lake level responses were identified as a natural risk and specifically mentioned as the midcontinental Great Lakes basin is subject to harsh, rapid changes in weather and climate (USACE 2003). Storm surges, local wave conditions, longshore and cross-shore transport of sediment, and shoreline

erosion were also identified as risks when considering shoreline development. Amidst these natural risks, four strategies, adaptation, restoration of a natural shoreline, erosion moderation, and armoring the shore, were discussed and cited as defense options. Several of the projects outlined in Section 5 of this Plan fall under the four overarching strategies cited by USACE and WISGI. Specifically, the coastal marsh rehabilitation, marina drive reconstruction, and wetland construction projects proposed later in this plan are within the restoration of natural shoreline techniques, and bank stabilization at Kelsey's run and the creek/ravine stabilization at Turkey Creek Park fall under the erosion moderation techniques proposed by USACE and WISGI.

#### 1.4.9 Ohio Coastal Design Manual, 1st Edition, ODNR, Office of Coastal Management (2011)

The ODNR OCM prepared a design manual in 2011 for engineers, surveyors, and contractors to consider and use when developing along the Lake Erie shoreline. The 2011 design manual is intended to be corroborated with the LESEMP which details what types of erosion control are best suited for specific locations and conditions along the lake. While the LESEMP identifies the types of erosion controls that function best along a section of shoreline, the design manual shows how said structures should be designed (ODNR 2011). The design manual and LESEMP were considered when choosing the projects outlined in Section 5 as a way to ensure compatibility of a project with the location as described in the LESEMP "reaches" and overall project design.<sup>9</sup>

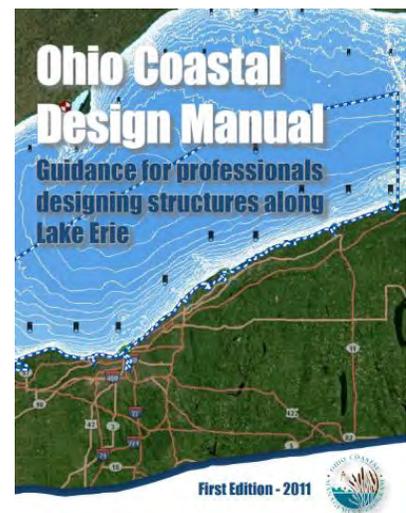


Figure 14. Ohio Coastal Design Manual

<sup>8</sup> Figure 13 source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, [https://www.shorelinepartnership.org/uploads/4/6/8/6/46869113/livingonthecoast\\_sea\\_grant\\_usace\\_2003\\_478366\\_9.pdf](https://www.shorelinepartnership.org/uploads/4/6/8/6/46869113/livingonthecoast_sea_grant_usace_2003_478366_9.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Figure 14 source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <https://ohiodnr.gov/business-and-industry/best-management-practices/coastal-erosion-and-shoreline-protection>.

#### 1.4.10 Ohio Coastal Atlas, 3rd Edition, ODNR OCM (2018)

In 2018 the ODNR OCM updated the Ohio Coastal Atlas with the intent of providing a detailed description of the historical, cultural, physical, and natural resources of Lake Erie for coastal and community decision makers and resources managers. The Coastal Atlas gives detailed information on the following topics: (1) Lake Erie Watershed; (2) Lake Erie’s role in western expansion and settlement of Ohio; (3) transportation and waterborne commerce; (4) land use; (5) protected lands; (6) outdoor recreation and public access; (7) Lake Erie’s ecosystem and habitat types; (8) coastal processes, bathymetry, and geomorphology; (9) soils; (10) geology and the formation of Lake Erie; and (11) water resources, among many other topics. (ODNR 2018). The Coastal Atlas, like the Ohio Coastal Design Manual and LESEMP, was consulted during development of this Plan to inform Sections 3 and 5.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 15. Ohio Coastal Atlas 3rd Edition

<sup>10</sup> Figure 15 source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <https://ohio.gov/>.



# Public Outreach & Community Engagement



## 2 Public Outreach & Community Engagement

Public involvement is not an afterthought in the decision-making process, but rather a core tenet for agencies, organizations, partners, and individuals to evaluate, plan, prioritize, design, construct, and maintain projects that benefit the community. Engaging the public early and often can also help avoid costly re-work and delays later in the project lifecycle, including potential litigation or complaints from community members. Building off previous planning efforts, including CPA’s 2023 Master Plan, the CPA made a point to begin community and stakeholder communication early in the development of the Coastal Resilience Plan. Engagement was driven by a Public Participation Plan (PPP) that was created for this planning effort (Appendix A). The purpose of the PPP was to create a structured approach for involving the public in the development of the Resilience Plan, ensuring that their input is considered, thereby fostering a more inclusive decision-making environment.

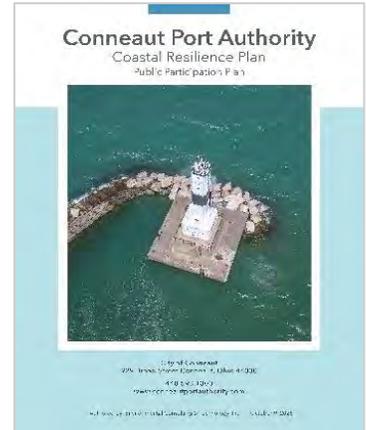


Figure 16. Public Participation Plan

### 2.1 Stakeholders & Communities

CPA, an active organization within the community of Conneaut, has built relationships with various community members, groups, leaders, businesses, and associations, and utilized these already established connections to begin the conversation regarding coastal resilience and how it relates to the planned marina redevelopment. CPA began the process of contacting their vast network of potential stakeholders (defined herein as the state and federal regulatory agencies and other technical entities) and community organizations in May 2024 to gauge interest in participating in this planning effort. Around the same time, the planning team began conducting research into other similar resilience projects that were occurring within the state of Ohio, as well as in other Great Lake states, to learn which community groups and regulatory bodies were engaged as part of those efforts. This information was used to help grow CPA’s network and to reach as many interested parties as possible. Table 1 summarizes these efforts; all these organizations were involved in the engagement activities and had various opportunities to provide input into the Plan.

Table 1. Stakeholders and Community Organizations

Stakeholder Organizations	Community Organizations	
Ashtabula Metro Parks	Ashtabula County	Conneaut Foundation
Canadian National	Ashtabula County Port Authority	Conneaut Library
City of Conneaut	Ashtabula County Tourism Board	Conneaut Township Park
Conneaut Port Authority Board	City of Conneaut-Municipal Government	Kent State University Ashtabula
NOAA - National Marine Fisheries	Civic Development Corporation	Ohio Sea Grants
ODNR	Cleveland Port District	Residents & Community Members
Ohio Department of Transportation	Conneaut Area Historical Society	Conneaut Convention and Visitors Bureau
OEPA	Conneaut Chamber of Commerce	
USACE		

## 2.2 Engagement Efforts

Understanding the interests, concerns, and needs of the public and stakeholders is crucial for any organization aiming to effectively engage with its community and make informed decisions. CPA's approach to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the community and stakeholders' needs, interests, and concerns is multifaceted. The first step was to conduct virtual outreach to those entities in Table 1 via email and phone calls. Through initial outreach, the purpose, needs, and goals of the Resilience Plan, were discussed and CPA was able to gauge their interest in participating in the development of the Plan. Throughout the process, CPA engaged in direct and regular communication with the outreach group through social media updates, phone calls, public meetings, virtual one-on-one meetings, emails, and updates on CPA's website. CPA's homepage included links to surveys and forms soliciting information about the community and stakeholders' project concerns. The goal of this outreach effort was to encourage the community to tell CPA what their needs were and give feedback about the Resilience Plan, not only during the development of the document, but in future phases that will include engineering, design and implementation.

### 2.2.1 Stakeholder Meetings

Hosting virtual meetings and webinars is one way of potentially increasing participation and input into the Resilience Plan, particularly regarding the stakeholders. The stakeholders, as defined previously, are those organizations such as regulatory agencies, landowners, and advisory groups that have a technical and financial interest in the project. Coordinating with these entities to meet all together in-person can be extremely difficult due to varied schedules. As the implementation of the proposed resilience projects will rely on stakeholder buy-in, and as the regulators' input into the resilience approach is critical to establishing the projects as feasible, it was vitally important that our planning team was able to gather their input as efficiently as possible. Therefore, CPA engaged the stakeholders virtually. As opportunities arose, or it became a necessity, CPA's team met with stakeholders in person, with one organization at a time. Online meetings were held using platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom and were recorded and transcribed.

#### *Stakeholder Meeting No. 1*

The first stakeholder meeting was hosted virtually on August 30, 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to review the marina redevelopment Master Plan, introduce the stakeholders to the resilience planning effort, and discuss the goals and objectives of the engagement process. The structure of the meeting allowed for discussion and feedback from the group, which was generally positive. Some agency stakeholders did raise questions regarding permitting the prioritized projects, and if the dredging permits for the new marina had been obtained. Questions regarding the extent of the planning study area, and whether upland areas, such as Turkey Creek, would be included as potential project areas arose. Information shared included current permits issued for areas around the sandbar and existing marina. The stakeholders expressed their interest in the planning process and articulated their satisfaction with the direction CPA was headed with their resilience and redevelopment efforts.

#### *One-on-one Stakeholder Meetings*

A few stakeholders' one-on-one meetings occurred in the fall and winter of 2024 - 2025. CPA and the planning team spoke to:

- Conneaut Creek Dredge Reclamation Facility
- ODNR
- Canadian National
- Ashtabula Metro Parks
- Township Park

The intent of each meeting was to discuss the agency or organization specific needs, wants, resilience challenges, and potential solutions. In these meetings, the planning team presented to each stakeholder group potential nature-based projects that may have beneficial impacts on their resources of concern. No major project feasibility concerns arose during these meetings. During the Canadian National, Ashtabula Metro Parks, and Township Park calls, the planning team discussed various projects that are now included in this Plan. During the ODNR call, some permitting challenges were mentioned, particularly in relation to restoration techniques to mitigate the impacts of bluff erosion. ODNR provided excellent examples of similar resilience and restoration projects to guide the planning team's investigation and learning. These projects included Ashtabula Harbor's wetland, Baltimore Harbor area, and the Euclid Connector Project.

### *Stakeholder Meeting No. 2*

The second stakeholder meeting was held on May 22, 2025, to review the progress made on the Plan since the first meeting. The meeting included a presentation and discussion on the progress of the Plan, an overview of the Plan, the proposed resilience projects, and how the projects would be evaluated for prioritization. A draft of the document was provided to the stakeholders for review and comment. The planning team specifically asked for input and feedback on the descriptions of each agency's regulatory process, the referenced plans and guidance documents, and the proposed projects. The team also asked the stakeholders to provide additional information and data that the plan may be missing. ODNR Division of Wildlife provided information about the importance of the Conneaut Harbor as stop #1 on the Lake Erie Birding Trail. The recognition of this existing natural assets' importance to the public, tourists, the economy, and to the environment highlights the need to protect natural habitats, improve visitor infrastructure, and incorporate conservation-friendly design in any future coastal resilience action.

During the meeting ODNR, Office of Coastal Management, noted that there are towns within Ohio that created shoreline Special Improvement Districts to help plan, organize, and fund shoreline protection and restoration projects. According to Section 1710.02 off the Ohio State Revised Code, "A special improvement district may be created within the boundaries of any one municipal corporation, any one township, or any combination of municipal corporations and townships within a single county, or counties that adjoin one another, for the purpose of developing and implementing plans for public improvements and public services that benefit the district. A district may be created by petition of the owners of real property within the proposed district, or by an existing qualified nonprofit corporation" (Ohio Revised Code 2023). The City of Conneaut engaged in this conversation and indicated that they would be interested in exploring the establishment of such a special district to help support landowners, business owners, and the City in funding shoreline protection projects.

### *Final Stakeholder Meeting No. 3*

A final stakeholder meeting was held virtually on October 2, 2025. The planning team hosted a Teams meeting recapping the recent community outreach activities and public feedback related to the Marina Redevelopment and shoreline projects. Key community concerns that were shared included protecting fisheries and estuary spawning areas, particularly around Turkey Creek and CN Shoreline stabilization, as well as managing tourism impacts like traffic, pollution, and noise. The team reviewed the 11 proposed projects, highlighting the Marina Drive Reconstruction and constructed wetlands as top priorities identified through the MCDA tool and noting a recent grant application to National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Discussion followed about project feasibility, permitting challenges, and coordination with agencies such as the U.S. Army Corps and Ashtabula Metroparks. USACE suggested setting a follow up meeting to review permitting and Ohio DNR suggested setting a meeting to discuss submerged land leases. All stakeholders were invited to continue providing input and to review the final plan which would be posted on the CPA website in November 2025.

## 2.2.2 Community Engagement

The foundation of the engagement efforts has been, and will continue to be, virtual and in-person community meetings. Prior to, and during all meetings, the CPA distributed project information and surveys to collect quantitative data on stakeholder opinions, preferences, and concerns about the proposed resilience projects. The surveys were both paper form and virtual and were designed to capture a range of perspectives about climate change, resilience, green design, and future economic development along the shore of Lake Erie in Conneaut. Various public meeting formats were used during the development of the Plan, including formal presentations, one-on-one and focus group meetings, online meetings, and town hall meetings (Figure 17).<sup>11</sup>



Figure 17. Engagement at First Public Meeting

### Public Meeting No. 1

The first public meeting was hosted on September 10, 2024, from 6 to 8 PM at the Conneaut Arts Center located at 1025 Buffalo Street, in Conneaut Ohio. More than 40 members of the public and community organizations attended including the Conneaut City Manager, City Council members, CPA's Board members, the Conneaut Harbor Master, and members of the Board of Commissioners for Township Park. A town hall style meeting kicked off the evening, giving participants the chance to review the Master Plan, talk directly to CPA and Board Members, and get to know the planning team. Later, a formal presentation was given to introduce the public to the resilience planning effort. MentiMeter, an online interactive presentation tool, was used to engage the attendees and solicit feedback about the planning process. Following the presentation and a formal question and answer session, breakout groups were assembled. A member of the planning team led each breakout group in a focused discussion on the following topics: (1) community resilience concerns, (2) what's important to the community, and (3) resilience project ideas. Team members rotated to the breakout group tables to ensure all participants had a chance to voice their opinions, concerns, and ideas as they related to each topic. After a quick break, the planning team presented the thoughts shared during each of the topic discussions with the room at large (Table 2). The meeting ended by sharing the Plan's development schedule and providing the public with resources on how to keep in contact with the team and continue to stay involved in the project.

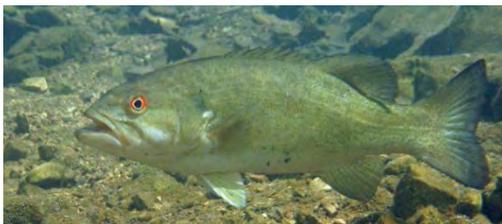


Figure 18. Smallmouth Bass

The meeting was recorded and can be viewed on CPA's website here (<https://www.conneautportauthority.com/>). overall feedback received during and after the meeting was positive, with nearly overwhelming support from the public. However, a few concerns were voiced, including the desire of fisherman to avoid estuary spawning areas for fish, particularly in the areas east of Conneaut Creek that continue to provide habitat for smallmouth bass, and for assurance that any projects proposed would not further exacerbate shoreline erosion for residents. A few community members expressed apprehension that the larger redevelopment project and recreation focused projects would result in reduced availability of parking at the shoreline, increased traffic and unsafe traffic patterns, increased rates of pollution, and the potential for increased nighttime noise levels. There were also questions regarding the number of jobs that will be created with the redevelopment.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Figure 17 source: Rich McBride.

<sup>12</sup> Figure 18 source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/animals/fish/smallmouth-bass>.

**Table 2. Public Meeting No. 1 Breakout Session Feedback**

Breakout Session Topic	Community Feedback
Resilience Concerns	Bluff Erosion
	Lake levels, low and high
	Increased storms and wave action, impacting the marina, and natural recreation areas
	Large population growth
	Stormwater and flooding with new development
What's Important to the Community	Lake Erie and the recreation opportunities it provides (sailing, fishing, etc.).
	Fishing in Conneaut Creek
	The beach area along Lake Erie
	Township Park
	Birding and photography
	Protecting the shoreline and natural recreation areas
	The people of Conneaut and sustainable growth
The view of the sunset	
Resilience Project Ideas	Additional birding sites via boardwalk or ecological restoration project(s).
	New parking areas and projects that will address increased traffic
	A sandbar, island, or living shoreline to protect the marina and fishing boats from waves
	Invasive species management to help support wildlife
	Moving proposed commercial development uphill of Naylor Drive
	Adding family friendly development to the shoreline such as a splash pad, boardwalks with interpretive signage, etc.
	Educational opportunities along the shore, such as a boating safety program or signage

*One-on-one Meetings with Residents and Community Organizations*

Beginning in November 2024, CPA and the planning team hosted various one-on-one meetings with community organizations and residents to further investigate similar resilience projects, discuss personal experiences with natural hazards, brainstorm project ideas, and gather input into the Plan. During this time, CPA and the planning team spoke to the Cleveland Metroparks about the Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS) and the Conneaut boat captains. A one-on-one meeting with a few residents who live along the Lake Erie shoreline, west of Conneaut Harbor occurred on June 9, 2025. On the call, the residents described the erosion occurring on their property, with one landowner noting that their property has subsided by approximately 22 feet in the last 8 years. Discussions regarding the possible causes of erosion, including anecdotal information on surface water runoff from neighboring properties south of Lake Road, resulted in an acknowledgement that site specific surveys and data collection will be needed in the future. The planning team followed up with a site visit to affected properties north of Lake Road on June 26<sup>th</sup> to document and discuss bluff erosion. Additional one-on-one meetings were scheduled throughout the drafting of this Plan, as residents expressed interest.

## Public Meeting No. 2 – Open House at Township Park

The second public engagement meeting was held on June 25, 2025, at Township Park at 480 Lake Road, Conneaut. The open-house style event took place on a weekday from 3 to 7 PM kicking off at the well-known gazebo on the bluff overlooking Lake Erie. More than 45 members of the public and community organizations attended, including CPA Board members, City Council members, the Conneaut Harbor Master, local businesses and residents, and leaders from the Conneaut Public Library, Conneaut Area City Schools, and members of the press. Supported by excellent weather, the attendance was successful due to advertisements on social media and CPA’s website and distribution of flyers displayed in community venues around town and the beach, as well as shared directly with boat owners at the port.<sup>13</sup>

The goal for this second meeting was to inform the community about the eleven selected projects identified in the draft Plan and solicit feedback. The open house experience was interactive, featuring five stations along the bluff walking pathway:

1. Welcome Area – Gazebo and upper pavilion
2. Projects – Series of posters along the bluff
3. Kelsey’s Creek Walk and Overlook
4. Kids Activities - Playground
5. Feedback, Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) & Refreshments – Lower pavilion

CPA contractors and staff were stationed at each stop to provide context for the information presented. Attendees gathered at the top of the bluff and were welcomed and oriented by the planning team as they signed in. Guests received an open house map that explained each station and directions about how to progress. They also were given clipboards with feedback forms encouraging engagement and note taking. A mood board was on display to communicate the general look and feel of the ultimate final Plan, while several hard copies of the draft Plan were available for review. Attendees also were given small cards with QR codes linked to the full draft Plan on the CPA website and a digital form where they could submit their comments. Many attendees lingered under the shade of the gazebo sharing stories and asking questions.



Figure 19. Open House Flyer Posted Throughout the Conneaut Community



Figure 20. June 25, 2025, Township Park Public Open House Overlooking Lake Erie

<sup>13</sup> Figure 19 and Figure 20 source: Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.



Figure 21. June 25, 2025, Open House Hosted at Township Park

house. At the Kids Zone youth gathered at the playground and participated in nature themed activities including painting pots and planting seeds. The last stop of the open house featured a complimentary meal from the concessions stand with beverages and an opportunity to engage with the project team to discuss overall feedback as well as the MCDA. This evaluation system was used to prioritize which projects should seek continued funding. (See section 4.0 for more information about MCDA). It was important to share with the community how decisions were being made transparently and with balanced consideration for many factors.

Both the local newspapers, the [Courier/Gazette News](#) and the [Star Beacon](#) both featured stories about the open house. Feedback from those in attendance was generally positive with 21 community members signing



Figure 23. Hands-on Example of MCDA Tool Presented at Open House

in this area of Lake Erie, and noted that overtime, invasive aquatic plant species, sedimentation, and other factors have led to a decline in the smallmouth bass population inhabiting the area. He also expressed confusion regarding the projects - as he understood it, these projects were all going to move forward with 100% certainty, exactly as they are proposed. The planning team reiterated that these projects are

Next, guests moved through a series of displays that summarized each of the eleven projects and featured a project location map with background and highlight summaries. Several of the projects were visible from the bluff, which added to the real-time excitement and understanding. Kelsey’s Run, an incised creek that runs through Township Park, offered a prime opportunity for a walk and overlook of the proposed bank stabilization project, while views of the sandbar, Naylor Drive and the port further oriented attendees.<sup>14</sup>

Once the upper series of stations was complete guests traveled to the lower portion of the open



Figure 22. June 25, 2025, Open House Walking Tour of Proposed Project

a letter of support for advancing projects through engineering and design. Residents and recreationalists seemed to approve of most of the proposed projects; however, the wetland park and boardwalk area garnered most of the most positive support, with one community member noting “I have always felt this was a wasted area and should be utilized. I like the concept.” The Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland Project also received significant support due to the protection the project will provide the marina.

Comments through online forms were received after the second public meeting. The planning team followed up with one recreationalist who frequents Conneaut for the natural environment, fishing, and boating through an online virtual meeting. During this meeting, the fisherman expressed concerns regarding the Living Shoreline at the Canadian National project. He wanted to ensure that the shoreline erosion control work that would occur onsite would enhance the spawning area for smallmouth bass. He provided a historical context of the bass fishery

<sup>14</sup> Figure 21, Figure 22, and Figure 23 source: Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.

conceptual only, and that design and implementation of each project may occur if funding and community/stakeholder support is secured.

### ***Community Volunteer Clean-up Event***

On Tuesday, August 19, 2025, CPA hosted a Volunteer Clean-up Day at the Port’s public dock in partnership with Conneaut Area City Schools. The event supported the district’s high school graduation requirement for community service and drew participation from 13 students and community members, who collectively contributed more than 38 volunteer hours. Activities included picking up litter and stocking supplies. As part of the event, the planning team introduced the Conneaut Resilience Plan and engaged volunteers in conversations about the skills and career paths related to resilience planning. Participants were also invited to share their perspectives on Conneaut’s future through a virtual survey and expressed interest in potential citizen science opportunities tied to future phases of the Plan’s implementation. Pizza and refreshments were served.<sup>15</sup>



***Figure 24. August 19, 2025, Volunteer Cleanup Event at the Sandbar and Marina***

### ***White Out Community Event***

On September 19, 2025, members of the planning team attended the Conneaut High School “White Out” street fair event before the home football game. Community members were able to stop at the Resilience Plan booth to review project posters and ask questions. Flyers for the final public meeting were shared, encouraging broad attendance to the public meeting the following day. It was estimated that over 500-600 people attended the white out. The Resilience Plan was also featured in an interview with Chuck Guglielmo, a well-known local community voice.



***Figure 25. Interview with Chuck Guglielmo***

### ***Final Public Meeting***

The third and final public meeting was held on September 20, 2025, in the heart of the Port District at Smoke on the Water BBQ and Seafood, located at 1205-½ Broad Street, Conneaut. Over 60 people attended the meeting, enjoying lunch along with an informative presentation given by the planning team. Each of the 11 projects was explained in detail along with the next steps and an invitation for engagement. It was shared that the final Conneaut Resilience Plan will be available on



***Figure 26. September 20, 2025, Final Public Meeting Hosted at the Marina***

<sup>15</sup> Figure 24, Figure 25, and Figure 26 source: Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.

CPA's website and will be a living document. Comments and information about potential new projects were encouraged through continued interaction with CPA in-person and online. Both the local newspapers, the [Courier/Gazette News](#) and the [Star Beacon](#) featured articles about the final public meeting. The event concluded with a celebration by local musicians The Slack and Kings of Castles.

## 2.3 Stakeholder and Community Recommendations

The engagement activities conducted for this Plan generated a wide range of feedback, with overall sentiment being largely positive. Community members and stakeholders expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be heard and recognized and that CPA was taking meaningful steps to address coastal hazards and advance resilience efforts. Some concerns were raised, including skepticism about long-term outcomes and apprehension about potential negative impacts—such as increased traffic—resulting from future tourism growth. For future phases, it is recommended to maintain both formal and informal lines of communication, including continued one-on-one meetings, which proved highly effective in generating meaningful feedback and dialogue. Any project that moves forward should continue to prioritize public and stakeholder engagement, as this is essential for building lasting support.

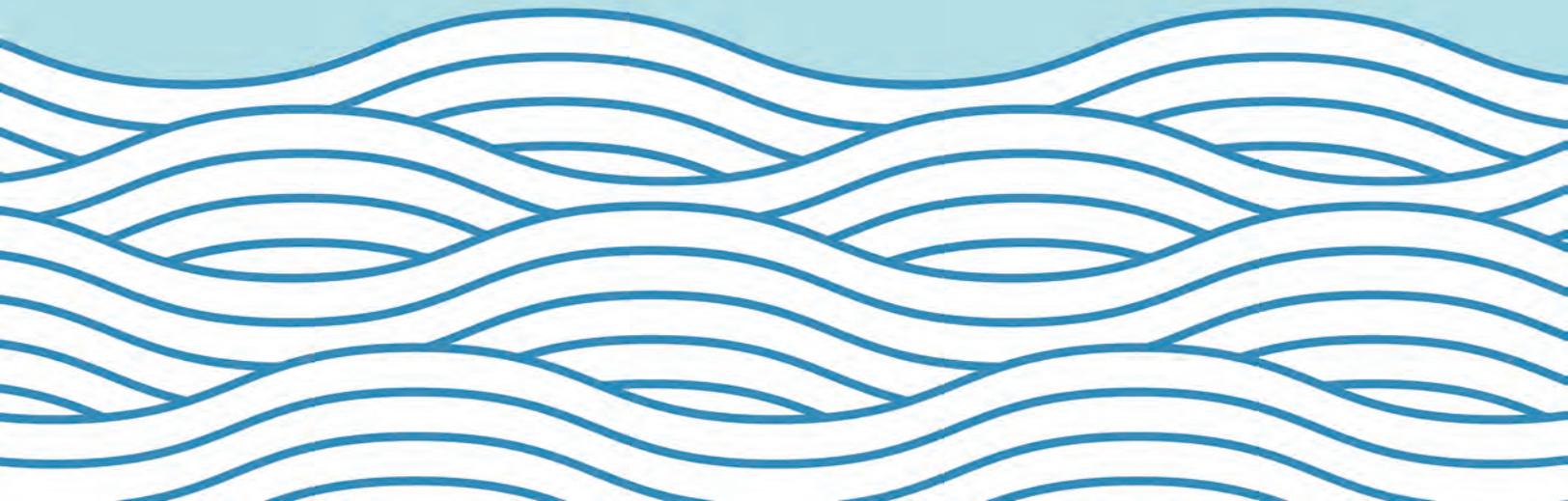
The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) was highly engaged throughout the stakeholder process. While they were unable to provide formal approval, they contributed valuable feedback and guidance. Notably, they recommended exploring the creation of a Special Use District that would include the eroding residential bluff areas. ODNR also provided useful tools, examples, and resources that highlighted the potential value and feasibility of such a district. As the plan progresses into future design and implementation phases, it is recommended to establish a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). This group would be composed of subject matter experts offering guidance and recommendations on complex design and planning decisions. Areas of expertise could include local governance, environmental regulation and planning, transportation, financing and economic development, recreation, and other relevant disciplines.

In addition, both stakeholders and the public have noted that the following aspects of the Plan and future projects are important to the residents and for the ecological health of Lake Erie and Conneaut:

-  **Creation and improvement of fish habitats:** Fishing, both commercial and recreational fishing is extremely important to the residents and visitors of the Conneaut area. Throughout the engagement activities and online responses to the Plan, the planning team received feedback that during project planning, any opportunities to improve or create spawning and foraging habitat for fisheries should be considered and incorporated.
-  **Birdwatching and recreational activities:** Conneaut Harbor is the first stop on the Lake Erie Birding Trail, highlighting the importance of ecotourism in the region. Thousands of in-state and out-of-state tourists flock to Conneaut for recreational opportunities (fishing, birdwatching, beach-going, boating, etc.). Creating additional recreational opportunities and improving existing recreation infrastructure with a focus on safety will help the local economy grow. Future projects will also look for occasions to improve the bird population in the area through creation or improvement of rookeries and foraging habitat.
-  **Educational Signage and learning opportunities:** Throughout the process of developing the Plan, residents brought up the importance of continued education, whether it be about swimming safety, water quality, restoration and resilience, or other ecological functions. The planning team will continue to look for opportunities to incorporate educational signage and continued outreach and education in all future resilience projects.



# Achieving Resilience



### 3 ACHIEVING RESILIENCE

To achieve a resilient Conneaut, CPA is following the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit’s steps to resilience framework which “encompasses the team building, data gathering, and decision making it takes for a local climate champion and a team of engaged community members to enhance their resilience to climate-related impacts” (U.S. Federal Government 2024) (Figure 27). The vision of this Plan is for the CPA, as a steward of the local economy and environment, to collaborate with the community of Conneaut



Figure 27. U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit

to help residents learn about their local climate hazards, identify their most pressing climate-related issues, and work together to develop an equitable climate resilience plan. Creating a community driven Plan and prioritizing resilience projects endorsed by residents and stakeholders will improve access to future funding and builds social cohesion and local capacity. Grantmakers, government agencies, and policymakers often favor or require demonstrated community support for projects that request design, permitting, and implementation funding, making it easier to secure future implementation dollars. The process of collaboration and shared decision-making also strengthens community relationships, trust, and capacity to tackle future challenges collectively.

The Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan is intended to be a living document, with future updates encouraged. Impacts of climate-related risks and natural disasters change over time, as do demographics, economic drivers, and environmental conditions. The Plan is structured to adapt to these changes over time. In addition, as CPA and others “take action” (i.e., plan, permit, and implement) on the prioritized projects outlined in this Plan, other community vetted projects should be added.

Achieving resilience through ecological restoration and nature-based design projects necessitates thorough consideration of both community needs and ecological function. Factors essential for realizing coastal resilience, aside from engagement, include the current and projected environmental conditions as well as regulatory compliance and permitting. The planning team also reviewed current and historical resilience efforts to obtain valuable insights, lessons learned, and practical guidance in the pursuit of a resilient Conneaut. Additionally, these resilience efforts have provided the team with insights into effective resilience strategies and actions that can be used in Conneaut that successfully address the impacts of climate change.

#### 3.1 Existing and Future Environmental Conditions

The Great Lakes are experiencing the repercussions of a changing climate, prompting renewed focus on the restoration and protection of the United States' largest freshwater system. In September 2022, Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments (GLISA) published a report detailing the impacts of climate change within the Erie region, including increased precipitation, rising temperatures, and reduced ice coverage. These changes have triggered a “domino effect” of impacts that not only affect the region but also the community of Conneaut (Channell et al. 2022).

### 3.1.1 Regional Climate Conditions

The Great Lakes region is experiencing an increase in annual precipitation as a result of climate change. The warmer air and surface temperatures contribute to higher evaporation rates, which in turn lead to greater cloud formation and more intense precipitation events and storms (Dietz *et al.* 2011; Sinha *et al.* 2023). Several Great Lake coastal communities have already experienced the effects of such storm events caused by increased precipitation. Erosion, exacerbated by heightened precipitation and more severe storms, has started to consume shoreline communities, resulting in the loss of residential properties, commercial developments, and formerly cherished public beaches. Current models predict 7-percent greater average rainfall intensity per degree of surface warming in the Great Lakes region (d'Orgeville *et al.* 2014; Sinha *et al.* 2023). With increased variability and intensity of precipitation, intermittent periods of flooding and drought will become both more frequent and severe (Wuebbles *et al.* 2019; Sinha *et al.* 2023).

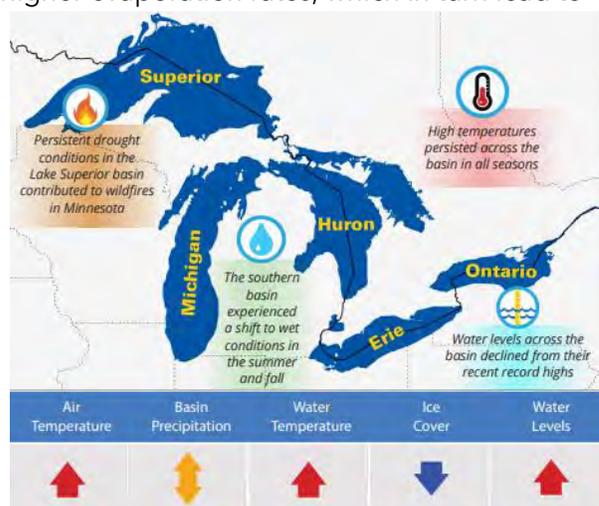


Figure 28. 2021 Annual Climate Trends and Impacts Summary for the Great Lake Basin

Air and surface water temperatures within the Great Lakes Region are also anticipated to rise. Currently, the average annual air temperature is 1.6°F higher than historical averages, which is higher than the overall change of 1.2°F over the contiguous United States for the same time period (U.S. Global Change Research Program [USGCRP] 2018). The average air temperature within the Great Lakes Basin is projected to continue increasing, reaching 5°F to 6°F higher in the northern region and 4°F to 5°F higher in the southern region (Wuebbles *et al.* 2019). Warmer air and water temperatures cause the offset of critical seasonal cues, such as the delayed onset of winter and the early start of spring, both affecting the decline of ice coverage and lake stratification (Anderson *et al.* 2021). Unpredictable weather conditions and drivers (such as cold arctic air blasts) are still at play and able to produce winters of extreme cold though these anomalies are predicted to become less extreme and less frequent.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, significant variability in ice coverage throughout the Great Lakes Region is anticipated. This variability can have both economic implications for shipping and navigation, and environmental impacts on lake ecosystems. Reduced ice coverage can increase the vulnerability of specific fish and wetland species that rely on ice for protection. While it may benefit the shipping industry by extending its operational period, it could negatively affect winter tourism activities and associated revenue for the surrounding region (Channell *et al.* 2022). Additionally, reduced ice coverage can expose shorelines, making them more susceptible to erosion during high wind and wave events associated with winter storms (Channell *et al.* 2022). During winter under icy conditions, the colder layers of lake water stratify into distinct levels with minimal mixing. In spring, seasonal warming triggers the overturning process, promoting the exchange of nutrients across different layers. Early spring warming, a result of climate change, causes earlier and prolonged stratification (Channell *et al.* 2022). Increased stratification and rising water temperatures foster conditions that exacerbate the impacts of nutrient runoff from agricultural and urban development, leading to harmful algal blooms (HABs), particularly in Lake Erie (GLISA 2025). HAB toxins create hazardous conditions for humans, fish, and wildlife, resulting in fish kills, beach closures, and loss of drinking water. For instance, in Toledo, OH, 500,000 residents lost access to potable water for 72 hours in 2014 due to HABs (Sinha *et al.* 2023).

<sup>16</sup> Figure 28 source: GLISA, <https://glisa.umich.edu/>.

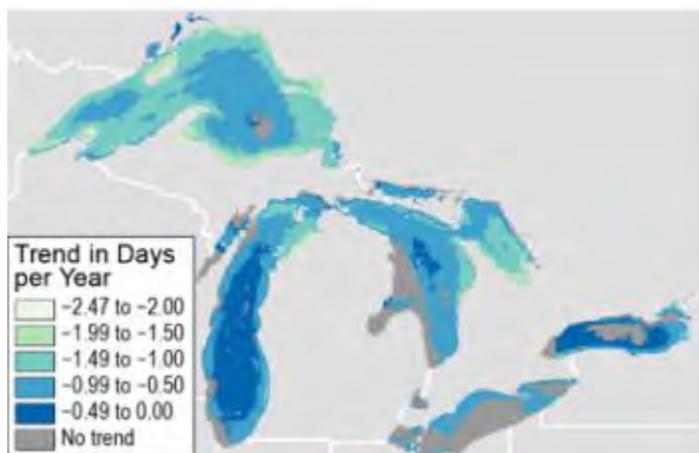


Figure 29. Rate of Change in Ice Cover Duration from 1973 to 2013

While it is difficult to truly measure and determine whether lake level changes are a natural variation in the hydrological cycle, or due to the impacts of climate change, scientists expect lake levels to experience “smaller drops on average and the possibility of a small rise in lake levels by the end of this century” (Channell *et al.* 2022). Over the past few decades, Great Lakes water levels reached both record lows and highs, with Lakes Huron and Michigan most susceptible to water level shifts due to large basin size and drainage patterns (Wuebbles *et al.* 2019). When averaged over the past hundred years, water levels in Lakes Superior, Michigan, and Huron showed no significant change, unlike Lakes Erie and Ontario, whose water levels rose (EPA 2025b).

Lake Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes based on its bathymetry, or depth. Over the past hundred years, average water levels have shown that lake levels are influenced by precipitation, ice cover, runoff, and evaporation. High water levels can lead to increased flooding events, which some urban areas may struggle to manage due to insufficient water capacity. Reliance on grey infrastructure results in stormwater runoff spreading across impervious surfaces, introducing pollutants back into the lake and contributing to HABs and the loss of native species. Extreme flooding events also impact coastal communities through erosion and property damage. Lake Erie, in particular, experiences significant shoreline loss due to flooding and extreme storm events.<sup>17</sup>

The combination of rising lake levels, higher lake levels, more frequent and intense storms, and reductions in seasonal ice cover have increased the intensity and frequency of wave action along Lake Erie’s shoreline. More intense storms, often fueled by warmer atmospheric and lake surface temperatures, generate more powerful winds that drive larger and more destructive waves across Lake Erie. This is especially problematic because Lake Erie is the shallowest of the Great Lakes, which means its waters respond more quickly to wind, creating steeper and more forceful waves (Wuebbles *et al.* 2019). The combination of higher lake levels and stronger winds increases the energy with which waves hit the shoreline, accelerating erosion and damaging infrastructure. Higher lake levels exacerbate this issue. When lake levels rise, waves can reach farther inland and affect areas that were previously protected. The impact of these waves is not only a threat to natural coastal systems but also to communities, ports, and recreational areas that line the shore. Without adequate shoreline protection or resilience planning, many areas around Lake Erie are becoming increasingly exposed to wave-induced damage (Wuebbles *et al.* 2019). As climate trends continue, these patterns of intensified wave action are expected to persist, underscoring the need for adaptive coastal management strategies.

### 3.1.2 Local Conditions

Conneaut, like many shoreline communities within the Great Lakes and along Lake Erie, experiences fluctuating water levels, decreased ice coverage, erosion, intensified storm events and increased wave action - all which affect fish and wildlife, the economy, and human health and safety to a diverse array of ecosystems and habitats that support a rich tapestry of plant and animal life. These habitats range from dynamic coastal zones to tranquil upland areas, each playing a crucial role in the ecological health of the region. The diverse ecosystems of Conneaut provide essential services such as water filtration, habitat for wildlife, and opportunities for recreation and education. The area’s rich biodiversity, including rare plant

<sup>17</sup> Figure 29 source: Johnson *et al.* 2019.

communities and a variety of wildlife species, underscores the importance of preserving these habitats for future generations.

### Coastal Habitats & Infrastructure

The sandbar west of the marina presents a unique coastal marsh habitat that is uncommon along the shores of Lake Erie. Local residents highly value the diverse bird species that are drawn to the wetlands during migration and mating seasons, as well as the recreational and aesthetic benefits the wetland provides to the community. However, fluctuating lake levels and HABs pose significant threats to the wildlife population,

recreational activities, and the hydrology of the wetland marsh. Additionally, the rise of invasive plant species threatens native vegetation. The loss of this habitat could result in a decrease in critical bird habitats, a reduction in ecotourism, and diminished recreational fishing opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

The breakwaters that enclose the sandbar, marina, and port area on the east and west sides of the harbor mitigate the effects of wind-generated wave action, which is more pronounced elsewhere along the Erie shoreline. However, with rising lake levels, the breakwaters present other challenges to the CPA. While the breakwaters shield the marina and Marina Drive from most flooding events, the anticipated increase in water levels and the growing frequency of stronger storms pose a significant threat to the marina's infrastructure. Higher waves can result in damage to both the marina port and the breakwater walls themselves. Damage to Marina Drive can lead to the increased surface water runoff into the lake and surrounding waterways and wetlands.

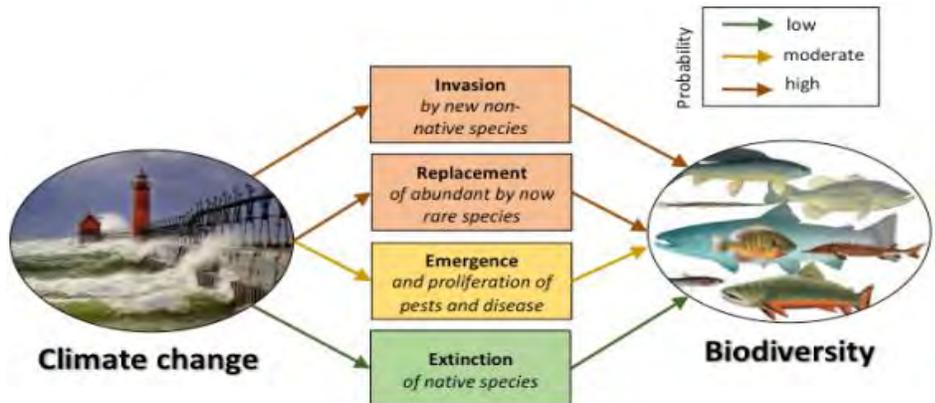


Figure 30. Impact of Climate Change on Biodiversity in the Great Lakes

When the breakwaters in Conneaut Harbor were constructed, they significantly altered the natural sediment transport dynamics along the Lake Erie shoreline (ODNR 2020a). Breakwaters are built to protect harbors and coastlines from wave action, but they also disrupt littoral drift - the coast driven by wave action and currents (ODNR 2020a) (Figure 31).<sup>19</sup> In Conneaut, this disruption has created unintended natural movement of sand and sediment along geomorphological consequences that continue to shape the local shoreline. Specifically, the western breakwater has acted as a barrier to the eastward flow of sediment, trapping sand that would

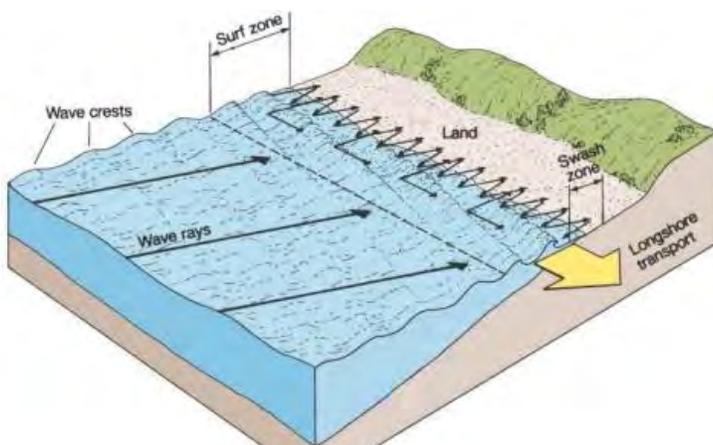


Figure 31. Example of Sediment Transport from Littoral Drift Process

<sup>18</sup> Figure 30 source: Johnson et al. 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Figure 31 source: Hunter College, Department of Geography and Environmental Science, geo.hunter.cuny.edu.

otherwise travel along the shoreline. As wave-driven undercurrents push sediment from west to east, the breakwater blocks this flow, leading to a stockpiling of sand on the west side, particularly at Conneaut Township Park Beach. Over time, this accumulation has caused the beach to grow outward, forming an artificially widened shoreline and expanding recreational space in that area.



Figure 32. Bluff Along Lake Erie Shoreline, Ohio

However, this accumulation comes at a cost. East of the breakwater, sediment supply is cut off, leading to a process known as sediment starvation. Without a replenishing source of sand and sediment, the eastern shoreline begins to erode more rapidly. Natural wave energy continues to strike the shore, but without protective sediment, the coastline is worn away, increasing the risk of bluff failure, loss of habitat, and potential damage to infrastructure and private property. This imbalance in sediment distribution (excessive accumulation on one side and erosion on the other) is a common issue where hardened coastal structures like breakwaters are installed. In Conneaut's case, while the harbor has been stabilized and enhanced for navigation and commerce, it has also introduced a long-term

ecological and shoreline management challenge that must

be addressed through careful planning, potentially involving sediment bypassing, beach nourishment, or more nature-based design strategies to restore equilibrium to the coastal system.

The natural geology of the Lake Erie shoreline contributes to erosion. The shoreline east and west of the breakwater wall consists of bluffs up to 40 feet high, made of glacial till topped with clay, silt, and sand. These materials are inherently susceptible to erosion.<sup>20</sup> Wave action at the base of the bluff undercuts the structure, leading to slumping and collapse of the overlying material (ODNR 2020a). Additionally, the presence of soil joints in the glacial till allows water to infiltrate and build up pressure, further destabilizing the bluff face. Erosion of these bluffs is part of a natural cycle; however, upland development such as residential dwellings, vegetation loss, and stormwater runoff are combining with natural erosion effects to exacerbate the process. With predictions of higher water levels, more significant storms generating increased waves, ongoing upland development, and the trapping of sand on the west side of the western breakwater wall, bluff erosion is anticipated to intensify, threatening the residential properties west of Conneaut harbor. Over the past 50+ years residential properties along these bluffs have been steadily losing shoreline. However, due to the impacts of climate change, the shoreline erosion rates have been increasing, particularly after the extraordinarily high lake levels of 2020. Some Conneaut residents have lost nearly 70 feet of bluff in a five-year period (Mongiovi 2023). Addressing this challenge

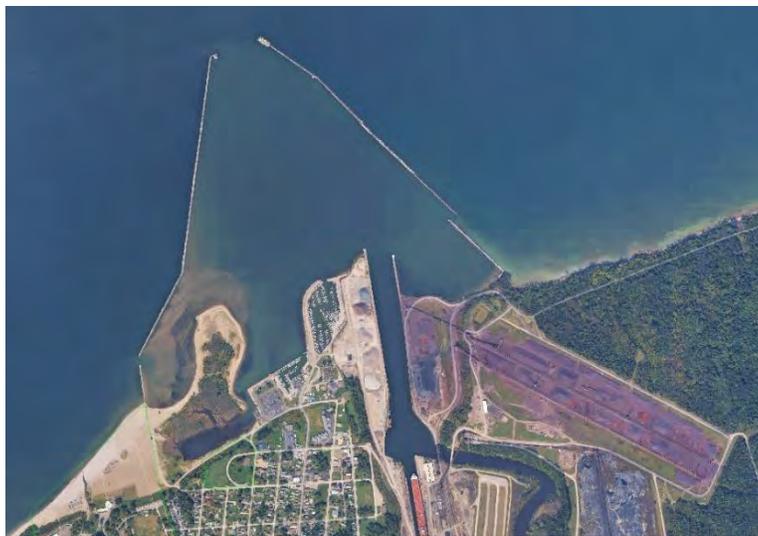


Figure 33. Conneaut's Coastal Habitats and Infrastructure

<sup>20</sup> Figure 33 source: Ohio Lake Erie Shore Erosion Management Plan, <https://ohio.gov/>.

requires a comprehensive approach that includes restoring vegetation, managing stormwater runoff, and considering the impacts of coastal structures like breakwaters on sediment dynamics.

### *Upland Habitats & Infrastructure*

Surface runoff and associated land-use factors in upland environments (areas located inland from the immediate shoreline) significantly influence the shoreline environment of Lake Erie. When upland habitats are vegetated and natural, they function as natural buffers to the shoreline, aiding in the reduction of sediment and nutrient transport and erosion. Vegetation stabilizes the shore, tree roots and native plants absorb rainwater, and upland wetlands and riparian habitats act as sponges, retaining excess surface water and minimizing flood surges. Conversely, when these habitats are cleared for development, agriculture, or roads, their protective functions are lost. Bare or paved surfaces increase runoff, leading to faster water flow, greater erosion, and increased nutrient and pollutant loading into the lake. Stormwater runoff carries sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants into tributaries and directly into Lake Erie. The increased volume and speed of this water escalate erosion at the shoreline, particularly where natural vegetation is absent.

Climate change is exacerbating these upland and shoreline dynamics. Increased precipitation results in heavier and more frequent storms, which lead to more runoff and flashier streams, contributing to erosion and flood damage. Rising lake levels cause wave action to reach further inland, undercutting bluffs and accelerating shoreline loss. More powerful storms generate larger waves and stronger currents, increasing physical pressure on shorelines already weakened by upland changes. Warmer temperatures can reduce snowpack and alter the timing of meltwater runoff, further affecting erosion patterns.

To safeguard the environment of Lake Erie's shoreline, it is crucial to manage both upland and coastal zones effectively and address the impacts of climate change. Mitigation strategies may include restoring and preserving native upland vegetation, reconnecting floodplains, and implementing green infrastructure to reduce and filter runoff. There are a few upland areas within the 6-mile study area of this Plan that are negatively impacting the Lake Erie shoreline that could benefit from these mitigation strategies, Kelsey's Run, the Lagoon Outfall, and Conneaut Creek.

### *Kelsey's Run*

Conneaut's Township Park is a 60-acre lakeside park, established in 1926 and offers a variety of outdoor activities and natural beauty along the shores of Lake Erie. The mouth of Kelsey's Run Creek is situated between the park's west beach parking lot and the central pavilion and is crossed by a restored 1930s-era bridge, which spans a creek flowing from the east. This area is characterized by its shaded walking paths, picnic tables, and playgrounds, making it ideal for families and nature enthusiasts. The creek receives surface water runoff from various residential and commercial properties and roadways within the watershed and drains into Lake Erie at the sandy beach to the east of the parking lot at the end of Gibson Way (Figure 35).<sup>21</sup> Localized runoff from Kelsey's run can negatively impact Lake Erie water quality through the transportation of pollutants such as heavy metals, nitrogen and phosphorus, and hydrocarbons (like oil and grease). Sediment transport is a known issue in Kelsey's Run,



*Figure 34. Restored 1930s Bridge Connecting Kelsey's Run East and West Bluffs*

<sup>21</sup> Figure 35 source: Conneaut Township Park, <https://www.conneauttownshippark.com/>.



Figure 35. Kelsey's Run Watershed

from increased water pollution include eutrophication, where excess nutrients lead to algal blooms, depleting oxygen and causing fish kills and aquatic life toxicity where heavy metals and chemicals bioaccumulate in fish eventually causing the fish to become toxic to humans. Urban runoff also increases the risk of waterborne pathogens which can cause gastrointestinal illness and skin irritations.

The lagoon is the future location of the marina expansion project, which is scheduled to begin construction in 2026. To accommodate the new boat slips, docks, and other infrastructure, the lagoon will be dredged; dredging permits from the USACE were approved in 2025. To help reduce the need for continual dredging, and the potential for harmful algal blooms, the volume and quality of the runoff needs to be addressed (Alliance for the Great Lakes). Various green infrastructure measures, including bioretention practices and Conneaut Creek.

### Conneaut Creek

Conneaut Creek, a 43.5-mile tributary of Lake Erie, flows through both Pennsylvania and Ohio, with its west branch reaching Lake Erie in Conneaut Harbor, east of the marina (Figure 37). The creek meanders through diverse landscapes, including rural woodlands, urban areas, and agricultural zones, offering a rich tapestry of habitats and recreational opportunities. Conneaut Creek has a mean annual flow volume of 323.46 cubic feet per second (cfs), draining approximately 493.41 kilometers squared (km<sup>2</sup>) from commercial, residential, and deciduous forested areas (EPA 2011). Conneaut Creek is renowned for its ecological diversity; A 21-mile stretch of the creek, from the Ohio-Pennsylvania border to the former Penn Central Railroad bridge in Conneaut, Ohio has been designated as a State Wild and Scenic River in 2005 (ODNR n.d.).<sup>22</sup> The stream corridor supports 78 fish species and 32 species of amphibians and reptiles. The watershed is home to more than 30 unique plant communities, many of which are listed as threatened or endangered. The creek's shale streambed and varying flow conditions create ideal habitats for a range of aquatic life (ODNR n.d.). The creek provides a variety of recreational opportunities for

with heavy rainfall, snowmelt, and storms moving soil from the eroded and incised creek banks to the beach and into Lake Erie.

### Lagoon Outfall

One of the largest collectors of urban runoff within the town of Conneaut is the stormwater outfall that empties into the Lake Erie Lagoon, located north of Naylor Drive and southwest of Conneaut Harbor (Figure 36). The outfall collects runoff from urban development and discharges it directly into the lagoon. Urban surface water runoff transports environmental contaminants, such as oil, grease, heavy metals, nutrients, pesticides, trash and debris, and sediment, creating negative impacts on the environment and human health. The effects



Figure 36. Lagoon Outfall Watershed

<sup>22</sup> Figure 37 source: Ohio Department of Natural Resources, <https://ohiodnr.gov/>.

Conneaut residents and surrounding communities including fishing, canoeing and kayaking, wildlife viewing, birding, and photography. Despite its ecological significance, Conneaut Creek faces several environmental issues including water quality degradation from upstream pollutant sources such as leaking septic tanks and waste inflows from commercial infrastructure and sediment transport and turbidity from erosion.



*Figure 37. Conneaut Creek Wild and Scenic River*

### *Historical Conneaut Habitat*

The Lake Erie basin was formed during the last Ice Age, as the Laurentide Ice Sheet advanced and retreated across northern Ohio (ODNR 2020b). Several glaciations produced a series of beach ridges that are several miles from the lake's current borders, and glacial till and deposits formed the ridges that would become Lake Erie's coastline. Meltwater flow from glacial melt roughly 12,000 years ago filled the basin and formed Lake Erie, while erosion from this flow formed Conneaut Creek. The glacial activity that formed Conneaut and the surrounding region's terrain created lake plains and moraines, with poorly drained soil near

the lakeshore and better-drained upland soil further inland (ONDR 2020b).

Prior to European settlement, Lake Erie's lakeshore supported coastal marshes, wet prairies, and bluffs and beach ridges populated by sedges, rushes, and hardy shrubs such as willows and dogwoods. Further inland, the rolling hills and valleys supported the growth of beech-maple and oak-hickory forests while more open areas were suited to the development of the mesic prairie ecosystems that are typical across the Great Plains. Conneaut Creek, Turkey Creek, and the other regional tributaries draining into Lake Erie supported riparian zones and coastal wetlands that provided habitat for amphibians and migratory birds, as well as aquatic species. As European settlement in the Conneaut area progressed throughout the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, land was cleared for agriculture and industry as forests were logged for timber and fuel. Wetlands were drained, prairies were converted to cropland, and the contiguous old growth forests became fragmented. Conneaut's position on the lake as a hub for shipping and trade, as well as the development of the railroads, further accelerated deforestation and the degradation of the health of the region's wetlands and aquatic ecosystems.

## **3.2 Regulatory Environment**

The Lake Erie coastal zone has multiple stakeholder interests and resource responsibility intertwined. As such, all project development within the Lake Erie coastal zone requires adherence to federal, state, and local environmental permitting through multiple regulatory agencies to ensure alignment with all approved management policies. Restoration projects aimed at achieving resilience in the shoreline and open water environments of Lake Erie will be under the regulatory authority of the USACE, ODNR, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA), and Ashtabula County. While the permitting needs will be determined on a project-by-project basis, generally, the following permits will likely be required.

### **3.2.1 Federal Permitting**

The most common federal permits for coastal resilience projects are administered by the USACE. The USACE is authorized to review projects that are connected to navigation channel dredging material use in habitat restoration (Section 216 of the Rivers and Harbors Act [RHA] of 1970, 404(b)(1) of the Clean Water Act [CWA] of 1972, Section 1135 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986,

Section 206 of WRDA 1996, and Section 1122 of WRDA 2016, and Section 204 of WRDA 1992). However, depending on the project's activities, federal environmental compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) may also be required. If there is a federal nexus to these projects, such as federal funding, potential impacts to federally listed species, etc., the projects will also need to complete an environmental assessment through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

### Clean Water Act Section 404

Under Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA, USACE regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into Waters of the United States (WOTUS). WOTUS can include such bodies of water as lakes, ponds, rivers, tributaries, and wetlands. Impacts to WOTUS are authorized under one or more standard permits, known as Nationwide Permits (NWP), or an Individual 404 permit based on project activities and level of impacts. NWPs are used to authorize minor activities that result in minimal impacts to WOTUS. If minimal impacts to WOTUS are anticipated for a project, each single and complete project may be authorized under a NWP. The actual permit issued would be dependent on the type of impact that is proposed. Pre-Construction Notification (PCN) to USACE may be required for NWP authorization, depending on the extent of impacts. If fill exceeds set thresholds of the applicable NWP (e.g., 0.5-acre loss of WOTUS), then an Individual 404 permit is required. NWPs are typically faster to obtain averaging between 3 and 6 months than an Individual permits which could average over a year or more to obtain. Individual 404 permits would also require alternative analyses and include a public comment period.

### National Environmental Policy Act

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA, 42 United States Code [USC] §§ 432 -4370h) is a foundational U.S. environmental law that requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of federal actions before making decisions. Its core purpose is to ensure that environmental factors are considered alongside economic and technical factors in federal planning and decision-making. It is generally triggered by the involvement of federal funding, permits, or lands. NEPA established the requirement for environmental assessments (EAs) and more detailed environmental impact statements (EISs) for major federal actions that may significantly affect the environment. Some federal actions that are determined to not have significant effects on the human environment can be categorically excluded from detailed analysis. NEPA also mandates public participation and interagency coordination, making it a critical tool for transparency and accountability.

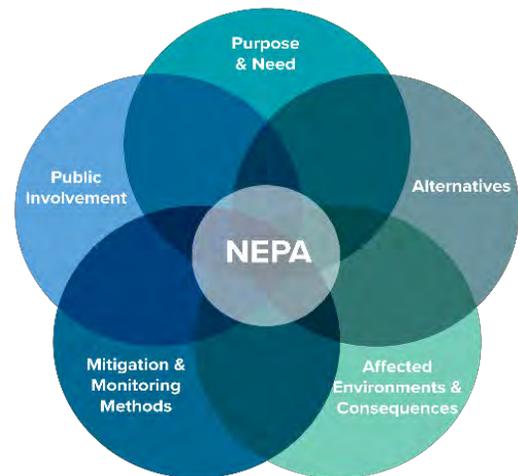


Figure 38. Elements of a NEPA Document

The level of NEPA analysis will vary project by project, depending on the funding source (federal or nonfederal), the proposed project actions (dredging, riparian plantings, herbicide use for removal of invasive species, etc.), and the anticipated impacts to environmental resources (i.e., temporary reduction in spawning habitat, removal of invasive plant species in bird nesting habitat, extensive earth work to reconnect a floodplain, etc.). The CPA or other project proponent (such as the City, Ashtabula Metro Parks, etc.) will work with the lead federal agency - the federal agency that supervises the preparation of the environmental document and coordinates with other federal, state, tribal, and local agencies - on the environmental analysis.

### National Historic Preservation Act

The 1966 NHPA established protections for historic structures and sites, including archaeological sites, within the United States. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the official list of districts, sites, structures/buildings, and objects that are significant in federal, state, or local history. Under Section 106 of the NHPA, State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) are required to review potential impacts to historic resources listed on the NRHP when project activities have a federal nexus (i.e., federal funding, federal permitting including a NWP from USACE, or other federal authorization). All projects that involve ground disturbing activities and have a federal nexus (e.g., are on federal lands, use federal funds, or require a federal permit), will be required to comply with the NHPA. Compliance with the NHPA entails several steps: (1) determining the area of potential effects (APE), which constitutes the geographical area where the project may have direct or indirect impacts on cultural and historic resources; (2) consulting with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and any Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs); (3) identifying historic properties that are listed or may be eligible for listing on NRHP; (4) evaluating the project's effects on these cultural and historic resources; and (5) devising strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any adverse effects.

### Endangered Species Act

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA, 16 United States Code [USC] §1531-1544) authorizes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) (while working cooperatively with States) to identify, list, and monitor qualifying species as endangered and threatened.<sup>23</sup> Species that are designated as either endangered or threatened are afforded protection from possession, sale, transport, and take. The definition of take is “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill,



Figure 39. Great Lakes Piping Adult and Chick

trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct” including “incidental take” or significant habitat modification. ESA Section 7(a)(1) or Section 10(a)(1) consultation could be required depending on a federal nexus. ESA Section 7(a)(1) consultation would likely require a biological assessment and receipt of a biological opinion from the USFWS. The responsibility of Section 7 consultation falls with the lead federal agency reviewing the project. For example, if a project requires a NWP, it is the responsibility of USACE to coordinate with USFWS to determine that project activities will not have an adverse effect on threatened and endangered species of their habitats. However, project owners can initiate informal consultation with USFWS to determine potential avoidance and mitigation measures to expedite the Section 7 review process. If impacts to threatened and endangered species cannot be avoided, an Incidental Take Permit (ITP) under Section 10(a)(1) of the ESA might be required. The issuance of an ITP also requires the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan.

<sup>23</sup> Figure 39 source: Saunders, S. (2023), John Doskoch, <https://www.audubon.org/>.

### Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

Under authority of the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA, 16 USC 668–668d), bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are afforded legal protections.<sup>24</sup> The BGEPA prohibits the take, sale, purchase, barter, offer of sale, transport, export or import, at any time or in any manner of any bald or golden eagle, alive or dead, or any part, nest, or egg thereof. The BGEPA also expands the common law scope of “take”—to include “pursue, shoot, shoot at, poison, wound, kill, capture, trap, collect, molest, or disturb,” and includes criminal and civil penalties for violating the statute (see 16 USC 668). The USFWS further defined the term “disturb” as agitating or bothering an eagle to a degree that causes, or is likely to cause, injury, or either a decrease in productivity or nest abandonment by substantially interfering with normal breeding, feeding, or sheltering behavior. The BGEPA specifies that violations must occur “knowingly, or with wanton disregard for this act.”



Figure 40. Bald Eagle Perched on Conneaut Harbor Breakwall

Priority resilience projects identified in this plan would likely have minimal impacts on eagles. While an active bald eagle nest was confirmed in the spring of 2025, the proposed actions can be mitigated through proper permitting and consultation with the USFWS and through techniques such as the creation of buffer zones around nest sites. Prior to construction, a nesting survey would also be conducted, and avoidance and minimization measures would be utilized if an active nest is observed near any project area.

### Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) integrates and implements four international treaties that provide for the protection of migratory birds against hunters and poachers. The MBTA prohibits “the taking, killing, possession, transportation, import and export of migratory birds, their eggs, parts, and nests, except when specifically authorized by the Department of the Interior.” (16 USC § 703; 1918). The word “take” is defined by regulation as “to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or attempt to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect,” (50 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] § 10.12; 1973). USFWS maintains a list of all species protected by the MBTA at 50 CFR § 10.13 (1973). This list includes over 1,000 species of migratory birds, including eagles and other raptors, waterfowl, shorebirds, seabirds, wading birds, and passerines.

There is no permitting authority under the MBTA and, as such, no way to obtain permit coverage for incidental take of MBTA-protected species. The primary means of compliance with the MBTA is through avoidance and minimization measures. Although the Project could impact suitable nesting habitat for some migratory bird species, certain actions—such as clearing vegetation outside of the breeding season (April 1 through July 31) and implementing an environmental education training program including species identification placards or educational posters—could help minimize risks to migratory birds.

#### 3.2.2 State Permitting

The agencies that are often involved in permitting resilience and environmental restoration projects in Ohio are OEPA and ODNR. The OEPA is a state dedicated to safeguarding public health and the environment by ensuring compliance with environmental laws and promoting environmental

<sup>24</sup> Figure 40 source: Chelsea Murphy, Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.

stewardship, with a mission statement to “protect the environment and public health by ensuring compliance with environmental laws and demonstrating leadership in environmental stewardship” (OEPA n.d.). Similarly, the ODNR is responsible for managing and conserving Ohio’s natural resources through management of Ohio’s state forests, monitoring Ohio’s rivers, lakes and groundwater supplies, regulation of hunting, fishing trapping, operating state parks, regulating mineral and energy production, and through scientific research and data collection.

### *Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification*

Project activities requiring Section 404 authorization under either a NWP or an Individual Section 404 permit from USACE will also require Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC). Any prioritized project that will involve in-water and aquatic work (river restoration, bank stabilization, wetland restoration and creation, etc.) will require a 401 WQC. The OEPA administers the Section 401 program within the State of Ohio. The OEPA issued Section 401 WQC for NWPs. A proposed project that meets the general and activity-specific Section 401 WQC limitations and conditions will only require authorization from USACE; projects that exceed these conditions require application to OEPA for either a Director’s Authorization or an Individual 401 WQC. Any project requiring an Individual 404 Permit will also require an Individual 401 Permit. The WQC for NWPs in Ohio set thresholds based on wetland categorization that reflects the functional quality of the wetland. Wetlands are categorized via completion of Ohio Rapid Assessment Method (ORAM) forms, which evaluate several metrics including wetland hydrology, size, and habitat alteration. Each metric is scored and then totaled to give a final ORAM score corresponding to an ORAM category (1 through 3). Category 1 wetlands represent low quality wetlands while Category 3 wetlands are high quality wetlands.

OEPA has additionally mapped certain high-quality watersheds where the applicability of the general WQC for the NWPs is limited for proposed stream impacts. Based on the OEPA 401 WQC for NWP Eligibility Map, watersheds within Ashtabula County and surrounding the City of Conneaut, Ohio are protected watersheds that are listed as Possibly Eligible and Ineligible for WQC under the NWPs. Impacts to federally jurisdictional streams within a Possibly Eligible watershed that are determined to be high quality would require an Individual 401 WQC or a Director’s Authorization from the OEPA. Stream quality is based on drainage area, pH measurements, and habitat assessment scores (i.e., Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index [QHEI] or Headwater Habitat Evaluation Index [HHEI] scores). Impacts to streams within an Ineligible watershed require an Individual 401 WQC or a Director’s Authorization from the OEPA, regardless of the stream quality.

### *OEPA Ohio Isolated Wetland Permits*

The OEPA regulates all surface waters determined non-jurisdictional by the USACE, including isolated wetlands and perennial and intermittent streams. Any quantity of impacts to isolated wetlands will require authorization from the OEPA under a general or individual permit and an Approved Jurisdictional Determination (AJD) from USACE. Temporary or permanent impacts up to 0.5 acres within Category 1 or Category 2 wetlands are eligible for coverage under a Level 1 Isolated Wetlands Permit. Temporary or permanent impacts exceeding 0.5 acres of Category 1 and 2 wetlands and up to 3 acres of Category 2 wetlands may be authorized under a Level 2 Isolated Wetlands Permit. Any impacts to a Category 3 wetland or impacts exceeding 3 acres in a Category 2 wetland require authorization under a Level 3 Isolated Wetlands Permit.

### *ODNR Shore Structure Permit*

A Shore Structure Permit is required from the ODNR prior to construction or modification of structures in Ohio along the Lake Erie Shoreline. Construction projects that require a permit include but are not limited to the construction of living shorelines, jetties, breakwaters, floating wetlands, etc. Several proposed projects in this Plan would require this permit. All shore structure permit applications would

include infrastructure design plans prepared by a professional engineer and would be reviewed by the ODNR. All resilience work requiring a shore structure permit would follow the Ohio Coastal Design Manual and policies related to shoreline management and erosion control from the ODNR Coastal Management Program.

### *ODNR Coastal Management Consistency Certification*

Project activities along the shoreline must also adhere to the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (CZMA). An Ohio Coastal Management Consistency Certification is required for projects that may affect Ohio's coastal resources or land and water uses, particularly along Lake Erie. This certification ensures that the proposed activity aligns with the Ohio Coastal Management Program (OCMP), which is designed to protect and manage the state's coastal environment. This certification would be applicable to any prioritized projects within this Plan that will seek a federal license or permit for an activity that may affect coastal resources (e.g., obtaining a USACE 404 and 401 certification), and/or if the project is funded using federal dollars.

### *Ohio Threatened and Endangered Species*

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 1531.25 charges the ODNR Division of Wildlife (DOW) to adopt rules restricting the taking or possessing of native wildlife threatened with statewide extirpation and to develop and periodically update a list of endangered species. Any wildlife species whose survival or recruitment within the state are in jeopardy and any species designated under the federal ESA are protected under Ohio state law. In Ashtabula County there are 50 state-listed wildlife species and 102 listed plant species (ODNR 2023a; ODNR 2023b). Prior to construction activities for any of the prioritized projects, a habitat assessment will be conducted to determine if there is suitable habitat for any threatened and endangered state and federal species. If suitable habitat is present, species-specific surveys may be necessary, followed by mitigation measures to avoid harming or taking the species. Coordination with ODNR will occur on every project to complete an environmental review (ER) to provide comments on potential impacts and avoidance and mitigation measures

### **3.2.3 Local Permitting**

Designing and implementing any of the prioritized projects listed in this Plan will require complying not only state and federal policies and permits, but also with local ordinances. Local permitting is particularly crucial as it ensures that the project aligns with the city's zoning regulations, comprehensive plans, and environmental standards. For projects within the Study Area, Ashtabula County and the City of Conneaut are the main governing bodies that will require permit coordination.

### *Building and Other Local Permits*

Both Ashtabula County and the City of Conneaut regulate development within their respective boundaries. The Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners and the Conneaut Planning & Zoning Department should be contacted for specific required permits. Permits that may be required include a zoning certificate which evaluates the project's compliance with zoning ordinances and its impact on the community's development goals. Conditional use permits may also be required, especially if the project does not conform to the existing zoning regulations but are deemed beneficial for the community. Both the County and the City will be consulted with during the design and implementation of the prioritized projects.

### *Floodplain Permitting*

ODNR oversees the Floodplain Management Program for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulatory floodways and 100-year floodplains, also known as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs). ODNR delegated responsibility for administering the program to local Floodplain

Administrators. Within Ashtabula County, the Board of Commissioners, specifically through the Ashtabula County Engineer's Office, is the designated Floodplain Administrator. Under floodplain regulations, impacts to floodplains must be approved by the Board of Commissioners prior to work. Upland projects that may reconnect floodplains by grading and/or terracing riverine banks, may alter the floodplain and require coordination with the Board of Commissioners.

### *Local Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan Review*

The City of Conneaut's Codified Ordinances, particularly Chapter 931, address wastewater discharge and pretreatment standards. While these ordinances focus on wastewater management, they highlight the city's role in regulating discharges into its sewer systems. For construction projects that may impact stormwater runoff, local authorities may require permits and adherence to best management practices to prevent pollution. A stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP) is necessary for construction projects disturbing one acre or more of land area. The SWPPP is implemented by the Project's operator (owner or contractor) and must always be kept on the construction site. The SWPPP must be prepared in accordance with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations as established by the CWA and guided by the State of Ohio. NPDES was established under Section 402 of the CWA and establishes guidelines for point source discharges to WOTUS.

## **3.3 Local, State, Regional, and Federal Resilience Efforts**

Coastal resilience efforts along Lake Erie, particularly in the Conneaut region, are structured through a multi-tiered approach, encompassing planning and implementation at local, state, regional, and federal levels. At the local level, municipal planning departments, parks and recreation departments, and port authorities play crucial roles. Municipal planning focuses on developing comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and building codes to mitigate coastal hazards and protect shorelines. These efforts include strategies for stormwater management, setback regulations, and shoreline protection, alongside the implementation of green infrastructure like rain gardens and permeable pavements to reduce runoff and enhance water quality. Parks and recreation departments contribute by implementing beach replenishment, dune restoration, and living shoreline protection for public beaches and recreational areas, while also providing vital public education on coastal hazards and resilience. Local port authorities manage dredging operations, ensuring the beneficial reuse of dredged materials for beach nourishment and habitat restoration, and implement projects to safeguard port infrastructure from coastal impacts.



*Figure 41. ODNR Staff Monitoring Water Quality*

At the state level, Ohio's coastal resilience is fortified by the collaborative efforts of several key agencies. The ODNR is pivotal, managing coastal areas through programs focused on erosion control, water quality monitoring, and habitat restoration.<sup>25</sup> They also extend technical assistance and funding to local communities and implement protective measures in state parks and wildlife areas along the shoreline. The OEPA concentrates on safeguarding water quality, addressing issues like stormwater runoff, nonpoint source pollution, and harmful algal blooms. They provide funding, technical support, and enforce regulations to minimize shoreline hazards. Finally, the Ohio Sea Grant provides essential research, education, and outreach programs concerning Lake Erie's coastal issues, offering critical data, information, and resilience resources to policymakers, local governments, and businesses.

<sup>25</sup> Figure 41 source: ODNR Nature-Based Shorelines, <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/safety-conservation/about-ODNR/coastal-management/ohio-coastal-mgmt-program/nature-based-shorelines>

Regional collaboration is essential for effective coastal resilience along Lake Erie, and this is facilitated by several key entities. Regional planning commissions, where they exist, unite local governments to develop and execute comprehensive, long-term strategies for shoreline protection and resilience. The Great Lakes Commission fosters interstate cooperation, coordinating development, conservation, and restoration initiatives across the entire Great Lakes region. Furthermore, the Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail organization plays a vital role in promoting responsible recreational use of the shoreline while simultaneously educating the public about the trail, the ecological challenges facing Lake Erie, and the importance of coastal preservation.

Federal support for coastal resilience along Lake Erie is spearheaded by four key agencies.

- The **USACE** manages dredging, shoreline protection, and flood control, while also providing funding and technical expertise to local, regional, and state initiatives.
- The **U.S. EPA** enforces regulations, safeguards water quality, and funds coastal management programs, with a focus on addressing harmful algal blooms and invasive species.
- When catastrophic events occur, **FEMA** offers disaster preparedness, recovery, and flood mitigation assistance, and contributes to essential flood mapping.
- **NOAA** provides critical scientific data, tools, and resources for coastal management, and funds programs like Sea Grant.

These interconnected federal agencies, working in concert with state, regional, and local entities, illustrate a comprehensive approach to bolstering the resilience of Lake Erie's shoreline.

The following projects illustrate some of the recent nature-based projects that have been planned and implemented with the Great Lakes and in Ohio. The planning team reviewed these projects, and even spoke with some of the project proponents, to learn more about the design and implementation process for each resilience effort. Information from these lessons learned discussions was utilized during the evaluation and prioritization of the projects described in Section 5.

### 3.3.1 Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Study

CHEERS exemplifies a forward-thinking approach to coastal protection and ecological enhancement.<sup>26</sup> This initiative aims to repurpose dredged material to construct both land-based and aquatic structures, fostering diverse habitats and recreational spaces. By strategically designing onshore and offshore formations, CHEERS intends to create a haven for aquatic, wetland, and upland species, while simultaneously offering the community expanded opportunities for leisure activities on and near the water. To achieve these goals, the project incorporates three distinct shoreline designs, each tailored to mitigate wave energy, cultivate varied ecosystems, and provide accessible waterfront experiences for residents and visitors alike. This multi-faceted strategy underscores



Figure 42. CHEERS - Illustration of Proposed Area Called "The View"

<sup>26</sup> Figure 42 source: Cleveland Metroparks, <https://www.clevelandmetroparks.com/about/planning-design/cheers-cleveland-harbor-eastern-embayment-resilience-strategy>

a commitment to both environmental sustainability and public enjoyment, demonstrating how infrastructure projects can simultaneously address coastal challenges and enrich community life.

### 3.3.2 Port Clinton Coastal Restoration Project

The Port Clinton Coastal Restoration Project, a \$1.9 million initiative, restored 6 acres of coastal wetland and expanded 1.4 acres along Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline (Great Lakes Restoration Initiative 2024). Funded by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the City of Port Clinton, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the project was led by USACE Buffalo District. The project focused on restoring the wetland habitat by removing invasive species like phragmites from 12.2 acres and planting nearly 40,000 native plant species. This restoration enhances biodiversity, supports migratory birds, and improves water quality and local habitat. The project also boosts the local economy by enhancing recreational opportunities and strengthening shoreline resilience. The collaborative effort, involving federal, state, and local entities, serves as a model for future Great Lakes restoration projects.

### 3.3.3 Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve

Transforming a former landfill into a thriving ecosystem, the Cleveland Lakefront Nature Preserve exemplifies the beneficial reuse of dredged materials. Approximately 5.7 million cubic yards of sediment, repurposed from dredging operations, formed the foundation of this unique greenspace. Managed by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority, the preserve now provides diverse habitats, encompassing both forested and upland environments, all interwoven with recreational trails. This project highlights a successful strategy for environmental restoration and public access, turning a liability into an asset for both wildlife and the community.

### 3.3.4 Pointe Mouillee Marsh Restoration Initiative

The Pointe Mouillee Marsh Restoration initiative in Michigan serves as a prime example of large-scale ecological revitalization along the Lake Erie coastline. Situated in the southeasternmost region of the state, this undertaking represents the most extensive freshwater marsh restoration effort ever undertaken in the United States. Through the efforts of USACE, a disposal island formed from dredged material has been constructed, yielding 450 acres of newly established wetlands and elevated terrain. Moreover, further plans envision the restoration of an additional 1,500 acres of wetland habitat, substantially enhancing the ecological integrity of the Lake Erie shoreline.<sup>27</sup>



Figure 43. Pointe Mouillee Marsh Restoration

Once a location for dredged material storage, Windmill Bay in Michigan has undergone a remarkable transformation. Upon reaching its capacity, the site was meticulously sealed and planted, paving the way for an affluent residential and commercial enclave. This development mirrors the charming aesthetics of traditional Dutch villages, creating a unique community. Annually, the area bursts with vibrant colors, showcasing a profusion of tulips, and a genuine windmill, brought over from the Netherlands, stands as a testament to its inspired design. This location proves that previous industrial sites can be repurposed for beneficial uses.

<sup>27</sup> Figure 43 source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MIDNR/bulletins/25d3caa>

### 3.3.5 Sandusky Bay Initiative

The revitalization of Sandusky Bay is being driven by the comprehensive Sandusky Bay Initiative, a project aiming to rejuvenate over 1,000 acres of habitat within the bay's expansive 40,000-acre expanse. To date, this undertaking has successfully reinstated 50 acres of vital wetland ecosystems, coupled with efforts to restore riparian creeks, thereby reestablishing natural connections between these waterways and their floodplains. This enhanced connectivity facilitates more fluid water movement and promotes the settling of sediment. Future phases of the initiative prioritize continued habitat restoration, alongside the development of adaptable, nature-inspired shorelines. These innovative shorelines are designed to lessen the impact of wave energy, foster the establishment of wetlands, and provide crucial protection to shoreline infrastructures vulnerable to erosion.

## 3.4 Resilience Strategies

Resilience strategies focus on enhancing the ability of systems—whether they are urban, natural, or mixed environments—to withstand, adapt to, and recover from the impacts of environmental stresses, such as climate change, extreme weather events, or natural disasters. These strategies prioritize the use of natural systems, ecosystem services, and sustainable practices to address vulnerabilities and create more sustainable, adaptable, and self-sustaining solutions. The following are common resilience strategies for protecting and improving coastal environments. The planning team considered and evaluated these strategies to assess their suitability and effectiveness in addressing the challenges and impacts faced in Conneaut.

### 3.4.1 Nature-based Shoreline Restoration

Nature-based shoreline restoration refers to the process of using natural or nature-inspired techniques to restore and protect coastal and shoreline ecosystems. This approach focuses on leveraging the inherent resilience and functionality of natural systems—such as wetlands, mangroves, seagrasses, salt marshes, sand dunes, and riparian vegetation—to stabilize shorelines, reduce erosion, improve water quality, and provide habitat for wildlife, while enhancing the overall ecological health of the area. Unlike traditional engineering approaches (e.g., seawalls or concrete barriers), nature-based shoreline restoration seeks to work with nature rather than against it.<sup>28</sup> The goal is to use ecological processes to address coastal challenges such as sea-level rise, storm surges, erosion, and flooding, while also providing additional benefits such as biodiversity enhancement, carbon sequestration, and recreational opportunities.

There are a few types of nature-based shoreline restoration infrastructure types, green and gray/green. Green infrastructure, relying solely or mostly on vegetation and is primarily suitable for low to medium wave energy environments, whereas gray/green (i.e. integrated traditional and nature-based) infrastructure is more appropriate in higher energy wave environments (NOAA 2015). Depending on the project site a mix of green and gray strategies may be possible.

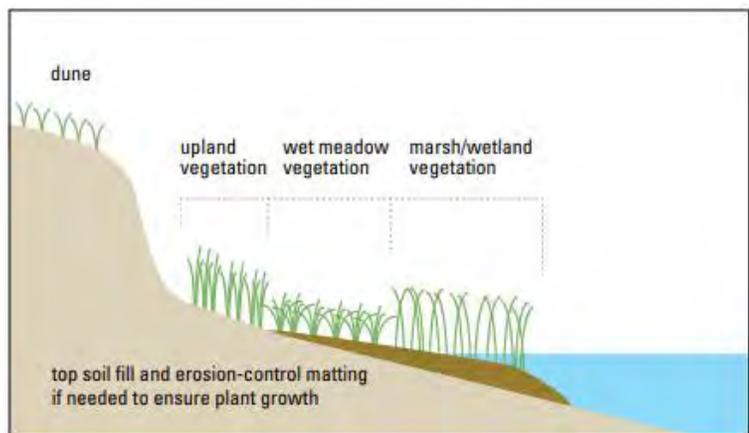


Figure 44. Native Vegetation Erosion Control Method

<sup>28</sup> Figure 44 source: University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, <https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/ohiodnr.gov/documents/coastal/Wisconsin-NBS-Guide.pdf>.

## Coastal Wetland Restoration

Coastal wetland restoration involves rehabilitating or recreating wetland ecosystems that have been degraded, drained, or lost due to urban development, agriculture, pollution, or invasive species. These wetlands are essential for maintaining the ecological health of the lake, as they provide habitat for wildlife, filter pollutants, reduce erosion, and buffer inland areas from flooding and storm surges. Key components of a coastal wetland restoration project that lead to long-term success include re-establishing natural hydrology, removing invasive species and planting native species, and incorporating buffer zones with native grasses and shrubs along the wetland to assist with filtering nutrients.

The Great Lakes Science Center (GLSC) explored a variety of techniques for coastal wetland restoration in the Great Lakes that focused on hydrologic, sedimentation, chemical, and biological aspects of control (Wilcox *et al.* 1999). Hydrologic techniques are referenced for restoring hydrologic connections between diked and altered wetlands and the lakes, reestablishing water tables lowered by ditching, and reinstating natural fluctuations in lake levels of regulated lakes such as Superior and Ontario. Sediment control strategies include the management of sediment input from uplands, proper administration or removal of dams on tributary rivers, and the restoration of protective barrier beaches and sand spits. Chemical methods aim to reduce or eliminate contaminants from point and non-point sources through



Figure 45. Before (Left) and After (Right) Wetland Restoration Site

located west of Toledo, Ohio. This project included the incorporation of a dike with a water control structure tower and efforts to revegetate and introduce native species. Cootes Paradise project, located in Canada was also cited as another successful model for wetland restoration using barriers for invasive species like the common carp, reduction of inflowing sediments and nutrients, naturalization of the shoreline, vegetation bank stimulation and protection, and careful vegetation management.

## Beach Replenishment

Beach replenishment, also known as beach nourishment, is a coastal resilience strategy used to combat erosion, protect infrastructure, and maintain natural shorelines. It involves adding sand or sediment to eroded beaches to restore their natural form and function.<sup>30</sup> Though more commonly associated with ocean coastlines, beach replenishment is increasingly used in the Great Lakes, particularly along the shores of Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario, where erosion



Figure 46. Lake Erie Beach Replenishment Project

<sup>29</sup> Figure 45 source: Crehan, R. (n.d.), <https://www.fws.gov/media/lcfwco-wetland-restoration-site-and-after>.

<sup>30</sup> Figure 46 source: Go Erie, <https://www.goerie.com/>.

from high water levels and storms threatens property, ecosystems, and public access. Ultimately, beach nourishment widens a beach and advances the shoreline seaward.

Beach nourishment projects are created to mimic natural beaches, allowing sand to shift in response to changing waves and water levels. Coastal engineers might place beach fill as underwater mounds, directly on the beach, as dunes, or a combination of these methods. Once the sand is placed, it is gradually redistributed by natural processes affecting the beach system. Ultimately, the wider nourished beach, which slopes downward below the waterline, and the taller sand dunes protect the shore by acting as buffers (USACE 2007).

In addition to mitigating coastal erosion and protecting life and property through hurricane and storm damage reduction, beach nourishment projects can provide environmental, recreational, and aesthetic benefits. For example, nourishing and widening an eroding beach can: (1) protect threatened or endangered plants, (2) preserve habitat behind dunes or adjacent to beaches, and (3) restore or create new nesting areas for shorebirds and spawning grounds for other species (USACE 2007). Beach nourishment projects can also result in wider shorelines for recreational activities such as fishing and boating and protecting infrastructure frequented by tourists. Healthy beaches are important to the travel and tourism industry and can contribute to local economies by increasing property values, rentals, retail sales, and demand for services.

### *Gray/Green Coastal Shore Protection Structures*

The coastal shoreline is a dynamic zone shaped by natural forces and human interventions; it requires careful management to mitigate erosion and protect valuable land. Understanding the intricate coastal processes at play is paramount for effective shoreline protection. These processes, influenced by factors like marine climate, geology, weather, and human activities, dictate how shorelines respond to wave action and sediment transport. Sandy shorelines, for instance, are highly mobile, while glacial till bluffs, though initially resistant, don't recover naturally from erosion.<sup>31</sup>

The phenomenon of "sand starvation," where sand is lost faster than it's replenished, is a major concern, often exacerbated by both natural and artificial structures. To combat these challenges, various coastal protection structures are employed. Shore-parallel structures, such as rock rip-rap revetments and seawalls, protect the base of bluffs but can lead to beach narrowing. Shore-perpendicular structures, like groins and jetties, trap sand but can cause erosion down-drift. Offshore breakwaters reduce wave energy and promote beach growth, offering versatile protection. Each structure type has unique advantages and disadvantages, requiring careful consideration of site-specific conditions. Effective design and implementation of these structures rely on comprehensive monitoring, including sediment sampling, beach surveying, and wave measurements, as well as sophisticated modeling techniques. Coastal engineers, with their expertise in Great Lakes coastal processes, play a crucial role in ensuring that shoreline protection measures are both effective and sustainable, minimizing unintended consequences and preserving the integrity of the local ecosystem.

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<sup>31</sup> Figure 47 source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife., <https://climateactiontool.org/content/restore-and-protect-natural-shorelines-use-living-shoreline-techniques>.

## HOW GREEN OR GRAY SHOULD YOUR SHORELINE SOLUTION BE?

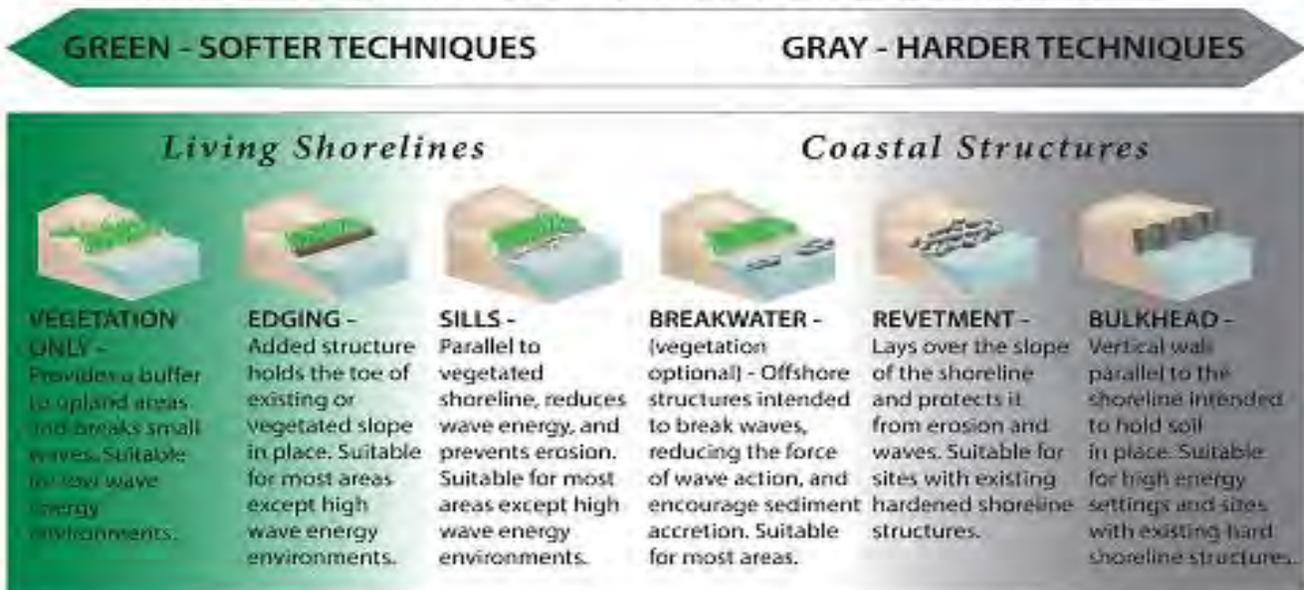


Figure 47. Continuum of Green to Gray Shoreline Stabilization Techniques

### Bluff Protection Measures

The Great Lakes shoreline is shaped by a long history of glacial activity, leaving behind diverse soil types like clay, sand, and bedrock, each with varying erosion resistance. Clay bluffs are prone to landslides when wet, while sandy areas erode more gradually. Bedrock, though tougher, eventually succumbs to weathering.<sup>32</sup> This geological legacy also dictates the presence of natural defenses like beaches and underwater bars. Ongoing factors such as water flow, lake level changes, storms, and potential climate change further contribute to erosion. Furthermore, the placement of buildings along eroding shores initiates a "geo-time" clock, where erosion reduces the building's lifespan. Relocating structures inland resets this clock and restores property value.

Lakebed erosion, particularly in areas with clay and glacial till shorelines, is a key driver of bluff and bank erosion in the Great Lakes. This underwater erosion, often invisible, dictates the rate of visible shoreline recession. As the lakebed erodes, it allows larger waves to reach the base of the bluffs, accelerating erosion at the toe of the slope and leading to further recession. If wave action alone erodes a shoreline, the remaining lake bottom creates a shallow barrier, which weakens incoming waves and protects the base of the land. Conversely, the lake floor itself can erode, particularly in softer rock formations. Unlike beaches, which can rebuild after storms, this underwater erosion is permanent. The fine particles released from these eroding lakebeds do not contribute to nearshore



Figure 48. Failing Bluff Along Lake Erie Coastline West of Conneaut Marina

<sup>32</sup> Figure 48 source: Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc.

recovery; instead, they remain suspended and ultimately settle in the lake's deeper regions. The underwater erosion of Great Lakes lakebeds, while often subtle, occurs consistently and significantly impacts shoreline stability. Vertical erosion rates fluctuate, typically ranging from a few inches annually, with the most intense activity near the shore where wave turbulence is highest. This erosion, a slow but persistent process, can extend to considerable depths, and its rate is directly linked to the steepness of the lakebed slope. Steeper slopes experience faster erosion, resulting in a concave profile near the shore. Unlike surface erosion, lakebed erosion is not mitigated by low lake levels; instead, it's accelerated, leading to increased wave impact and toe erosion when water levels rise. This unseen erosion compromises shore protection structures, shortening their lifespan and subjecting them to greater wave forces. Furthermore, abrasive materials like sand and gravel, eroded from coastal slopes, enhance lakebed erosion through abrasion and impact. However, substantial deposits of these materials can act as a protective barrier, though the dynamic nature of sandbars means a significant thickness is required for effective protection.

Various methods to protect the eroding bluffs within the Great Lakes have been utilized and range from more large-scale involved projects to smaller, more simplified solutions. Examples of complex solutions include toe protection at the base of the bluff using riprap, stone revetments, and offshore breakwaters, and grading and terracing, which involves re-contouring the bluff, which can reduce slope steepness and improve stability. Less intensive solutions to protect bluffs include surface water management to reduce erosion (i.e., drainage controls, rain gardens, vegetated swales), and invasive species removal and native vegetation plantings to stabilize the soil and intercept rainfall.



**Figure 49. Port Clinton Coastal Restoration Project Native Plantings**

#### ***Invasive Species Removal & Native Vegetation Plantings***

ODNR has partnered with Office of Coastal Management, Division of Wildlife and Division of Geological Survey to identify causes of erosion within Ashtabula County in specific areas called reaches and compiled a list of recommendations based on each reach specific erosion issues (ODNR 2020a). In Conneaut reach ten, which is defined as Pennsylvania Avenue to the western breakwater of Conneaut Harbor, and reach twelve, which is defined as the southeastern Conneaut Harbor breakwater to the state line, identifying planting of native vegetation as a strategy against further erosion along the shoreline and bluffs. Encouraging growth of native vegetation along the bluff slope would aid in removing excess ground water and retaining soil strength, thereby reducing erosion. Due to the presence of ground and surface water in Conneaut harbor, the bluff along the shore is suitable for native vegetation growth (ODNR 2020a).<sup>33</sup> In addition, the peninsula located in the marina could also benefit from invasive species removal and native vegetation restoration. Invasive species such as common reed

(*Phragmites australis*), and purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) can be replaced with native wetland and upland species such as willows (*Salix* spp.), American beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), and blushrush (*Scirpus* spp.).

<sup>33</sup> Figure 49 source: USACE, <https://www.army.mil/>.

### Fish Habitat Structures

In the Great Lakes, a variety of fish habitat structures are used not only to support healthy aquatic ecosystems but also to contribute to coastal resilience. These structures provide critical shelter, spawning grounds, and nursery habitat for native fish species—while also playing a role in stabilizing shorelines, reducing erosion, and improving water quality. Many of these approaches are part of nature-based restoration projects that blend ecological enhancement with shoreline protection. Common fish habitat structures that also provide coastal resilience benefits include submerged wood debris, artificial fish shelters (i.e., reef balls), vegetated habitats (i.e., submerged aquatic vegetation), and reconnected backwater channels.<sup>34</sup> The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR) have previously implemented a series of artificial fish habitat structures in the Presque Isle Bay to improve fish populations and enhance fishing success. Three types of structures, porcupine brush cribs, shallow water spawning structures, and stake tree structures were chosen to provide protection for fish and enhance spawning and nesting success (Ohio Sea Grant College Program 1997).



Figure 50. Porcupine Cribs for Fish Habitat

#### 3.4.2 Open Water Green Infrastructure

Open water green infrastructure pertains to the application of natural or nature-based systems within open water environments—including lakes, bays, estuaries, and nearshore areas—to enhance coastal resilience. These methodologies utilize ecosystem functions to mitigate wave energy, decrease erosion, enhance water quality, and safeguard coastal habitats as well as human communities from the adverse effects of climate change, storm surges, and rising sea levels. Benefits to utilizing this type of coastal resilience strategy include wave attenuation, erosion control, habitat creation, and flood mitigation.

#### Living Shorelines

Living shorelines are a coastal resilience strategy utilized in the Great Lakes region to stabilize eroding shorelines, protect coastal infrastructure, and enhance natural habitat. Unlike traditional "gray" infrastructure such as seawalls or bulkheads, living shorelines employ natural materials—such as native plants, rocks, logs, and biodegradable fiber rolls (e.g., coir logs)—to absorb wave energy, reduce erosion, and support ecosystems. This method incorporates native vegetation, often combined with natural structural elements (e.g., rock sills, woody debris), to mimic or restore natural coastal processes like wave buffering and sediment trapping, while maintaining or improving the ecological connectivity between land and water. Benefits to living shorelines are numerous as compared to traditional hard gray infrastructure as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3. Benefits of Living Shorelines**

Living Shorelines	Hard Shorelines (e.g., Seawalls)
Absorb wave energy and reduce erosion	Reflect wave energy, often increasing erosion nearby
Provide habitat and support biodiversity	Offer little to no habitat
Improve water quality through filtration	Can increase runoff and pollutant loading
Adapt to changing lake levels	May become ineffective with water level shifts
Typically cost-effective over the long term	Often expensive to build and maintain

<sup>34</sup> Figure 50 source: Save Our Native Species, Inc., of Lake Erie Fishing Club, <https://sonsoflakeerie.org/habitat.htm>.

NOAA encourages the use of living shorelines, green restoration, where possible and has provided guidance on determining whether an area would be suitable for such restoration (NOAA 2015; Figure 51). When considering the possibility of a living shoreline NOAA advises understanding the physical conditions at the site such as the amount of boat traffic that occurs along the shoreline or the extent, rate, and cause of the current erosion problem. Ecological factors to consider are the presence of valuable aquatic habitats or animals at the site, such as habitat used by federally threatened or endangered animal species or submerged aquatic vegetation beds (NOAA 2015).<sup>35</sup>

**LIVING SHORELINES SUPPORT RESILIENT COMMUNITIES**

Living shorelines use plants or other natural elements—sometimes in combination with harder shoreline structures—to stabilize estuarine coasts, bays, and tributaries.

- One square mile of salt marsh stores the carbon equivalent of 76,000 gal of gas annually.**
- Marshes trap sediments from tidal waters, allowing them to **grow in elevation** as sea level rises.
- Living shorelines improve **water quality**, provide fisheries **habitat**, increase **biodiversity**, and promote **recreation**.
- Marshes and oyster reefs act as natural **barriers** to waves, **15 ft** of marsh can **absorb 50%** of incoming wave energy.
- Living shorelines are **more resilient** against storms than bulkheads.
- 33%** of shorelines in the U.S. will **hardened by 2100**, decreasing fisheries habitat and biodiversity.
- Hard shoreline structures like **bulkheads** prevent natural marsh migration and may create seaward **erosion**.

Figure 51. Importance of Living Shorelines for Resilient Communities

<sup>35</sup> Figure 51 source: NOAA, <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/living-shoreline.html>.

## Floating Wetlands

Floating wetlands, also known as floating treatment wetlands (FTWs), are artificial platforms planted with vegetation that float on the surface of a waterbody (Figure 52).<sup>36</sup> These wetlands are a green infrastructure tool used to enhance water quality, provide wildlife habitat, and stabilize shoreline conditions, especially in urban or degraded coastal environments where natural wetlands have been lost. Floating wetlands consist of:

- A buoyant base, often made of recycled plastic or biodegradable materials.
- Native wetland plants (such as sedges, grasses, or rushes) planted into the mat.
- Roots that hang beneath the surface, creating a submerged network that interacts with the surrounding water.

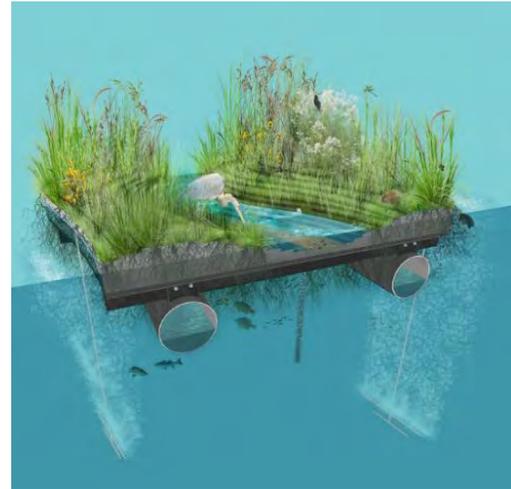


Figure 52. Cross-section Rendering of a Floating Wetland

These systems replicate some of the ecological functions of natural wetlands but are designed to float in open water or nearshore zones. The benefits of floating wetlands for coastal resilience are outlined in Table 4. In the Great Lakes, floating wetlands offer a flexible, cost-effective solution for enhancing coastal resilience in urbanized or degraded waterfronts. By improving water quality, reducing erosion, and creating habitat, they help communities better adapt to environmental stressors such as stormwater pollution, climate change, and shoreline degradation—while reconnecting people with nature in the process.

**Table 4. Benefits of Floating Wetlands**

Function	Benefit
Nutrient absorption	Reduces algal blooms and improves water clarity
Habitat creation	Supports fish, birds, and pollinators
Erosion buffering	Helps protect vulnerable shorelines from minor wave and boat wake impacts
Urban retrofitting	Can be installed in constrained or developed shorelines
Climate adaptation	Increases resilience to flooding and water quality degradation

## Constructed or Restored Reefs

Constructed or restored reefs in the Great Lakes are nature-based structures placed in nearshore waters to support native fish habitats, stabilize sediments, and reduce coastal erosion. They blend ecological restoration with shoreline protection, enhancing coastal resilience against high lake levels, stronger storms, and habitat degradation due to climate change. These reefs can include artificial reefs, which are built with natural materials such as limestone, restored natural reefs, and structures placed in shallow or mid-depth waters to mimic the function of natural reef systems. These reefs are typically designed to

<sup>36</sup> Figure 52 source: Cosier, S. (2022), <https://e360.yale.edu/features/floating-wetlands-cities-pollution>.

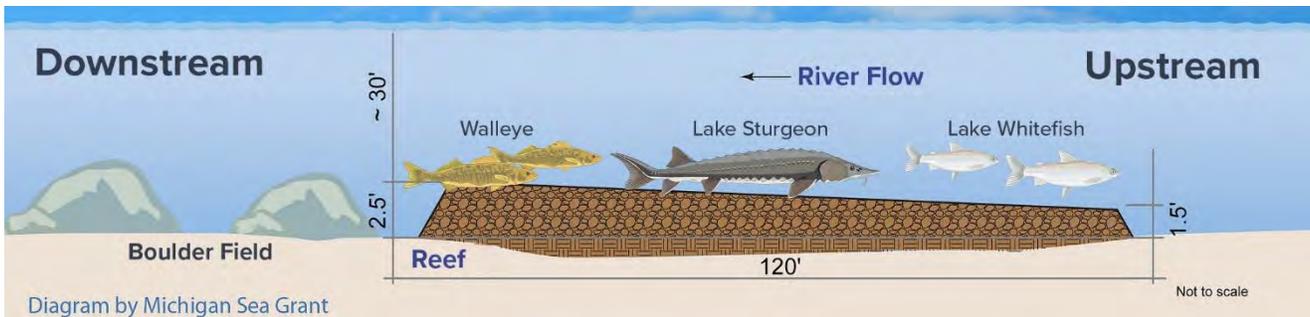


Figure 53. Artificial Reef

enhance fish spawning, support benthic organisms, and improve ecosystem health, while also contributing to shoreline protection.<sup>37</sup>

These reefs support coastal resilience through:

- **Wave energy reduction** – Reefs function as submerged barriers that attenuate wave action before it impacts the shoreline, thereby mitigating erosion. By decelerating waves, reefs contribute to increased sediment deposition, aiding in the restoration of nearshore areas.
- **Sediment stabilization** – Reef structures reduce water turbulence near the lakebed, helping keep sediments in place, improving water clarity and supporting aquatic vegetation, which further reinforces shoreline stability.
- **Biodiversity and ecosystem restoration** – Reefs support invertebrates, plants, and algae that form the base of the aquatic food chain. They contribute to habitat reconstruction in areas affected by dredging, shipping, or pollution.

### 3.4.3 Upland Restoration

Upland restoration encompasses the enhancement and rehabilitation of land areas located inland and upslope from immediate shoreline regions. Within the Great Lakes region, these upland areas are integral to the health and resilience of coastal systems. By effectively managing water, stabilizing soil, and supporting native ecosystems, upland restoration initiatives contribute significantly to coastal resilience. This resilience pertains to the capacity of shorelines and communities to withstand and recover from erosion, flooding, and other climate-related impacts.

#### Riparian Stabilization Measures

Riparian stabilization refers to the process of protecting and restoring vegetated areas along the banks of rivers, streams, and other waterways.<sup>38</sup> In the context of the Great Lakes, this process is important for coastal resilience as it improves watershed health and reduces the movement of sediment, pollutants, and excess water into nearshore environments. Eroding riverbanks contribute large amounts of sediment to lakes, which can smother fish habitat, degrade water quality and clog harbors and wetlands. Riparian stabilization involves practices that prevent erosion



Figure 54. Example of Riparian Stabilization

<sup>37</sup> Figure 53 source: Erickson, J. (2012, May 3), <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-spawning-reefs-great-lakes-native.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Figure 54 source: Genesee River Watch, <https://geneseeriverwatch.org/>.

along streambanks such as stabilizing the soil using vegetation and natural materials, such as woody debris. Riparian stabilization techniques include live stake plantings such as willows, vegetated buffers with native plant species to anchor the soils, brush layering or fascines involving long cylindrical bundles of wood branches placed on slopes, re-grading banks to more stable angles, and installing coir logs or erosion blankets made from biodegradable materials that protect the banks as vegetation is established. Stabilizing the restoring riparian areas also reduces upland flooding from storms, as riparian zones slow and absorb stormwater, reducing peak flows during heavy rainfall, which lessens the impacts of surface water on downstream shorelines and infrastructure. Riparian restoration also improves fish and wildlife habitat, as these areas are essential corridors for fish, birds, amphibians, and pollinators.

### **Green Stormwater Infrastructure**

Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) involves practices and systems that capture, slow, filter, and infiltrate stormwater runoff in inland areas before it reaches waterways. In the Great Lakes region, upland GSI helps manage water, reduce erosion and flooding, and improve water quality to support coastal resiliency. Examples of GSI include raingardens, bioswales, permeable pavements, green roofs, vegetated retention basins, and constructed wetlands.<sup>39</sup> These systems are typically installed in urban, suburban, or agricultural areas where impervious surfaces like roads, roofs, and parking lots create large volumes of fast-moving runoff. Detroit and Milwaukee have implemented large-scale GSI networks in urban areas to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs), improving water quality in Lake Michigan and Lake Erie, such as the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department's Green Infrastructure Program, the Joe Louis Greenway, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's (MMSD) Green Seams Program, and the Green Infrastructure Partnership Program. GSI supports coastal resilience by reducing stormwater volume and peak flow, improving water quality, and minimizing bluff and shoreline erosion.



**Figure 55. Green Roof in Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

### **Floodplain Reconnection & River Restoration**

Floodplain reconnection and river restoration are nature-based approaches that aim to restore the natural functions of rivers and their adjacent landscapes. These strategies are especially important in the Great Lakes region, where tributaries, wetlands, and coastal areas are interconnected and influenced by upstream watershed conditions. Together, these practices enhance coastal resilience by reducing flood risk, improving water quality, supporting biodiversity, and restoring the natural flow of water through the landscape. Floodplain reconnection is the process of restoring the natural connection between a river and its floodplain, which has often been lost due to channelization (i.e., straightening of streams), dam construction, and urban development. Reconnecting the floodplain means allowing water to overflow onto low-lying land during high-flow events, which mimics how rivers historically behaved before being altered. Slowing surface water and spreading it on an improved floodplain reduces the downstream risk

<sup>39</sup> Figure 55 source: Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District, <https://mmsd.com/>.

of flooding, promotes groundwater recharge and natural infiltration, helps restore wetland habitat that supports more diverse species, and reduces sediment and nutrient runoff to Lake Erie.

Reconnecting floodplains is just one aspect of overall river restoration, which involves returning altered or degraded rivers to a more natural, dynamic state. River restoration is achieved through various methods including removing levees or berms, restoring meanders or natural channel shapes, replanting riparian vegetation, adding instream structures such as riffles and pools, and reestablishing natural flow regimes.<sup>40</sup>

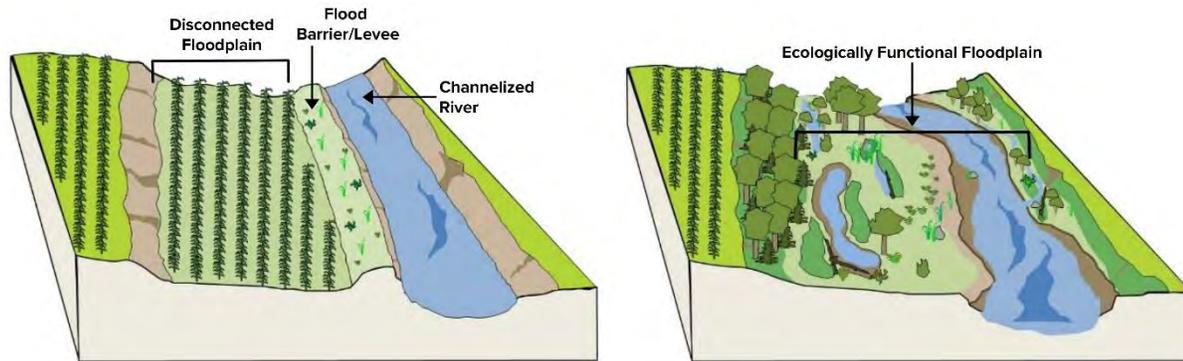


Figure 56. Comparison of Disconnected Floodplain (Left) Versus Ecologically Functional Floodplain (Right)

### Beneficial Use of Dredge Material

The beneficial use of dredged material refers to the strategic reuse of sediment removed during dredging (typically from navigation channels, harbors, and ports) for environmentally, economically, and socially valuable purposes. Instead of treating dredged material as waste, it's increasingly being used to enhance coastal resilience, restore habitats, and adapt to the impacts of climate change and erosion. The Great Lakes region generates millions of cubic yards of dredged sediment annually, particularly in major shipping and harbor areas such as in Conneaut. Beneficial reuse of material can reduce reliance on costly disposal, offset sediment deficits in eroding shorelines, support ecosystem restoration and promote sustainable dredging and shoreline management practices.

Dredged material has been used for the construction of islands, marshes and habitat development projects across the US. In 2015, it was estimated that 1,000,000 birds' nest on dredged material islands each year (USACE 2015). USACE has created a guidance document titled *Environmental Evaluation and Management of Dredged Material for Beneficial Use: A Regional Beneficial Use Testing Manual for the Great Lakes* (also known as the Great Lakes Beneficial Use Testing Manual). This document provides technical guidelines for assessing the suitability of dredged sediment for beneficial use in aquatic and terrestrial environments in the Great Lakes region (USACE 2022). In this most recent manual, USACE categorized dredged sediment management into "aquatic placement" which includes habitat creation in wet environments, shore protection, and capping/remediation. Or "upland placement" which includes habitat development for land restoration or agricultural purposes, upland fill sites for human development, and manufactured products. Aquatic placement, which is most relevant in the case of Conneaut's harbor, has benefits that range from storm protection, and habitat enhancement. Successful examples of such aquatic placement sites can be seen in previous projects within the Great Lakes Region, namely the Cat Island Project in Green Bay for shoreline protection or the habitat creation in Duluth-Superior Harbor.

<sup>40</sup> Figure 56 source: Olivia Dorothy, Healthy Floodplains Reduce Nutrient Pollution, <https://www.wateronline.com/doc/healthy-floodplains-reduce-nutrient-pollution-0001>

Key resilience-focused applications of dredged material in the great lakes and their outcomes are outlined in Table 5.

**Table 5. Resilience-Focused Applications of Beneficial Dredge Material**

Function	Resilience Outcome
Wetland restoration	Buffers storms, stores floodwaters, filters runoff
Beach nourishment	Reduces erosion, protects property and public lands
Habitat enhancement	Increases biodiversity and ecosystem stability
Bluff and shoreline stabilization	Reduces sediment loss and risk of landslides
Island creation	Deflects wave energy, protects fragile shoreline ecosystems

### 3.5 Resilience Actions

Evaluating various coastal resilience strategies during a coastal resilience planning effort is critical because it helps ensure that the selected strategies are effective, sustainable, and tailored to the specific needs and challenges of the coastal environment and its communities.<sup>41</sup> This process allows for informed decision-making that considers the unique environmental, social, and economic factors at play, ultimately leading to a more resilient coastal community that can better withstand future challenges and recover more effectively after disasters. CPA and the planning team evaluated the strategies outlined in Section 3.4 to determine which strategies and specific methodologies would be best suited to provide climate resilience solutions for Conneaut, Ohio. Incorporation of green infrastructure to reduce climate impacts was one of the main objectives during the analysis. The specific actions that the planning team will use varies by project. Table 6 outlines the various actions/practices that will be designed, permitted, and implemented in Conneaut to support coastal resilience.



Figure 57. Nature Based Solutions as Resilience Actions

<sup>41</sup> Figure 57 source: IUCN Commission on Ecosystem Management, <https://iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/ensuring-effective-nature-based-solutions>.

**Table 6. Proposed Resilience Actions for Conneaut, OH and their Benefits**

Resilience Strategy	Resilience Action/Practice	Benefit
Coastal Wetland Restoration	Reestablishing hydrology	Improves floodwater storage, groundwater recharge, and wetland function.
	Invasive species removal	Enhances ecosystem resilience, habitat quality, and reduces fire and flood risk.
	Native vegetation planting	Stabilizes soil, supports wildlife, and improves stormwater filtration.
	Sediment augmentation or grading	Increases wetland resilience to erosion and rising water levels.
	Wetland creation	Improves water quality and reconnects habitats.
Beach Replenishment	Strategic sediment placement	Mimics natural coastal dynamics, enhances beach width, reduces impacts of storm surge.
	Dune restoration or construction	Enhances wildlife habitat, provides natural barriers to reduce the impacts of storm surges and flooding, helps trap wind-blown sand to maintain beach elevation.
	Native vegetation plantings	Enhances wildlife habitat, protects threatened or endangered plants, reduces erosion, mitigates flooding impact
	Sand fencing, coir logs, congruent sediment sourcing	Reduces erosion, mitigates impacts of wave action
Gray/Green Coastal Shore Protection Structures	Gray coastal structures (bulkheads, revetments, breakwaters)	Holds soil in place and reduces erosion, protects from wave action
	Gray/green coastal armament (vegetated breakwaters, sills, edging)	Holds soil in place and reduces erosion, protects from wave action, offers some wildlife habitat
Bluff Protection Measures	Building relocation	Increases building lifespans, restores property values, moves building impacts away from bluffs
	Bluff toe protection (riprap, stone revetments, offshore breakwaters)	Protects against erosion and wave action
	Grading and terracing	Reduces bluff slope steepness improving stability
	Surface water management (drainage controls, rain gardens, vegetated swales)	Reduces erosion impact from upstream runoff
	Invasive species removal and native vegetation planting	Increases bluff soil stability, removes excess groundwater to retain soil strength
Fish Habitat Improvements	Native plantings	Provides fish habitat and enhanced spawning success, aids in shoreline stability, provides habitat in aquatic-upland transition areas

Resilience Strategy	Resilience Action/Practice	Benefit
Shoreline and Wetland Enhancement	Living shorelines	Provides a buffer to upland areas, provides protection from wave action, creates and restores natural plant communities and provides wildlife habitat, improves water quality through filtration, adapts to changing lake levels, cost effective
	Floating wetlands	Reduces algal blooms, supports fish, birds, and pollinators, protects from wave and boat wake impacts, adapts to various shoreline conditions, increases resilience to flooding and water quality degradation
	Constructed or restored reefs	Wave energy reduction, sediment stabilization, biodiversity and ecosystem restoration,
Riparian Stabilization	Native plantings and natural material stabilization	Stabilizes soil, provides aquatic and riparian habitat, reduces sediment movement, reduces peak flow impacts
	Stream daylighting	Restores natural stream paths and reduces impacts from peak flows, provides increased habitat
	Removal of impoundments	Allows for desired surface/stream flows and positively impacts surface water quality
Green Stormwater Infrastructure	Rain gardens and bioswales	Slows surface runoff, improves downstream water quality, provides habitat
	Permeable pavements	Reduces surface runoff, improves downstream water quality
	Green roofs	Reduce urban heat island effect, provide habitat
Beneficial Use of Dredge Material	Wetland restoration	Buffers storms, stores floodwaters, filters runoff
	Beach nourishment	Reduces erosion, protects property and public lands
	Bluff and shoreline stabilization	Reduces sediment loss and risk of landslides
	Island creation	Deflects wave energy, protects fragile shoreline ecosystems

One tool that creates opportunities for the funding of resiliency strategies involves public private partnerships for managing and restoring privately held lands. In Euclid, Ohio, a group of nearly 100 property owners negotiated the transfer of permanent easements on their land with Cuyahoga County. The land where the easements were given includes a shoreline that has been subject to dramatic erosion in recent years. The creation of this type of conservation district unlocked public funding which was used to stabilize the shoreline and create a public trail along  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile of Lake Erie coastline.



# Project Solicitation



## 4 PROJECT SOLICITATION

One of the main goals of the Plan is to identify and describe a suite of green infrastructure projects that address the areas of habitat and economic concern acknowledged during the planning process. Over the past year of planning efforts, throughout the engagement events, calls with stakeholders, community members, and after review from technical experts, our Team has created a running list of the “universe of projects.” The “universe of projects” is defined as a near comprehensive set of potential projects that can be implemented to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and community resilience along the 6-mile Conneaut shoreline of Lake Erie. The intent of this list is not to have a final and comprehensive accounting of all the possible restoration projects within Conneaut region. Instead, the list will serve as a living document, to be added to overtime, as prioritized projects are moved through the next phases of development (i.e., engineering/design, permitting, implementation, and monitoring). To move projects forward through development and implementation, a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) evaluation system was used to prioritize which projects will seek continued funding. The methodology used for identifying and prioritizing projects is described below.

### 4.1 Project Proposal Submission

Seeking project ideas and input into potential resilience actions is a core element of this Plan. CPA endeavored to gather public and stakeholder feedback on nature-based and green infrastructure projects through a structured, inclusive process. This process included collaborative planning sessions during in-person and virtual meetings, providing opportunities to submit ideas directly to the planning staff (via emails, online forms, surveys, etc.), and through community feedback loops. Inherently, through the multiple drafts of this Plan shared with the stakeholders and the public, the CPA has created a feedback loop, where ideas are presented to the community for feedback and refinement. Online project submission forms on the CPA website will stay active after the planning process to allow for continued input into this living document. All submitted projects will then be entered into the “universe of projects” and evaluated for feasibility.

### 4.2 Project Selection Criteria & Process

All projects presented to the CPA through the outreach events, virtual meetings, private calls, emails, and via the online form (the “universe of projects”) have been evaluated by the technical team for general, high-level feasibility considerations (i.e., does the project include elements of green design, does it address the environmental issues identified, can the project be built, etc.). After initial evaluation, the technical team utilized a MCDA matrix to appraise and compare the different project alternatives to help the CPA prioritize which projects should be designed and implemented first. A MCDA matrix is a useful tool that assists with formulating complex decisions when several conflicting objectives or factors need to be considered simultaneously. The matrix provides a systematic approach to decision-making and reduces bias by incorporating multiple perspectives. As applied during this planning process, the matrix helped the CPA assess which project options would be most effective in achieving desired resilience outcomes, such as improving shoreline protection, water quality, habitat connectivity, improved public safety, reduced erosion, and improved stormwater management. The MCDA framework considers a diversity of criteria that include (but not limited to) cost, environmental and climate-related thresholds, social perceptions, stakeholder and partner capacities, and permitting requirements. Each criterion is assigned a weight that reflects its importance relative to the other criteria. The weightings can be based on expert judgment, stakeholder input, or other methods of prioritization. Using the MCDA methodology, CPA provided transparency to their constituents as to why some projects were prioritized over others.

### 4.2.1 MCDA Process

Development of the MCDA was accomplished through an iterative process between the CPA and their technical experts. The MCDA process outlined here represents a systematic approach to evaluating and prioritizing potential projects based on multiple criteria. This methodology ensures that decisions are made transparently and with a balanced consideration of various factors. By following these steps, the CPA has been able to prioritize the projects included in this Plan based on the results of the MCDA matrix.

### 4.2.2 MCDA Steps

#### *Step 1. Define the Potential Projects*

The first step involved defining potential projects. This step is crucial as it sets the stage for the entire evaluation process. The “universe of projects” list serves as the foundation, from which initial ideas are filtered through high-level feasibility considerations by technical experts. This initial screening ensures that only projects aligning with the overarching goals of the CPA move forward for further evaluation. For this planning effort, CPA received 11 potential project ideas that were deemed initially feasible.

#### *Step 2. Define the Evaluation Criteria*

Next, the evaluation criteria were determined. These criteria are essential as they provide the basis upon which each project will be assessed. The evaluation criteria are those key factors CPA and the planning team, with input from stakeholders and the public, determined were important. Each criterion was carefully defined to ensure that it effectively captures the key aspects of project performance and aligns with the community's resilience objectives. Table 7 describes the evaluation criteria chosen for this planning effort.

**Table 7. MCDA Proposed Criteria Definitions**

Proposed Criteria	Criteria Definition
Technical Feasibility	The practical ability to design, engineer, and implement a proposed solution using existing technology, methods, and materials within the constraints of the site conditions. Does the project promote nature-based designs? What is the efficacy of utilizing green infrastructure vs. grey infrastructure. Are there major technical issues and challenges to project implementation? Are projects relying on manmade materials or local natural materials?
Permittable	"Permittable" refers to whether the proposed project can obtain the necessary legal and regulatory approvals from local, state, and federal agencies to proceed with construction and implementation. Are there anticipated permitting challenges? Does this project require special permits or unusual permits? Are agencies supportive from a permitting perspective? Have similar projects been permitted by the regulatory agencies (i.e., is there precedence?).
Time to Implement	The time it will take for a project to move from a conceptual plan, through engineering and design, to implementation and finally monitoring and adaptive management; Essentially, the project schedule. Will this project take a long time to get built, resulting in a delay of anticipated benefits?

Proposed Criteria	Criteria Definition
Ecological Benefits	The positive impacts a project has on the health, function, and biodiversity of natural ecosystems. These benefits go beyond physical protection from hazards - they support and enhance natural processes that sustain both the environment and the people who depend on it. Examples include water quality improvements, habitat improvements, expanded carrying capacity for plants/animals, and increased foraging habitat. Are projects promoting habitat improvements and/or enhancing natural processes?
Cost	The total project costs, including engineering, design, permitting, implementation, and monitoring. This criterion should also consider long-term maintenance costs. Are project costs prohibitive? Does the project require long-term maintenance? Is funding available?
Long-Term Sustainability	The project's ability to remain effective, functional, and beneficial over time, especially as environmental conditions, climate patterns, and community needs continue to change. Examples include resilience to future environmental, weather conditions, and use conditions. Does the project provide a long-term economic benefit to the region? What is the life expectancy and longevity of the project?
Community & Stakeholder Support	The engagement, endorsement, and active involvement of local residents, landowners, businesses, governments, nonprofits, and other affected or interested parties throughout the planning, design, and implementation of the project. Have the public and stakeholders expressed particular interest in the project? Is there an expressed need for the project?
Human & Economic Risk Reduction	The strategies and outcomes aimed at minimizing harm to people, property, infrastructure, and local economies from coastal hazards such as erosion, flooding, storm surge, and extreme weather events. What's the long-term project benefits to humans and the economy? What is the economic risk to critical infrastructure (i.e., roadways or bridges), and human health if the project is not built?

### Step 3. Weight the Criteria

Once the criteria were established, they were weighted according to their importance. This step involves assigning weight to each criterion, reflecting its relative significance in the decision-making process. The weightings were derived from expert judgment, their significance to CPA, and stakeholder and community input (Table 8). The total weight of all the criterion needs to equal 1.0 for the matrix to be effective.

**Table 8. MCDA Criteria Proposed Weights**

Proposed Criteria	Proposed Weight
Technical Feasibility	0.18
Permittable	0.16
Time to Implement	0.08
Ecological Benefits	0.13
Cost	0.10
Long-Term Sustainability	0.13
Community & Stakeholder Support	0.10
Human & Economic Risk Reduction	0.12
<b>Total Weight of Criterion</b>	<b>1.00</b>

#### *Step 4. Score the Projects*

The penultimate step in the MCDA process involves scoring the projects. Each project is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 for each criterion, with 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. CPA worked with the planning team to create a draft rating for each project (Appendix B). The draft scoring has been presented in the drafts of this plan to the stakeholders and the public for input and editing before these scores were finalized and published in the final living document.

#### *Step 5. Calculate the Weighted Scores*

Each score was multiplied by the criterion weight to get the weighted score for each project. The overall scores are presented for each project in Section 5. This scoring system allows for a nuanced assessment of project performance across multiple dimensions. The draft scores have been presented to stakeholders and the public for input and refinement, ensuring that the final scores reflect a broad consensus. It is important to note that any projects that are added to the universe of projects over time will be added to this plan on a rolling basis and will be evaluated using the same MCDA matrix, criterion and weighted score.



# Resilience Projects



## 5 RESILIENCE PROJECTS

The Projects described in Section 5.0 are those that have been selected out of the universe of projects based on the high-level technical feasibility analysis and have been evaluated via the MCDA matrix. Feasibility of these projects has been determined based on a detailed desktop analysis, observational data, input from resource agencies and stakeholders, and technical project knowledge from our experts. During this process, we have identified data gaps that have been called out for future investigation during the engineering and design process. For each of the projects in this Plan, the relevant information needed for the CPA and other interested parties to be able to seek future funding for engineering, design, and implementation was included, such as the proposed resilience actions, the approximate costs, the types of permits required, etc.

### 5.1 Coastal Marsh Rehabilitation



**Weighted MCDA Score:** 3.89 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°58'2.17"N,  
80°33'29.34"W

**Background & Location:** The emerging wetland and beach complex that has formed inside of Conneaut harbor's western breakwater offers significant recreation and habitat benefits. This sandbar turned marsh is a recent arrival to this stretch of Lake Erie's shore. Both residents and historical aerials confirm that it first formed in the mid-1990s (though it was certainly growing for years beneath the water). Created by the natural migration of sand down the coast, its emergence has financial implications for Conneaut's Port Authority. As the agency charged with maintaining the commercial marinas, they are responsible for dredging any excess material out of the boat channels. The beach portion of the coastal marsh is very popular with visitors to neighboring Conneaut Township Park. Unlike most of the beaches in the area, this stretch is within the port's breakwater and the waters are calm enough for paddleboarding and other popular water activities.

Figure 58. Coastal Marsh Rehabilitation



**Figure 59. Gull and Tern Species at Conneaut Township Park**

Aerial imagery shows that the vegetation that has colonized the sandbar over the past 30 years has created a coastal marsh which is a locally rare habitat and critical for many native shorebirds. Birders know the Conneaut Harbor as a birding hotspot and “flock” to the area in the spring to see migrating birds and at other times of the year to view shorebirds.<sup>42</sup> A similar habitat 20 miles away at Presque Isle in Pennsylvania has recently hosted the first nesting pair of Common Terns in many years (PGC 2025) This State endangered bird was once extirpated from the region but is slowly making a comeback.

Designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society, Conneaut is the only bit of increasing mudflat habitat between Huron and Presque Isle in Pennsylvania (National Audubon Society 2025). The harbor has been changing over the years, and marsh species are increasing. This is the principal shoreline staging area for birds in Northeast Ohio along Lake Erie. It is both a spring and fall site for shorebirds, as estuaries such as this are relied upon in the deeper central basin of Lake Erie. It is a raptor and vulture migratory corridor. Gulls concentrate at Conneaut in both spring migration and during winter. This spot is characteristically very transient in nature for birdlife. Records of nesting Least Bittern (State threatened) and Marsh Wren (species of special concern) in the associated wetland exist. In addition, Merlin’s have been observed during the summer months along the gorge upstream and have been recorded hunting (eBird 2021).

The coastal marsh, unfortunately, is anything but stable. Sand continues to move into it from the east and is lost from the system as it moves into the boat channels or the deeper parts of the harbor. Lake levels have also been notoriously difficult to predict. The 10-year period between 2010 and 2020 saw Lake Erie’s mean water level climb nearly 3 feet (GLISA 2022). For plants that rely on stable hydrology this marsh is an unforgiving environment. Non-native invasive plants have taken advantage of the situation and now common reed (*Phragmites australis*) dominates the landscape.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** This project will restore approximately 13 acres of degraded littoral wetlands along the western shoreline of Lake Erie. The restoration effort will involve hydrologic reconnection, invasive species removal, native vegetation replanting, sediment removal or reshaping, and the installation of natural shoreline features to reduce erosion. The project will be implemented in partnership with local conservation organizations, academic researchers, and government agencies. It will utilize a nature-based approach to enhance ecosystem services while supporting the resilience of nearby coastal communities against climate-driven threats such as flooding, storm surges, and shoreline erosion. Field data will be collected to produce floristic quality assessments and establish transects for future monitoring. Additionally, a bathymetric survey and hydraulic and sediment transport modeling will guide restoration design, ensuring alignment with projected lake level changes, increased precipitation, and storm intensity due to climate change. A metocean analysis will include a technical evaluation of wave action and water levels at the existing site. Active engagement with local communities will be embedded throughout the planning and implementation phases to promote stewardship and equitable benefit-sharing.

The project will include a long-term stewardship plan to guide future management. A coastal marsh rehabilitation plan will identify both short term and long-term measures that protect existing habitats for native plants and animals. Strategies will be included that preserve access to the public for recreation and plan for the fluctuation of lake levels. Work will include a thorough analysis of existing conditions,

<sup>42</sup> Figure 59 source: Tunney, C. (2017, June 19), <https://greatlakesecho.org/2017/06/19/great-features-of-the-great-lakes-region-ohio/>.

preparation of an open space management plan, the creation of restoration plans for the first phase of work, and construction of phase one improvements.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The coastal marsh at the sandbar is highly susceptible to fluctuating lake levels. The composition of the plant community here is directly related to the change in inundation over the years. Some volatile aspects of the site’s ecology, however, such as the increasing mudflats have benefits to shorebirds.

**Resilience Strategies:** Strategies for rehabilitating the coastal marsh will include nature-based strategies for shoreline stabilization, guidance on nearby dredging activities, a soil management plan, control of invasive plants, and replanting native plants.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions     | \$30,000 to \$50,000   |
| 2. Open Space Management Plan          | \$45,000               |
| 3. Phase 1 Restoration Design          | \$80,000 to \$100,000  |
| 4. Construction of Phase 1 Restoration | \$350,000 to \$500,000 |

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions      | 3 to 6 months  |
| 2. Restoration Design Alternatives      | 3 to 4 months  |
| 3. 30- to 60-Percent Restoration        | 2 to 4 months  |
| 4. Environmental Permitting             | 6 to 12 months |
| 5. 60- to 90-Percent Restoration Design | 2 to 4 months  |
| 6. Final Design & Permitting            | 4 months       |
| 7. Open Space Management Plan           | 2 months       |
| 8. Construction                         | 8 months       |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include increased habitat diversity for the coastal marsh and an improved ability for the habitat to bounce back after major storms or lake level fluctuations.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include a bathymetric survey and topographical survey of the site, metocean analysis of wave action and lake levels, floristic quality inventory/assessment, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of open space management plan, restoration design alternatives, 30- to 60-percent designs, restoration plans, permitting, 60- to 90-percent designs, final designs, construction, and monitoring.

## 5.2 Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.48 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°58'11.10"N, 80°33'13.87"W

**Background & Location:** The Marina Drive extension within Conneaut Harbor is a breakwater structure that protects a portion of the CPA's marina along with the private Conneaut Boat Club. Boaters take advantage of the drive as a convenient place to park their cars. It also serves as a popular location for shoreline fishing. While the drive is protected by the harbor's main breakwaters, the CPA reports that many severe storms still manage to cause damage to the road's surface which is a combination of asphalt and compacted gravel. Some storms are so severe that they have moved entire fields of rock and debris onto the road surface – some pieces as large as a car tire. The waves and debris from these storms have damaged critical infrastructure and have led to sediment eroding back into Lake Erie. Also concerning is that the configuration of the pavement does not adequately separate anglers from the mix of parked cars and driving lanes leading to dangerous conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles.

### Project Description & Proposed

**Activities:** The Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland project will reconstruct 1,150 feet of public roadway and its

adjacent shoreline to address infrastructure protection, water quality, and safety/access concerns. A new barrier island will be constructed in the harbor within areas managed by the CPA under their submerged lands lease. The island will be constructed of material dredged from the adjacent marina and boat channel areas. It will create 6 acres of habitat for native coastal marsh plants. It will also defend the Marina Drive extension by absorbing wave action coming from the northwest.

Marina Drive's pavement will be reconstructed using permeable interlocking concrete pavers. This material is more durable than the existing asphalt and crushed stone paving. It is also more flexible than



Figure 60. Proposed Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland

other pavement options such as poured concrete. Rainwater runoff from the new paved surfaces will be detained and filtered within the permeable pavement as well as by rain gardens placed between the pavement and shoreline. These measures will improve the water quality within the harbor. The project will also have an educational component by highlighting Lake Erie's water cycle and instructing visitors on measures that they can take to battle pollutants through the use of green infrastructure like rain gardens. Newly striped parking stalls and pedestrian paths will separate pedestrians from vehicles making the breakwater safer for anglers.

A bathymetric survey and hydraulic and sediment transport modeling will guide restoration design of the barrier island, ensuring alignment with projected lake level changes, increased precipitation, and storm intensity due to climate change. A metocean analysis will include a technical evaluation of wave action and water levels at the existing site. Active engagement with local communities will be embedded throughout the planning and implementation phases to promote stewardship and equitable benefit-sharing. The project will include a long-term stewardship plan to guide future management. An open space management plan will identify both short term and long-term measures to establish habitats for native plants and animals. Strategies will be included that preserve access to the public for recreation and plan for the fluctuation of lake levels.

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, construction, and monitoring during the establishment phase.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** While located within the protected harbor, the location of the Marina Drive extension on top of an interior breakwall places it in a precarious position and makes it highly susceptible to damage from future storm events.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include newly constructed wetlands that will act as barrier islands, beneficial use of dredge material, green stormwater infrastructure such as permeable paving and bioretention, educational signage, and safety/access improvements for visitors.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$75,000 to \$100,000
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	\$15,000 to \$25,000
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	\$250,000 to \$300,000
4. Permitting	\$150,000 to \$200,000
5. Final Engineering Plans	\$500,000 to \$700,000
6. Construction	\$3.5 million to \$5 million
7. Monitoring	\$50,000 to \$75,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Individual 404 Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)

- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | 6 months   |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | Throughout |
| 3. Preliminary Engineering Plans    | 8 months   |
| 4. Permitting                       | 24 months  |
| 5. Final Engineering Plans          | 6 months   |
| 6. Construction                     | 24 months  |
| 7. Monitoring                       | 72 months  |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include added habitat for native plants, fish, and other wildlife, improved water quality (reduction in total suspended solids), protection of the roadway and marina infrastructure, protection of visitors from hazards, and increased awareness of coastal resiliency measures through educational signage.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, bathymetric survey and topographical survey of the site, metocean analysis of wave action and lake levels, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of restoration plans, individual 404 permit with USACE and alternatives analysis, public review/comment, other permitting, construction of restoration measures, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.3 Naylor Drive Green Infrastructure



Figure 61. Proposed Green Infrastructure Project at Naylor Drive

intercept and treat rainwater runoff from the road before it reaches Lake Erie removing nutrients and suspended solids in the process. The basins will detain and treat the runoff from the 100-year rain event. The project will also have an educational component by highlighting Lake Erie's water cycle and instructing visitors on measures that they can take to battle pollutants through the use of green infrastructure like rain gardens.

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, topographic/utility survey, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, and construction.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** Lakeside infrastructure, like Naylor Drive, is particularly vulnerable to impacts from storm surges. The water quality of the nearby wetlands is also threatened by the pollutants contained in the runoff from the roadway surfaces.

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 3.65 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°57'55.92"N,  
80°33'26.68"W

**Background & Location:** Naylor Drive is an important access road within the Port of Conneaut. Along with the Marina Drive extension it is one of the primary lakeside roads used to access public lands in the City of Conneaut. It stretches a little over a quarter of a mile and connects the popular recreational assets of the marina to the east with Conneaut Township Park Beach to the west. The CPA is planning to expand its marina by constructing boat slips in the harbor immediately adjacent to Naylor Drive. Plans for the expansion were recently completed and are currently in the permitting phase.

The CPA expressed several concerns about this area during stakeholder meetings. One concern is that the existing road may be inadequate to handle its future uses. The narrow pavement only accommodates one lane of travel and there is not a dedicated sidewalk for pedestrians to use. There are also no measures to detain and treat rainwater runoff from the road. It currently sheet drains directly into the harbor.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:**

The Naylor Drive Green Infrastructure project seeks to accommodate the future expansion of Naylor Drive by constructing 9,000 square feet of rain gardens along the shore between the road and the harbor. The rain gardens will

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include green stormwater infrastructure such as permeable paving and bioretention, native planting, as well as educational signage.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

- |                                     |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | \$45,000 to \$60,000       |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | \$15,000 to \$25,000       |
| 3. Preliminary Engineering Plans    | \$75,000 to \$100,000      |
| 4. Permitting                       | \$25,000 to \$50,000       |
| 5. Final Engineering Plans          | \$250,000 to \$300,000     |
| 6. Construction                     | \$2 million to \$3 million |

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Permitting (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | 6 months   |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | Throughout |
| 3. Preliminary Engineering Plans    | 8 months   |
| 4. Permitting                       | 12 months  |
| 5. Final Engineering Plans          | 6 months   |
| 6. Construction                     | 24 months  |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include improved water quality through removal of suspended solids and other pollutants, and increased awareness of coastal resiliency measures through educational signage.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, topographical/utility survey of the site, stormwater modeling, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of construction documents, permitting, and construction of green infrastructure.

## 5.4 Living Shoreline at Canadian National

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.00 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°58'15.54"N, 80°32'44.52"W

**Background & Location:** The Canadian National Railroad owns a quarter mile stretch of shoreline within Conneaut Harbor. This area is unique within the harbor in that it is protected from Lake Erie wave action by the harbor's outer breakwaters and from boat traffic by the inner harbor's east pier. Even so, it has been deprived of sediment from littoral drift so its banks are steep and highly eroded. While most of the upland immediately adjacent to this stretch of shoreline is used for heavy industry, the far east end connects directly to over 600 acres of woodland owned by the Railroad and Ashtabula County. The Turkey Creek Metropark owned by Ashtabula County contains wooded wetlands, rare species of plants and wildlife and 3 miles of Turkey Creek, an outstanding trout fishing stream (Ashtabula County Metroparks 2017). According to M. Skladany (personal communication, September 4, 2025), this area was once a productive and fruitful smallmouth bass spawning ground. However, due to invasive aquatic species, erosion, and other factors, the smallmouth bass population has decreased.

This 500-foot stretch offers opportunities to connect and restore shoreline and fish spawning habitats between the Lake Erie shoreline within the protection of the harbor and the natural resources of Turkey Creek Metropark (having experienced particularly rapid erosion during the last 30 years).

The Ohio DNR reports that a 200-foot stretch of shoreline, located east of the breakwater has shown recession rates of 1 foot to 5.3 feet per year (ODNR 2020a). It may be affected by local currents produced by the breakwater or by rising lake levels. Its loss is concerning since it is a potential link between the calm waters of the harbor and the large natural upland area to the southeast. The area immediately above the bank contains an important access road and rail line for Canadian National's industrial operations. Much of this area sheet drains directly into the harbor. With less than 20 feet of vegetated banks between the road and the water there is not much space to filter and treat the runoff before it reaches Lake Erie.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The Living Shoreline at Canadian National RR project will restore 1,500 feet of Lake Erie shoreline and in-water aquatic smallmouth bass fisheries habitat within Conneaut Harbor. The project will take advantage of the site's protected conditions and utilize nature-based restoration techniques. Dredge material from the recreational boat channels will be used beneficially to extend the shoreline lakeward by 30 feet. The new banks will be planted with native vegetation to improve the connection between the water and the large woodland managed by



Figure 62. Proposed Living Shoreline at Canadian National

Ashtabula’s Metroparks. The wider and shallower shoreline will protect important infrastructure and improve Lake Erie water quality by increasing the vegetative filter strip between impervious areas and the harbor.

To help promote smallmouth bass and other aquatic species to utilize the area for spawning, a variety of restoration techniques may be used including the removal of contaminated sediments (if occurring onsite), additional of gravel and rock (angular limestone and rock in nearshore areas), installation of spawning benches, incorporation of coarse woody habitat, removal of invasive species, and planting riparian or wetland vegetation along the shoreline.

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, construction, and monitoring during the establishment phase. A bathymetric survey and hydraulic and sediment transport modeling will guide restoration design, ensuring alignment with projected lake level changes, increased precipitation, and storm intensity due to climate change. A metocean analysis will include a technical evaluation of wave action and water levels at the existing site. Active engagement with local communities will be embedded throughout the planning and implementation phases to promote stewardship and equitable benefit-sharing. The project will include a long-term stewardship plan to guide future management. An open space management plan will identify both short term and long-term measures to establish habitats for native plants and animals.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** This stretch of shoreline is partially protected by being within the outer breakwaters, but sections of it are experiencing rapid erosion due to wave action.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include nature-based shoreline stabilization techniques, beneficial use of dredge materials, improvements to animal/fish habitat, planting of native vegetation, and vegetated filter strips to treat runoff.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$65,000 to \$75,000
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	\$15,000 to \$25,000
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	\$100,000 to \$150,000
4. Permitting	\$75,000 to \$100,000
5. Final Engineering Plans	\$175,000 to \$200,000
6. Construction	\$2.5 million to \$3 million
7. Monitoring	\$50,000 to \$75,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | 6 months   |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | Throughout |
| 3. Preliminary Engineering Plans    | 8 months   |
| 4. Permitting                       | 24 months  |
| 5. Final Engineering Plans          | 6 months   |
| 6. Construction                     | 24 months  |
| 7. Monitoring                       | 72 months  |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include 5 acres of added coastal marsh and upland habitat, improved water quality through filtering sediments and other pollutants from adjacent road surfaces, stabilization of shoreline, and protection of habitat corridor to adjacent Turkey Creek.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, bathymetric survey and topographical survey of the site, metocean analysis of wave action and lake levels, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of construction documents, preparation of nationwide permit with ODNR, other permitting; construction of restoration measures, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.5 Beach Replenishment East of Conneaut Harbor



Figure 63. Proposed Beach Replenishment

placement. This includes the municipal channel managed by the Corps and the recreational channels and marinas managed by the CPA.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The beach replenishment project will restore the natural beach profile of the shoreline east of Conneaut Harbor by transporting dredge material to the Corp’s designated nearshore disposal area. This area is 1,500 feet to the east of the Conneaut Harbor’s east breakwater, between -11 and -8 feet below mean water.

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 2.91 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°58'18.54"N, 80°32'27.03"W

**Background & Location:** Since their construction over 100 years ago, the breakwaters around Conneaut’s harbor have been shaping Lake Erie’s shoreline. By disrupting the natural flow of littoral sediment along the coast, the breakwaters have created a large beach on one side and a sand depleted shore on the other. The loss of beach to the east of Conneaut is of such concern that Pennsylvania’s Office of Coastal Resources Management listed replenishing sand resources in the western part of the state as a top priority at a recent summit. (LimnoTech 2020). The disruption of littoral sand flow has a direct impact on the quality of habitat for native plants and animals. It degrades the function of coastal wetlands and nearshore environments leading to reductions in spawning and nursery habitat for native fish (Mackey 2012).

The boat channels and harbor areas are frequently dredged by USACE and the Conneaut Port Authority. Anywhere from 50,000 to 200,000 cubic yards of sediment are removed each year (USACE 2024). The federal channels and the outer port which are managed by the Corps have been found to have silt and clay deposits which are unsuitable for beach replenishment. The areas to the west of Conneaut Creek, however, are more likely to have coarser sand deposits which would be suitable for nearshore

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, construction, and monitoring during the establishment phase. A bathymetric survey and hydraulic and sediment transport modeling will guide restoration design, ensuring alignment with projected lake level changes, increased precipitation, and storm intensity due to climate change.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The coastline east of Conneaut’s east breakwater is highly vulnerable to future threats from severe storms as a direct result of beach loss.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include beach replenishment and native plantings.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$40,000 to \$50,000
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	\$15,000 to \$25,000
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	\$80,000 to \$100,000
4. Permitting	\$60,000 to \$80,000
5. Final Engineering Plans	\$100,000 to \$150,000
6. Construction	\$2 million to \$3 million
7. Monitoring	\$50,000 to \$75,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	6 months
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	Throughout
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	6 months
4. Permitting	8 months
5. Final Engineering Plans	6 months
6. Construction	18 months
7. Monitoring	36 months

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include stabilized shoreline conditions east of Conneaut Harbor with a reduction in near-term erosion rates. Other benefits will include improved habitat for native animals/fish.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, bathymetric survey and topographical survey of the site, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of construction documents, preparation of nation-wide permit with ODNR, other permitting, construction of restoration measures, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.6 Wetland Park and Boardwalk

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.40 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°57'53.56"N,  
80°33'34.93"W

**Background & Location:** At the nexus of three critical resources lies a triangular shaped property that is jointly owned and managed by the City of Conneaut and the Conneaut Port Authority. This upland area has 600 feet of shoreline and consists of mown turfgrass and a scattering of trees, but it could be so much more. The parklet lies at the intersection of the Naylor Drive connection and the recreational marina to the east, the sandbar coastal marsh to the north, and the Conneaut Township Park beach to the west. It offers opportunities to create important pedestrian and ecological connections between each of these resources.

This is also the location where one of the primary storm sewer discharges in the area is released into Lake Erie. The runoff in this sewer is collected from over 240 acres of upland area, most of which contains urban development. It emerges from the hillside in a 4- by 3-foot box culvert before running through 350 feet of incised drainage channel. The channel contains mown vegetation along its steep banks and does little to slow down or treat the runoff before it enters the lake.

The adjacent Naylor Drive and backwater lagoon are very popular bird watching spots. The coastal marsh that has developed on the sandbar is a locally rare habitat for this part of Lake Erie and attracts migratory birds in the spring as well as nesting shorebirds at other times of the year (Ohio Ornithological Society, n.d.). The CPA's plan to develop the lagoon into a marina will displace some of the birdwatching activity.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The wetland park and boardwalk project will build 2 acres of constructed wetland which will intercept and treat up to 1.5 million gallons of runoff from the existing



Figure 64. Wetland Park and Boardwalk

storm and sewer discharge. This artificial wetland will displace the existing mown lawn and drainage ditch and will be planted with native vegetation to provide additional habitat for native plants and animals. It will collect rainwater runoff and remove sediment and excess nutrients before allowing the runoff to overflow into Lake Erie. A boardwalk will be constructed to both improve access to the adjacent coastal marsh and confine visitors to specific areas. The boardwalk will terminate in a lookout that will provide birders with an advantageous viewing platform. The project will also have educational components. Signage will highlight the unique ecology of the intentionally constructed wetland, the recently formed marsh, and the historic shoreline conditions. Important habitat elements for birds will be identified, and visitors will be instructed on ways to incorporate these elements at home.

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, construction, and monitoring during the establishment phase. A topographic/utility and bathymetric survey will be completed for the site and preliminary/final stormwater modeling performed to confirm the performance of the constructed wetlands. An open space management plan will be created to guide stewardship efforts and identify both short and long-term goals for vegetation establishment.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The urban runoff that enters the lagoon at the project location has direct and indirect impacts on the health of the coastal marsh that has developed adjacent to the discharge point. As mentioned previously in this report, the coastal marsh is highly susceptible to future impacts from severe storms and lake level fluctuations. Addressing the urban runoff is one way to protect the health of the coastal marsh.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include constructed wetlands to treat urban runoff, boardwalks to improve and control visitor access, educational signage, and viewing platforms for birders.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$80,000 to \$100,000
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	\$15,000 to \$25,000
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	\$150,000 to \$200,000
4. Permitting	\$100,000 to \$150,000
5. Final Engineering Plans	\$250,000 to \$400,000
6. Construction	\$2.75 million to \$5 million
7. Monitoring	\$50,000 to \$75,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Permit (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | 6 months   |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | Throughout |
| 3. Preliminary Engineering Plans    | 8 months   |
| 4. Permitting                       | 24 months  |
| 5. Final Engineering Plans          | 6 months   |
| 6. Construction                     | 24 months  |
| 7. Monitoring                       | 36 months  |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include improved water quality within the harbor, 1.5 acres of added coastal marsh habitat, improved access to natural areas, educational opportunities for visitors.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, bathymetric survey and topographical/utility survey of the site, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of construction documents, stormwater modeling, preparation of nation-wide permit with ODNR, other permitting, construction of improvements, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.7 Restoration Plan for Kelsey’s Run Watershed

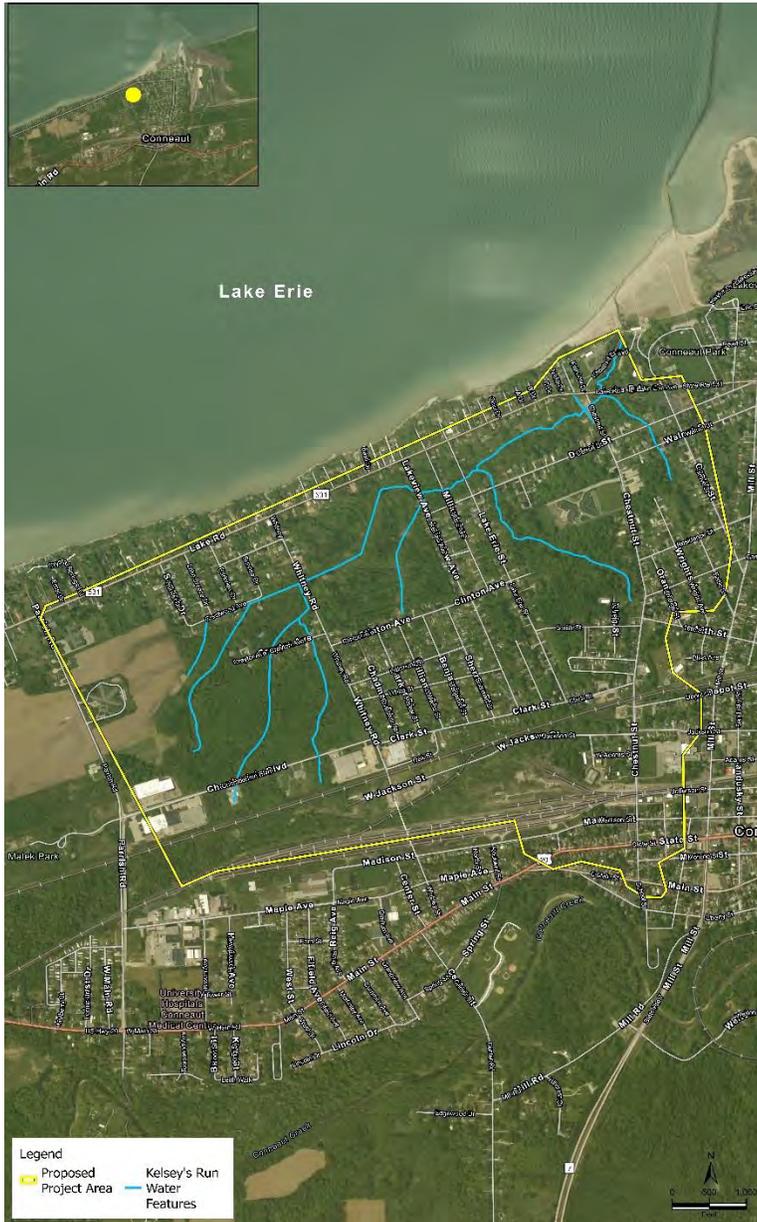


Figure 65. Kelsey’s Run Watershed

area of lakeside residential properties north of Lake Road are experiencing bluff erosion which may also be affected by the altered hydrology in the Kelsey’s Run watershed.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The Kelsey’s Run Watershed Restoration Plan will document the current conditions in the watershed and make recommendations to the City of Conneaut for measures that will protect the stream from impacts from future development. These will likely include vegetated setbacks, point source discharge measures, and efforts to remove impoundments and channelized or buried sections of the stream. The plan will seek to restore the natural hydrology of the watershed to the greatest extent possible. The plan will balance the needs of private property owners and future development in the area with the protection of this vital natural resource through a robust community engagement strategy. The final deliverable will be a document containing guidelines

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 3.69 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°57'18.37"N,  
80°34'11.20"W

**Background & Location:** Kelsey’s Run is a creek that winds through Conneaut Township Park before emptying into Lake Erie immediately west of the port. The main branch of the creek has been impounded in multiple locations but ultimately stretches about 2 miles with its headwaters near Parish Road and Chamberlain Boulevard. It drains over 1,000 acres of land.

Approximately 60 percent of the properties in this watershed have been developed - mostly for single family residential use. All the properties, developed or not, are zoned for development by the City, with only Conneaut Township Park protected from future residential building. The City of Conneaut’s Comprehensive Plan update from 2017 identifies the corridor around Kelsey’s Run as an important conservation priority for protecting wetlands and riparian setbacks (City of Conneaut 2018).

The current health of the watershed is degraded due to the development of impervious surfaces, eroded banks, loss of native vegetation, and disruptions to the habitat corridor from impoundments and buried sections of stream. Future development threatens to worsen these conditions. In addition, the direct impacts to Lake Erie water quality could be increased sediment and nutrient pollution at Conneaut Township Park Beach. The

recommending best practices within the watershed that the City of Conneaut and private property owners can utilize.

The scope of work will include engagement with stakeholders such as the City of Conneaut and local property owners. Field investigations will be conducted to confirm the condition of waterways and wetlands. County GIS data and LIDAR surveys will be used to conduct a watershed analysis which will map existing features such as topography and built improvements. An alternative futures analysis will compare various approaches to protecting wetlands and riparian corridors and reveal their costs and benefits. The project will culminate in the creation of best management practices for the watershed which will suggest measures that property owners and the City of Conneaut can take to protect water quality and reduce flooding as development occurs within the watershed.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** Kelsey’s Run has the second largest drainage area (after Conneaut Creek) in the project area. A large portion of its watershed is still underdeveloped or lightly developed. Measures to protect the drainage corridor can reduce local flooding and will have important long-term benefits to the Lake Erie water quality at Conneaut Township Park Beach.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include riparian corridor protection measures such as vegetated setbacks, nature-based bank stabilization, stream daylighting, and removal of impoundments.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

- |                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | \$10,000 |
| 2. Field Investigations             | \$20,000 |
| 3. Watershed Analysis               | \$40,000 |
| 4. Alternative Futures Analysis     | \$60,000 |
| 5. BMP Guide                        | \$80,000 |

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, as this proposed project is for data collection and planning activities, no permits will likely be required.

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | 2 months |
| 2. Field Investigations             | 1 month  |
| 3. Watershed Analysis               | 3 months |
| 4. Alternative Futures Analysis     | 3 months |
| 5. BMP Guide                        | 4 months |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include a comprehensive plan to encourage best management practices within the Kelsey Run watershed to reduce flooding and improve the Lake Erie water quality at Conneaut Township Park Beach.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include meetings with the City of Conneaut, stakeholder engagement, collection of field data, development of a watershed analysis, preparation of alternative futures analysis to compare various protection measures in the watershed, and creation of best management practices (BMPs) for Kelsey’s Run Watershed.

## 5.8 Bank Stabilization at Kelsey's Run

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.32 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°57'43.62"N,  
80°33'52.40"W

**Background & Location:** Kelsey's Run is a creek that winds through Conneaut Township Park before emptying into Lake Erie immediately west of the port. The main branch of the creek has been impounded in multiple locations but ultimately stretches about 2 miles with its headwaters near Parish Road and Chamberlain Boulevard. It drains over 1,000 acres of land. One of the most visited sections of the creek is at its mouth where it enters Lake Erie. This quarter mile section runs through Conneaut Township Park, dropping 15 feet in elevation before reaching the beach and Lake Erie. The area immediately surrounding the creek is mostly vegetated with turfgrass. The banks are deeply incised and are eroding in many places. During stakeholder meetings with Conneaut Township Park representatives, they informed the design team that the beach has been closed in the past due to water quality issues. They also expressed concern that stormwater runoff from the adjacent road surfaces may be eroding the creek's banks.

### Project Description & Proposed

**Activities:** The Bank Stabilization Project at Kelsey's Run will restore 1,200 feet of highly visible stream bank. It will serve as a pilot project that will inform future restoration measures in the watershed.

Nature-based solutions to bank stabilization will be employed and native vegetation re-established in this stretch of the creek. The project will include educational signage to inform visitors about the benefits of the restoration for water quality and wildlife habitat.

The scope of work for this project will include an analysis of existing conditions, community/stakeholder engagement, preparation of preliminary engineering plans, permitting, final engineering plans, construction, and monitoring during the establishment phase. A topographic/utility survey will be performed to establish existing conditions. Fluvial modelling will be conducted to predict the behavior of the stream during various conditions/seasons.



Figure 66. Bank Stabilization at Kelsey's Run

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The vulnerability of this stretch of Kelsey’s Run is currently low, but that may change with future development upstream. This project location is very visible to patrons of the park and would make a good pilot location with high educational value.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include nature-based bank stabilization strategies, conversion of turfgrass to native plantings, reduction of suspended sediments into Kelsey’s run and Lake Erie, and educational signage.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$15,000
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	\$5,000
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	\$20,000
4. Permitting	\$5,000
5. Final Engineering Plans	\$70,000
6. Construction	\$250,000 to \$300,000
7. Monitoring	\$10,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Floodplain Permitting (Ashtabula County)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	3 months
2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement	Throughout
3. Preliminary Engineering Plans	3 months
4. Permitting	3 months
5. Final Engineering Plans	4 months
6. Construction	6 months
7. Monitoring	36 months

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include bank stabilization, the addition of ½ acre of native plantings, reduction in suspended solids into Kelsey’s Run, and education of best management practices to visitors of the park.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, topographical/utility survey of the site, fluvial modelling of the stream flows, stakeholder engagement, design/engineering of construction documents, preparation of permits, construction of improvements, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.9 Conneaut Creek Shoreline Restoration



Figure 67. Conneaut Creek Restoration

stretch of creek is also the only portion of the creek within the State of Ohio that doesn't meet full attainment of water quality standards for exceptional warm water habitat. The Ohio EPA lists the causes of impairment in this area as priority organics, metal, and other habitat alterations (ODNR 2005). The

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.14 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°57'54.83"N, 80°32'45.14"W

### Background & Location:

Conneaut Creek is one of the most important natural resources for the Conneaut Region. According to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, "Conneaut Creek offers an exceptional diversity of habitats that support outstanding wildlife populations. The stream corridor is home to 78 fish species and 32 species of amphibians and reptiles. The heavily wooded watershed harbors more than 30 unique plants and plant communities, many of which are listed as federally and state threatened or endangered" (ODNR [n.d.]). The creek is particularly popular with anglers who travel to the Conneaut region for the steelhead trout in the creek. Over 16 miles of the creek starting at the state line are protected by Ohio with designation as a Wild River. An additional 21 miles downstream are designated as a scenic river. These designations end at the historic "Arches" bridge which carries the Penn Central Railroad over the waterbody at river mile 2.0.

The creek downstream of the Arches bridge empties into Lake Erie at the Conneaut Port. This stretch of creek is heavily industrialized with the land on either side almost entirely owned by Canadian National Railroad. This

sources of impairment are primarily stream bank modification (dredging), stream bank destabilization (development) and landfills.

The major threats to Conneaut Creek include a coal handling facility and modification of the river by channelization and steel bulkheading of the riverbanks near the mouth of the creek. The lower 2 miles of Conneaut Creek have been impacted from industrial activities. Over the last mile, a major coal handling operation has resulted in extensive layers of coal dust in the substrates. During a stakeholder breakout session, representatives from Canadian National Railroad informed the team that bank erosion is threatening the stability of the north abutment wall at their most downstream rail bridge crossing.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The Conneaut Creek Shoreline Restoration project will stabilize the stream bank within a 2-mile industrial corridor using nature-based stabilization strategies. The scope of work will include a field inspection of the shoreline conditions within the project area. Using this reconnaissance, multiple project sites will be selected based upon the effectiveness of nature-based stabilization techniques and the potential benefits to the environment and critical infrastructure. Further site investigations will be conducted at the selected sites. This will entail both an above ground survey as well as a bathymetric survey of below water conditions. Fluvial modelling will be conducted to predict the behavior of the stream during various conditions/seasons. Final design/engineering plans will be prepared for the selected sites and restoration measures constructed.

The scope of work for this project will include: an analysis of existing conditions; field inspections of bank conditions; project site selection; topographic/bathymetric surveys; fluvial modelling; stakeholder engagement; preparation of preliminary/final engineering plans; permitting; construction/ and monitoring during the establishment phase.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** Conneaut Creek is one of this region’s most valuable natural resources. This stretch of the creek is much more hydrologically connected to Lake Erie water levels being so close to the mouth. As such, it is much more vulnerable to future fluctuations in water levels.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include recommendations for implementing nature-based strategies for bank stabilization.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$50,000
2. Stakeholder Engagement	\$10,000
3. Site Selection	\$25,000
4. Engineering Plans	\$140,000
5. Permitting	\$75,000
6. Construction	\$1.5 million to \$2 million
7. Monitoring	\$50,000

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)

- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions | 4 months  |
| 2. Stakeholder Engagement          | 1 month   |
| 3. Site Selection                  | 1 month   |
| 4. Engineering Plans               | 4 months  |
| 5. Permitting                      | 6 months  |
| 6. Construction                    | 12 months |
| 7. Monitoring                      | 36 months |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project will include a report recommending locations for nature-based shoreline stabilization practices along Conneaut Creek.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, stakeholder engagement, topographical/bathymetric survey of the site, field inspection, fluvial modelling of the stream flows, site selection, design/engineering of construction documents, preparation of permits, construction of improvements, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.

## 5.10 Bluff Protection in Reach 10

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.23 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** East Boundary - 41°57'51.20"N, 80°33'38.34"W;  
West Boundary - 41°57'7.93"N, 80°38'49.33"W

### Background & Location:

Residential properties west of Conneaut's port are situated along bluffs that reach a height of 40 to 65 feet. Erosion remains a persistent issue throughout this section of the shoreline, largely driven by two interrelated factors: a lack of protective beaches and the presence of excess surface runoff and groundwater within the bluff. Waves continuously attack the base, or toe, of the bluff, leading to undercutting. Simultaneously, water infiltration from precipitation and groundwater flow weakens the upper layers, causing instability and slumping—even in areas with structural or natural toe protection.

The geology of the bluffs consists mainly of glacial till at their base, topped by layers of glaciolacustrine silts, sands, and clays (Lewis et al. 2023). Nearshore, the lakebed consists of shale bedrock covered by a thin layer of sand and gravel. Beach presence along this reach is minimal and generally confined to areas where human-made structures interrupt the natural flow of sediment. Notable examples include the beaches near Conneaut Waterworks and the more substantial accumulation at Conneaut Township Park, both influenced by the eastern breakwater's interference with littoral drift.



Figure 68. Bluff Protection in Reach 10

The ODNR Division of Geological Survey has documented changing bluff recession rates along Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline across several decades. Data from 1990 to 2004 shows average rates ranging from 0 to 4.7 feet per year (Jones 2022). While much of the area experienced minimal erosion—around 0 to just

over 1 foot per year – the highest recession occurred near Margor Drive, particularly east of a barge used for shoreline protection, where rates reached up to 4.7 feet annually (Jones 2022).

Residents in this area attended public meetings hosted for this project and voiced strong concerns about the threat that bluff erosion posed to their homes and properties.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The Bluff Protection in Reach 10 project will investigate local conditions within the reach and engage local property owners to identify measures that they can take to reduce their risk of property loss and damage. The project will educate property owners on the processes contributing to bluff instability and arm them with resources to address their local conditions where possible. These could involve such measures as revetments to protect the toe of the bluffs, re-grading of the bluffs, groundwater management, native planting on the slopes, redirecting surface water runoff, or property relocation. It may also include a public/private partnership similar to what residents in the City of Euclid entered into whereby private property owners granted public easements on their property in order to fund stabilization projects.

The scope of work will include an analysis of existing conditions, community and stakeholder engagement, and preparation of a detailed report documenting measures that property owners can take to stabilize the bluffs and protect their properties.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The high bluffs to the west of Conneaut’s harbor are very susceptible to erosion from severe storm events and erosion of the lake bed.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include recommendations for revetments to protect the toe of the bluffs, re-grading of the bluffs, groundwater management, native planting on the slopes, redirecting surface water runoff, or property relocation.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

- |                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | \$35,000 |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | \$25,000 |
| 3. Bluff Protection Report          | \$60,000 |

**Permitting:** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, as this proposed project is for data collection and planning activities, no permits will likely be required.

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

- |                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Analysis of Existing Conditions  | 3 months       |
| 2. Community/Stakeholder Engagement | 3 months       |
| 3. Bluff Protection Report          | 6 to 12 months |

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project include education to property owners along Lake Erie and ultimately stabilization of bluffs through a variety of measures on individual private property.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include stakeholder and public agency engagement, analysis of existing conditions, and preparation of a report recommending actions to protect the bluff.

## 5.11 Turkey Creek Bluff, Ravine, and Riparian Stabilization



Figure 69. Turkey Creek Stabilization

**Weighted MCDA Score:** 4.09 (out of 5.00)

**GPS Coordinates:** 41°58'26.12"N,  
80°31'51.86"W

**Background & Location:** Turkey Creek Metropark spans 602 acres along Thompson Road and Lake Road in Conneaut, Ohio, marking the northeastern tip of the state. Due to its remote location, the area remains largely difficult to access. The park includes 236 acres of forested wetlands, supports rare plant and wildlife species, and offers three miles of Turkey Creek shoreline—renowned for its exceptional trout fishing (Ashtabula County Metroparks 2017). The park is situated within an undeveloped section of the Lake Erie shoreline. Here the bluffs, which can reach heights of up to 40 feet, are composed of glacial till overlain by layers of glaciolacustrine clay, silt, and sand. Offshore, the shale bedrock is thinly covered with sand and gravel.

One notable feature in the center of this reach is Turkey Creek. Flanking both sides of the creek mouth, sand accumulations are present, providing some shoreline material. However, elsewhere along this stretch, beaches are either very narrow or vanish entirely during periods of high lake levels. The absence of shoreline structures, combined with limited beach width, leaves the area vulnerable to active erosion (ODNR 2020a). Wave action aggressively erodes the base of the bluffs, while excess surface and groundwater at the top compromise soil stability. This leads to slumping or mass sliding of the upper bluff layers, accelerating

the retreat of the shoreline (ODNR 2020a). The ODNR Division of Geological Survey has tracked shoreline recession along Ohio's Lake Erie coast, with notable changes over time due to coastal development and fluctuating lake levels. From 1990 to 2004, recession rates in this area decreased from previous highs but still ranged from 0 to 5.3 feet per year (Jones 2022). The most significant erosion remained concentrated just east of the Conneaut Harbor breakwater, where rates exceeded 1 foot and peaked at 5.3 feet annually.

During breakout sessions with staff from Ashtabula County Metroparks, they reported severe erosion events occurring on the bluffs just to the east of Turkey Creek resulting in the washing out of Lake Road. They also reported erosion issues in several of the minor ravines along the shoreline.

**Project Description & Proposed Activities:** The Turkey Creek Bluff, Ravine, and Riparian Stabilization project will use nature-based strategies to restore up to 2,000 feet of lakeside bluff as well as an additional 1,200 feet of riparian and ravine environments.

The project will begin with close coordination with Ashtabula County Metroparks and other stakeholders. A pre-application meeting with regulators will then be held. Field investigations will be conducted to confirm existing conditions. Using this reconnaissance, multiple project sites will be selected based upon the effectiveness of nature-based stabilization techniques at each area and the potential benefits to the environment and critical infrastructure. Further site investigations will be conducted at the selected sites. This will entail both an above ground survey as well as a bathymetric survey of below water conditions. Fluvial modelling will be conducted to predict the behavior of Turkey Creek during various conditions/seasons. Final design/engineering plans will be prepared for the selected sites and restoration measures constructed.

The scope of work for this project will include: an analysis of existing conditions; field inspections of bluff, ravine, and riparian conditions; project site selection; topographic/bathymetric surveys; fluvial modelling; stakeholder engagement; preparation of preliminary/final engineering plans; permitting; construction/ and monitoring during the establishment phase.

**Vulnerability Assessment:** The bluffs and ravines east of Conneaut Harbor are very susceptible to erosion from future severe storm events and the lowering of the lakebed.

**Resilience Strategies:** Resiliency measures will include bluff stabilization measures such as groundwater management, native plantings, and revetments, as well as ravine and riparian corridor restoration through nature-based stabilization strategies.

**Costs:** Project costs will include the following:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	\$60,000
2. Stakeholder Engagement	\$15,000
3. Site Selection	\$25,000
4. Engineering Plans	\$160,000
5. Permitting	\$90,000
6. Construction	\$1.75 million to \$2.25 million
7. Monitoring	\$60,000

**Permitting** Federal, state and local permitting will be evaluated during the engineering and design phase of the project. However, based on funding sources, potential impacts, and likely restoration activities, the permits this project will likely require are:

- NEPA compliance, likely due to receiving federal funds.
- SHPO and THPO coordination for compliance with the NHPA
- Nationwide Permit (USACE)
- 401 Water Quality Certification (ODNR)
- Shore Structure Permit (ODNR)
- Coastal Management Consistency Certification (ONDR)
- Wetland Permitting (OEPA)
- T/E Species Assessment/Review (ODNR)
- Building Permit (Conneaut)
- Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (Conneaut)

**Timeline:** A preliminary schedule for these activities is:

1. Analysis of Existing Conditions	6 months
------------------------------------	----------

2. Stakeholder Engagement	1 month
3. Site Selection	1 month
4. Engineering Plans	6 months
5. Permitting	8 months
6. Construction	16 months
7. Monitoring	36 months

**Anticipated Resiliency Outcome:** The desired outcomes of this project will include recommended actions to Ashtabula County Metroparks for stabilizing Turkey Creek as well as the bluffs and ravines in Turkey Creek Metropark.

**Next Steps:** The next steps for this project will include pre-application meetings with regulators, stakeholder engagement, topographical/bathymetric survey of the site, field inspection, fluvial modelling of the stream flow, site selection, design/engineering of construction documents, preparation of permits, construction of improvements, and monitoring of vegetation establishment.



# Monitoring & Adaptive Management



## 6 MONITORING & ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Monitoring and adaptive management are essential components of successful coastal resilience projects. Together, they provide a structured approach for tracking progress and identifying when adjustments may be needed. Even well-designed projects can encounter unexpected changes in environmental conditions and results. After a project has begun, monitoring helps identify how well it's performing, while adaptive management helps make informed adjustments to keep the project on track. This approach helps ensure that resilience efforts continue to meet their goals and provide long-term benefits.

### 6.1 Monitoring

Monitoring is the process of collecting information over time to understand how well a project is working. Monitoring programs are designed to match each project's goals, size, and location. Common monitoring activities for coastal resilience projects may include tracking plant survival and growth, checking erosion control features, observing water movement, and documenting how wildlife is using the area. The frequency and length of monitoring may depend on the type of project and site conditions but typically begin soon after construction and continue until key goals are met, which may take months or years. Often, monitoring involves more frequent visits in the early stages to make sure things are on track, followed by less frequent check-ins as the site stabilizes. Consistent, organized data helps partners track progress, report results, and plan ahead.

#### 6.1.1 Types of Monitoring

Monitoring activities generally fall into two categories: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative monitoring involves collecting measurable data, such as plant cover percentages, water quality levels, or species counts. These metrics help track trends over time and evaluate whether the site is meeting ecological goals. Qualitative monitoring, on the other hand, focuses on observations that describe how the site looks or functions, such as visual assessments of erosion control or anecdotal notes about wildlife use. Both approaches are often combined to better understand how a site is progressing. The type of monitoring selected should be guided by subject matter expertise, relevant scientific literature, or specific regulatory requirements that outline which metrics must be tracked for compliance. Whichever monitoring metrics are selected, they should be collected in a systematic, repeatable fashion so data can be compared over time. Examples of monitoring metrics are provided in Table 9.



Figure 70. Aquatic Species Monitoring

To evaluate progress, monitoring metrics should be assessed against clear success criteria established during the project design phase. These criteria may include physical, biological, or functional benchmarks that indicate whether the project is meeting its goals or if additional actions are needed. For example, if the goal of revegetation is to establish native plants where erosion had occurred, a success criterion may be achieving and maintaining 80-percent native plant cover by the third growing season.

**Table 9. Example Monitoring Metrics**

Monitoring Focus	Quantitative Examples	Qualitative Examples
Vegetation	Percent cover, plant survival rate	Visual signs of plant health, notes on invasive species
Wildlife use	Number of species observed, frequency of sightings	Presence of tracks, calls, or other behavioral cues
Hydrology	Water level changes, flow rates	Observations of ponding, drainage, or saturation
Erosion control	Erosion pin movement, sediment depth	Visual stability of slopes, signs of washouts
Public use and safety	Visitor counts, trail wear measurements	Feedback from park staff or community members

### 6.1.2 Monitoring Tools

Tool selection is key to effective monitoring. In some cases, low-tech methods such as printed data sheets, basic observation forms, or photo documentation offer advantages like cost savings, simplicity, and ease of use for a wide range of participants. These tools are especially useful when engaging community members in data collection, also referred to as community science. In other situations, meeting regulatory requirements or tracking detailed ecological changes may require more advanced tools, including GPS-enabled devices, remote sensors, or digital data platforms. The best approach balances project goals, available capacity, and the level of precision needed to evaluate outcomes.

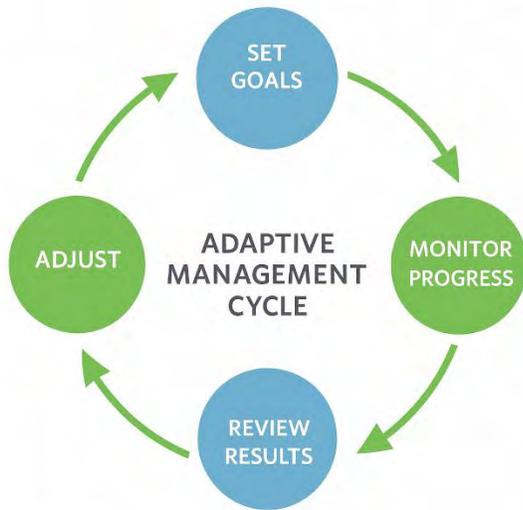
### 6.1.3 Monitoring Roles and Data Management

Clear roles and responsibilities help ensure that monitoring activities are carried out consistently and that the information collected leads to meaningful outcomes. Project partners, such as local agencies, nonprofit organizations, or contracted specialists, may be assigned to lead data collection, review results, or oversee reporting. Regardless of the collector, define where that information will be stored, who will have access to it, and how it will be used to support project goals. This may include using data to adjust site management, meet regulatory requirements, inform future projects, or share progress with the community. Keeping well-organized records, including photos, field notes, and summary reports, supports transparency, promotes collaboration, and ensures the information remains useful over time.

## 6.2 Adaptive Management

Coastal environments are constantly changing due to shifting shorelines, climate change, population growth, and local land use activities. Adaptive management is the process of responding to these changes to keep the resilience project on track. It follows a simple cycle: set goals, monitor progress, review results, and make adjustments. This approach helps project teams respond to real conditions on the ground rather than relying on assumptions made during early planning stages.

The adaptive management process follows a simple cycle: set goals, monitor progress, review results, and adjust as needed. This allows a project team to make decisions based on current conditions months or years after implementation, rather than relying on fixed assumptions.



*Figure 71. Adaptive Management Process*

and helps avoid delays when responding to changing conditions. Key roles include identifying who will collect and review monitoring data, determine whether changes are needed, and make final decisions about adjustments. Local partners, contractors, and agency representatives may each take on different parts of this process. Community input can also be valuable, especially when local knowledge or site use influences project success.

A critical role is assigning someone to track regulatory obligations. This individual or group should be familiar with applicable permits and requirements and able to flag when proposed changes could trigger compliance actions. Any adjustments to the project should be reviewed against existing permits, regulations, and funding agreements to ensure continued compliance.

Adaptive management in action may not look the same for every project, and will largely depend on the project scope, scale, and adjustments needed. For example, a living shoreline project like the one proposed for Canadian National may involve planting native vegetation to reduce wave erosion and filter industrial runoff. If a severe or untimely storm season causes erosion in previously stable areas, the adaptive response may include reinforcing vulnerable sections, adjusting planting methods, or modifying the design to better withstand the new conditions. These changes help keep the shoreline stable and the project on track.

### **6.2.1 Decision-Making**

For adaptive management to be effective, project roles must be clearly defined from the outset. Assigning responsibilities early builds trust among team members



# Conclusions & Recommendations



## 7 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the preceding strategies and practices, effective coastal resilience planning requires both robust data management and adaptive, collaborative approaches. Consistent monitoring, well-defined roles, and transparent decision-making frameworks have emerged as pillars of project success. The adaptive management cycle empowers teams to respond dynamically to evolving environmental conditions, ensuring interventions remain aligned with real-world challenges rather than static forecasts. By engaging local partners, agencies, and the broader community, projects benefit from diverse expertise and local knowledge, fostering trust and streamlining the path from observation to action.

Looking ahead, it is essential to maintain the momentum established throughout this process. Project partners should continue to prioritize the organization and accessibility of monitoring data, routinely revisiting site management strategies to reflect updated findings and regulatory requirements. Proactive engagement with regulatory frameworks ensures that compliance remains at the forefront, minimizing delays and safeguarding funding streams.

To further strengthen resilience planning, it is recommended that stakeholder engagement be deepened, especially as adaptive management decisions arise. Regular opportunities for feedback, knowledge sharing, and capacity building will help cultivate a sense of ownership and long-term stewardship among residents and partner organizations. Continued professional development and training for data collectors and decision-makers will help maintain high standards for project implementation.

Finally, the success of adaptive management hinges on securing diverse funding opportunities and forging new collaborations. The Conneaut community and stakeholders are proponents of this Resilience Plan and have a strong desire to continue to fund these projects through future grant funding opportunities. The projects were chosen from a universe of projects based on the high-level technical feasibility analysis evaluated in the MCDA matrix. Two of the highest scoring projects were recently selected, and CPA applied for NCRF grant funding in July 2025 for the 60%+ engineering design and permitting phase. These projects are the Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland Project (Ranked #1) and the Bluff Protection in Reach 10 (Ranked #4). The #4 project was chosen to continue funding at this time as the #2 and #3 projects (the Wetland Park and Boardwalk Project and the Bank Stabilization at Kelsey's Run, respectively), were determined by the CPA and their technical team to be best funded when the economic development work of expanding the Conneaut Marina occurs, likely starting in 2027.

During the development of this Coastal Resilience Plan and outreach efforts, the CPA and the City of Conneaut were notified by the ODNR of the opportunity to create a Special Improvement District (SID). A SID in the state of Ohio is a mechanism that allows property owners within a defined geographic area to band together and fund public improvements or services that benefit the area (enabled by Ohio Revised Code Section 1710). The City of Euclid Ohio created a SID called the Downtown Euclid Improvement Corporation (DEIC), focused on enhancing, protecting, and maintaining the downtown area. A SID can advance resident's coastal security by making more available state and local funding sources for engineering, design, and construction of Nature-based Solutions (NbS). For towns like Conneaut, forming a SID is a powerful way to build climate resilience from the ground up while engaging local stakeholders and leveraging public-private funding opportunities. The CPA, in partnership with the City, are proposing to assist residents in organizing and petitioning for the creation of a SID as part of the ongoing resilience efforts within Conneaut.

It is recommended that CPA, 501C3's, and public agencies take on the additional projects outlined in this Plan and apply for funds through other grants in the region. Other grant funding sources include *The*

*Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), The Lake Erie Protection Fund Grant, Ohio Coastal Management Program, H2Ohio, Lake Erie Ohio Communities & Coastal Resiliency Grant, and the Lake Erie Community Grant* to name a few. More information can be found on the following websites.

- <https://www.epa.gov/great-lakes-funding/great-lakes-restoration-initiative-glri>
- <https://lakeerie.ohio.gov/funding-opportunities/welcome>
- <https://ohiodnr.gov/buy-and-apply/apply-for-grants/grants/cmag>
- <https://h2.ohio.gov/about-h2ohio>

By leveraging grant programs, forming strategic partnerships, and fostering public-private cooperation, coastal communities can create resilient, sustainable solutions that address both current needs and future uncertainties. As projects progress, deliberate documentation and transparent reporting will not only sustain accountability but also inspire broader adoption of proven approaches across the region.

With these recommendations in place, the path toward climate-resilient coastal environments is both achievable and sustainable, supporting vibrant communities and ecological integrity for generations to come.



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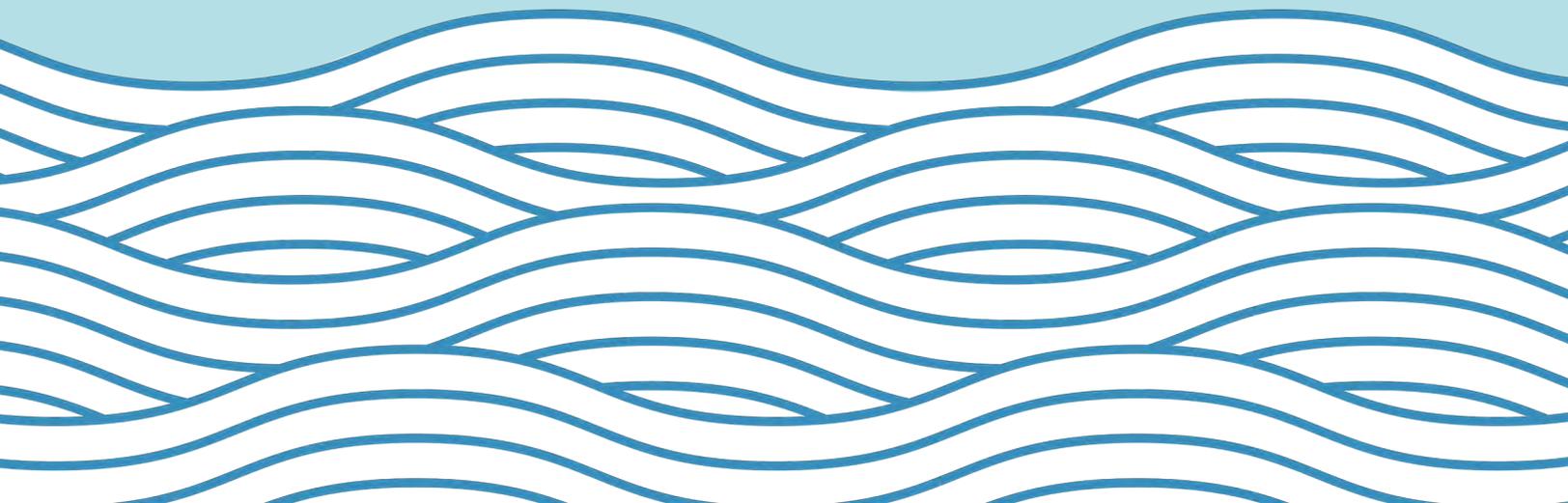
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# Public Participation Plan



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Lake Erie and its surrounding communities have faced, and continue to be vulnerable to, the impacts of climate change, including more frequent and severe storms, increased flooding, erosion, fluctuating lake levels, and degraded water quality. The community of Conneaut, Ohio, located on the southern shore of Lake Erie in Ashtabula County, has been experiencing these impacts for years, particularly along the shoreline areas near the Conneaut Port and harbor (Figure 1). This area consists of critical maritime and commercial infrastructure, with the Conneaut Port and rail system serving as a major receiving port on the Great Lakes for commodities including iron ore, steel, aggregates, minerals, limestone, and food and farm products, moving approximately 1,102,328 tons of materials a year on average. Residences west of Conneaut Port, as well as other commercial and residential areas within Conneaut are at risk of coastal erosion and flooding due to increased storm events and wave action, as are the nearby roadways, Lake Road and Naylor Drive that provide access to homes and community infrastructure (i.e., schools, local government, churches, the marina, etc.). In addition, this area provides some of eastern Ohio's most accessible outdoor recreation opportunities. As eastern Ohio's economy has shifted over the past 50 years from manufacturing and heavy industry (e.g., coal) to the service sector, opportunities have grown in the outdoor tourism industry.

Recognizing this economic shift and the need to safeguard community and commercial infrastructure and enhance natural resources, we, the Conneaut Port Authority (CPA) have identified a need to create a coastal resilience plan focused on community driven nature-based designs to protect the Conneaut and surrounding areas Lake Erie shoreline (Figure 2). The proposed Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan (Resilience Plan) will build upon the work already underway for an overall Conneaut Port District Redevelopment Project (Appendix A). This conceptual redevelopment includes economic improvements (such as development of commercial properties), safety and access upgrades (such as pedestrian walkways, road improvements, etc.), expansion of outdoor recreation opportunities (such as the addition of boardwalks for birdwatching), and ecologic restoration and climate resilience opportunities. The importance of incorporating climate resilience elements (i.e., living shorelines, wetlands, beach nourishment, etc.) to protect not only the existing infrastructure and residences, but also the upcoming economic improvements has become clear to the CPA as they have explored redevelopment. Five specific areas within the larger project area have been identified as possible locations for climate resilience restoration projects: the sandbar, marina drive extension, Canadian National Lakefront, shoreline east of the port, and the lagoon. These areas have undergone conceptual nature-based design feasibility analysis as part of CPA's ongoing planning efforts (Appendix A). Nature-based solutions in these areas could include coastal wetland creation/restoration/enhancement, living shorelines, beach nourishment, and estuary restoration. While these sites were identified by a highly qualified team of restoration and climate resilience experts, site selection was completed without input from the local and nearby communities.

We desire to engage further with the public (i.e., community members, leaders, interest groups, etc.), project stakeholders (defined herein as the state and federal regulatory agencies and other technical entities), and state (in both OH and PA) organizations to build upon the previous planning work, understanding that regional and local collaboration is a critical component of coastal resilience planning as it allows for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences, promotes ownership and support of the Resilience Plan, and ensures that it is responsive to the needs of the people.

## 1.1 Purpose of Public Participation Plan

Achieving meaningful public involvement requires the creation and implementation of equitable programs and plans using a diverse and inclusive range of communications and outreach tools and

methods throughout the project or program lifecycle. Public involvement is not an afterthought in the decision-making process, but rather a core tenet for agencies, organizations, partners, and individuals to evaluate, plan, prioritize, design, construct, and maintain projects that benefit the community. Engaging the public early and often can also help avoid costly re-work and delays later in the project lifecycle, including potential litigation or complaints from community members.

The purpose of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) is for the CPA to create a structured approach for involving the public in the development of the Resilience Plan, ensuring that their input is considered, thereby fostering a more inclusive decision-making environment. The PPP serves several key objectives:

- **Enhance Transparency**—By outlining how and when the public can engage, the PPP helps make processes and decisions more transparent. It ensures that community members and stakeholders understand how their input will be used for the development of the Resilience Plan.
- **Improve Decision Making**—Public participation can provide valuable insights and diverse perspectives that may improve the quality of decisions. By engaging with the community and stakeholders, CPA hopes that any potential challenges and opportunities regarding the proposed nature-based design work that might not be apparent from a purely administrative or technical standpoint, come to light through this engagement process.
- **Build Trust and Credibility**—Actively involving the public fosters trust between decision-makers and the community. The CPA values and respects the opinions of our stakeholders and community, demonstrating our desire to be inclusive through this PPP and subsequent outreach.
- **Encourage Inclusivity**—This PPP aims to include a broad range of voices, especially from groups who may be affected by or interested in the proposed resilience project (i.e., those residents living along Lake Erie, recreators, green space interest groups, etc.). This inclusivity will help ensure that the needs and concerns of diverse populations are considered.
- **Facilitate Conflict Resolution**—By providing a structured way for stakeholders and community members to express their concerns and preferences regarding the project, this PPP provides a means in which to address and resolve conflicts early in the project development process. Public outreach and meetings will allow for negotiation and compromise before decisions are finalized.
- **Ensure Compliance**—For many federal and state funded grant and loan programs, involving the public in project development is a requirement. Following the completion of the Resilience Plan, it is our desire to apply for engineering/design funding for the nature-based resilience features, with the goal of project implementation in the near future. This PPP helps us demonstrate our public engagement process by specifying how and when public input will be solicited and integrated into the decision-making process.
- **Strengthen Community Relationships**—Engaging with the public through this PPP will help CPA build stronger relationships with our partners, community members and organizations, and regulatory agencies. We encourage ongoing dialogue and collaboration with these entities, which can benefit from the future improvements of the Lake Erie shoreline.
- **Inform and Educate**—One goal of this PPP and outreach efforts is to inform and educate the public about the resilience issues at hand, the decision-making process, and the potential impacts of the different potential solutions. This helps ensure that participants are well-informed and can contribute meaningfully.

## 2 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### 2.1 Mission Statement

Our mission is to foster meaningful and inclusive public engagement by providing transparent, accessible, and collaborative opportunities for community and stakeholder input in the development of the Resilience Plan. We are committed to actively listening to diverse voices, addressing stakeholder concerns, and integrating valuable perspectives to enhance the quality and effectiveness of our decisions. Through dedicated efforts in communication and outreach, we aim to build trust, ensure equitable participation, and empower our community in shaping the outcomes of the Resilience Plan.

### 2.2 Ensuring Inclusivity and Equity in Engagement

The CPA acknowledges that ensuring inclusivity and equity in community engagement is essential for a meaningful and effective public participation process. Below are several strategies that we will employ to achieve our mission to foster meaningful and inclusive public participation in the Resilience Plan.

- We will work to better **understand the community landscape** by gathering demographic data on Conneaut and the surrounding communities, including race, ethnicity, income levels, languages spoken, and other relevant factors. Through our research we will also identify key community groups and stakeholders that need to be involved in the engagement process, as they are impacted by climate related issues (i.e., drought, flooding, storm surges, etc.), or have interest in the project (i.e., regulatory agencies).
- We will **build diverse partnerships** by collaborating with community organizations, such as the Conneaut Convention and Visitors Bureau (CCVB) and the Civic Development Corporation, and others that represent populations that may be affected by the Resilience Plan, and through engagement with community leaders (i.e., Conneaut's City Manager) who can help mobilize their communities to be involved with our outreach efforts.
- Throughout the engagement process, we will strive to **use inclusive communication channels** such as producing multi-language materials (if necessary) and providing outreach materials in various formats including printed materials, large print materials, and accessible digital versions.
- We will host our meetings in **welcoming spaces**. We plan on hosting engagement activities in locations that are accessible and familiar to different community groups and will endeavor to schedule meetings and events at times that are convenient for various community members, including those who work irregular hours or have other commitments.
- Our public engagement team will **facilitate meaningful participation** in the development of the Resilience Plan through various methods for participation, such as surveys, public meetings, focus groups, online forums, and workshops. We will also actively seek out and include voices from underrepresented groups in our engagement activities.
- We will work to **address barriers to participation** by evaluating the need to offer support to remove logistical hurdles to involvement, such as childcare. We will also offer public meetings in spaces that are accessible to people with disabilities (i.e., buildings that meet the accessibility standards issued under the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]).
- Through our in-person and virtual meetings, as well as through our outreach materials, we plan to **educate and inform** the public and stakeholders on the resiliency challenges and solutions available to help protect communities and businesses while also enhancing fish and wildlife

habitats. To do so, we will use plain language and clear explanations to ensure that information is understandable and accessible.

- During our engagement activities, we will **gather and act on community and stakeholder feedback**. We will actively seek feedback from all community members, especially those from marginalized groups, and ensure that their input is considered in the development of the Resilience Plan. We will be transparent with this feedback and share with other industry members and the regulators how community input has influenced the proposed project, and how it has been incorporated into the decision-making process.
- We will **monitor, evaluate, and adapt our approach** to public engagement based on feedback and evaluation to better meet the needs of the community and stakeholders. Throughout the development of the plan, we will regularly evaluate our engagement efforts to ensure we are reaching and involving the right groups, agencies, organizations, and businesses.
- Our long-term goal is to **foster long-term relationships** by developing lasting connections with community members and groups, rather than viewing engagement as a one-time event.

By implementing these strategies, we will create a more inclusive and equitable community engagement process, with the goal that all voices are heard and considered in the development of the Resilience Plan.

# 3 COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

## 3.1 Identification of Key Stakeholders & Community Organizations

CPA is already an active organization within the community of Conneaut, and therefore has built relationships with various community members, groups, leaders, businesses, and associations. We have utilized our already established connections to start a stakeholder and community engagement list (Table 1). At the drafting of this PPP, we have begun the process of soliciting from our vast network other potential stakeholders and organizations that may be interested in the proposed project and would be willing to participate in our engagement activities. In addition, our technical team has been conducting research into other similar resilience projects that are occurring within the state of Ohio, as well as in other Great Lake states, to learn which community groups and regulatory bodies were engaged as part of those efforts. We will use that information to help grow our outreach network and to reach as many interested parties as possible. We will continually update Table 1 as additional parties are added to the outreach list.

**Table 1. Stakeholders and Community Organizations**

Stakeholder Organizations	Community Organizations	
Canadian National	Conneaut Area Historical Society	Cleveland Port District
City of Conneaut	Conneaut Foundation	Conneaut Chamber of Commerce
Conneaut Port Authority Board	Conneaut Library	Conneaut Convention and Visitors Bureau
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - National Marine Fisheries	Ashtabula County	Conneaut Township Park
Ohio Department of Natural Resources	Ashtabula County Port Authority	County Metro Parks
Ohio Department of Transportation	Ashtabula County Tourism Board	Kent State University Ashtabula
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency	City of Conneaut-Municipal Government	Ohio Sea Grants
United States Army Corps of Engineers	Civic Development Corporation	

## 3.2 Understanding Interests, Concerns, & Needs

Understanding the interests, concerns, and needs of the public and stakeholders is crucial for any organization aiming to effectively engage with its community and make informed decisions. Our approach to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the community and stakeholders’ needs, interests, and concerns is multifaceted. Our first step is to conduct virtual outreach to those entities in Table 1 via email and phone calls. Through initial outreach we will explain the purpose, need, and goals of the Resilience Plan, and gauge their interest in participating in the development of the Resilience Plan. Prior to the first public meeting, as well as during the meeting itself, we will distribute surveys to collect quantitative data on stakeholder opinions, preferences, and concerns about the proposed resilience project. The surveys will be in both paper form and virtual and will be designed to capture a range of perspectives about climate change, resilience, green design, and future economic development along the shore of Lake Erie in Conneaut. Throughout the engagement process, we will engage in direct and

regular communication with our outreach group through social media updates, phone calls, public meetings, emails, and updates on CPA's dedicated webpage for this project. On our webpage we will include a link to surveys and forms soliciting information about the community and stakeholders' project concerns. Our goal is to encourage our community to tell us what their needs are and to give us feedback about the Resilience Plan, not only during the development of the document, but afterwards into the engineering/design and implementation phases.

# 4 COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH STRATEGY

## 4.1 Communication Approach

This section and those that follow are meant to be a “living document,” meaning that as necessary, the CPA will update and revise these sections to reflect new information, changes, or evolving strategies and techniques for public engagement. Unlike static documents, which are finalized and remain unchanged after their initial creation, this living document is designed to be dynamic and flexible, allowing us to adapt it over time to best fit the needs of the project.

Our communication approach begins with defining our communication goals, which are to:

- Increase public awareness of the resilience issues along Lake Erie.
- Educate the community and stakeholders on the proposed CPA master plan.
- Receive input into the green design elements of the proposed project and development of the Resilience Plan.
- Foster community and stakeholder collaboration.

To achieve these goals, CPA will start by developing key messages (Section 4.2) and selecting the most appropriate communication tools and techniques (Section 4.3). Once the key messages and techniques are developed, we will begin outreach, first with the stakeholders. It’s important that prior to beginning public meetings, the CPA will host a virtual introduction meeting with the regulatory bodies to inform them of the overall Master Plan (if not already aware), discuss the purpose and need of the Resilience Plan, and outline our plans to conduct public and stakeholder outreach over the next year. During this initial meeting we will solicit initial feedback from the agencies to determine if there are any immediate challenges or issues they see with our proposed projects (marina development, Resilience Plan, and community outreach). We plan on engaging with the stakeholders virtually and separately from the public. However, all stakeholders will be invited to the public meetings. Involving regulators in the public meetings will help give these agencies an opportunity to better understand the public’s needs/desires/concerns over not just the projects, but also regarding climate resilience issues as a whole.

After the introductory stakeholder meeting, CPA will host an in-person public meeting. This meeting, as detailed in Section 5.1, will be like the first agency meeting in that it will be an introduction to the Master Plan and the Resilience Plan. However, we will focus this first public meeting on learning more about the community’s/public’s concerns regarding resilience and their wants/needs for the Resilience Plan and the marina development. Utilizing online and hard-copy surveys, forms, etc., along with applications such as MentiMeter, which allows for live polling during the meeting, we will gather critical information that will inform our engagement moving forward.

Our approach to communication is to collect and analyze the feedback we receive and adapt our approaches, communication tools/techniques, and messaging. We plan on accomplishing this by actively monitoring participation levels, the effectiveness of the communication efforts through the solicited feedback, and reporting results to our technical team as well as the stakeholders and public. It’s important that we maintain transparency throughout this engagement process. Throughout the development of the Resilience Plan, we will sustain engagement through ongoing communication (meetings, one-on-one calls, webinars, social media, updates to the website, etc.). To keep the community motivated and engaged, we will publicize our successes and milestones and emphasize the fact that we want to build long-lasting relationships with local organizations, businesses, agencies,

community members, and interest groups, with the hope that they will be involved throughout the redevelopment of the Conneaut marina district.

## 4.2 Development of Messaging Materials

As part of this engagement process, CPA is developing various types of messaging materials that will be used to effectively communicate with the public, raise awareness, and encourage participation. Below are some of the key types of messaging materials that will be utilized.

- **Physical informational materials** such as brochures, flyers, fact sheets, and posters will be developed and posted in public spaces (such as the post office, library, churches, etc.) and handed out during community events to inform the public about the project and any upcoming events. All materials will be concise and visually appealing, providing key information to the public. We will also attempt to incorporate QR codes to provide the community with access to online resources.
- **Digital content** will be developed on our website via a landing page specific to the Master Plan and the Resilience Plan. Information on the webpage will include maps, forms, this plan, and other relevant documents/graphics. CPA will also provide content through our social media platforms, and we will encourage community members and groups to also share our information via social media.
- **Multimedia** content will be developed during our in-person public meetings. We plan on recording every meeting/event and posting these videos on the CPA website for later review by individuals unable to attend the meeting in person. We will also strive to have the meetings live streamed via Zoom or Microsoft Teams so that community members who are unable to attend in person can participate live. We will also strive to use interactive tools and maps such as a GIS web mapper and applications such as MentiMeter to encourage the public and stakeholders to better visualize the project and provide feedback.
- **Event Materials** such as presentation slides, workshop handouts and event agendas/programs will be developed for every in-person meeting that is hosted. These materials will be provided as hard copies and through our online platforms.
- **Feedback and Survey Tools** will be developed to gather meaningful feedback from the community and stakeholders. Survey forms through platforms such as Google Form or Survey Monkey will be posted digitally and printed forms will be provided during in-person meetings. We will also provide comment cards at our engagement events and in public spaces for the public to provide CPA with feedback on our outreach approach and meetings. Utilizing MentiMeter during the meetings will also give CPA an avenue for collecting community and stakeholder opinions on various topics.
- **Education Materials** about green design and the importance of ecological restoration will be made available to the public. CPA recognizes that there are similar projects occurring within Ohio and throughout the Great Lakes that can provide lessons learned and relevant technical information that will help enlighten not only CPA but the stakeholders and public in the approaches taken and restoration techniques used to accomplish resilience. Our team plans on collecting information about other similar projects and posting publicly available documentation about these projects on our website and providing hard copies if requested.

By developing a diverse range of messaging materials, our public engagement process can effectively reach and engage different segments of the community, ensuring that everyone has access to the information and opportunities to participate in resilience-building efforts.

### 4.3 Implementation of Outreach Activities

Implementation of our outreach activities will occur over an entire year, in which we will host virtual and in-person public meetings, provide information and feedback tools online and throughout the community, and conduct other means of engagement such as field trips to the Lake Erie shoreline and Conneaut marina district, host webinars, etc. CPA has an engagement and technical team that will be assisting throughout this process to ensure that meaningful engagement is occurring, and that the community is able to provide input into the Resilience Plan. Section 5 provides more specific information regarding the types of engagement activities that we plan on employing throughout the year-long project.

## 5 RESILIENCE PROJECTS

### 5.1 Public Meetings

#### 5.1.1 Format (e.g., Town Hall, Open House, Focus Groups)

Various public meeting formats can be used for public and stakeholder engagement to accommodate different objectives, audience sizes, and interaction levels. CPA plans on using the following formats to best engage with the public.

- **Town Hall Meetings**—This is an open format meeting where the community members can hear from officials, experts, or project leaders and ask questions. A presentation will be given and will be followed by a question-and-answer session. CPA will integrate the use of MentiMeter, a live participation tool for meetings, into the town hall meetings to help solicit feedback and gather information from the public.
- **Workshops**—Both during our town hall meetings and in other formats (such as webinars) we will integrate the use of interactive sessions where participants will work in small groups with the assistance of a facilitator to discuss the community’s resilience needs, potential project issues, and develop potential solutions for inclusion in the Resilience Plan. These workshops will facilitate in-depth discussion, problem-solving and collaborative planning.
- **Focus Groups**—Based on the outcomes of the initial engagement, CPA may want to create small, structured group discussions focused on particular topics (such as recreation, green-design, lake level rise and flooding, etc.) to gather detailed opinions and insights from the public and stakeholders.
- **Virtual Open Office Hours**—After initial engagement, CPA’s facilitation and technical team may host a series of virtual open houses. These open houses will be scheduled at set date(s) and time(s) and allow the public and stakeholders to ask CPA and our technical team questions, learn more about our proposed plans, and provide feedback.
- **Online Meetings and Webinars**—To follow up on our initial and other in-person events, CPA will host online meetings/webinars via video conferencing platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. By hosting online meetings, we may be able to reach a broad audience, especially those community members that are unable to attend in person. During these online meetings, our team may give presentations, conduct live polls, host virtual breakout sessions with particular subjects of our participants, and utilize interactive chat features.

#### 5.1.2 Schedule and Locations

CPA will be hosting in-person meetings at locations that are ADA accessible, easy to locate, have the necessary amenities (i.e., internet access, audio-visual capabilities, etc.), are able to safely accommodate the anticipated number of participants, is cost efficient, and will provide the right environment to be conducive to productive discussions and engagement. We have identified four venues within Conneaut that are suitable for our in-person meetings:

- **New Leaf United Methodist Church**, 110 Gateway Avenue, Conneaut, OH 44030
- **Lasting Impressions Event Center**, 326 West Main Road, Conneaut, OH 44030
- **Conneaut Arts Center**, 1025 Buffalo Street, Conneaut, OH 44030
- **Conneaut Public Library**, 304 Buffalo Street, Conneaut, OH 44030

To best suit the community and to encourage their involvement, meetings and events will either be hosted on weekdays in the evenings, or on the weekends. Currently CPA is planning three in-person public meetings, in addition to some virtual focus groups/breakout sessions and webinars. However, as the project progresses, we may decide to host other meetings or events, such as a field visit to the potential resilience sites along Lake Erie.

To accommodate the stakeholders' schedules, we will be hosting all stakeholder meetings virtually. However, if possible and necessary, CPA's team will meet in-person with select organizations from the stakeholder group to have focused discussions on particular topics such as permitting. All stakeholders will be invited to participate in the public engagement events. Currently, we have planned 3 stakeholder meetings, with additional one-on-one meetings/calls and other coordination throughout the life of the project.

To ensure the most participation as possible in our project, CPA aims to begin outreach to stakeholders and the public in the late summer of 2024, with the goal of the first virtual stakeholder meeting in August, and the introductory public meeting being held in early-to-mid September.

### **5.1.3 Interactive Sessions for Idea Generation and Collaboration**

Through both in-person and virtual events, CPA will create spaces for interactive sessions. CPA hopes these dynamic sessions will foster idea generation and collaboration through collective creativity and knowledge of a diverse group of participants. These sessions are valuable for generating innovative ideas, developing collaboration, and ensuring that public opinions and insights are incorporated into decision-making processes. These interactive sessions may be in the form of a "world café" (small group discussions at different tables, with participants rotating and building on each other's ideas) or through virtual breakout rooms and will be led by skilled facilitators to help guide the discussions.

## **5.2 Surveys and Questionnaires**

### **5.2.1 Online and Paper-based Surveys**

Soliciting feedback on the Resilience Plan and our approaches to public engagement (i.e., the efficacy of the meeting formats, breakout groups, etc.) is crucial as it enhances the quality and legitimacy of the decision-making process, ensures inclusivity, and builds trust between stakeholders, the public and the decision-makers. Throughout the development of the Resilience Plan, we will solicit feedback in various ways (e.g., in person paper comments, verbal feedback, etc.) including the creation of surveys and questionnaires intended to gather meaningful feedback through careful planning, clear question design, and strategic structuring, to help us gather reliable and actionable data. Our surveys/questionnaires will be available by QR codes on printed materials that will lead participants to online forms, such as Google Forms, or platforms such as Survey Monkey. We will also host feedback surveys on the CPA project webpage and through links on social media. For those community members that may not have access to the internet or have other hurdles to using virtual tools, CPA will provide the public with the same surveys/questionnaires during the in-person meetings as paper hard-copies or on tablet/computers.

### **5.2.2 Distribution Strategy and Data Collection**

Properly analyzing public feedback on the proposed project will involve categorizing and interpreting responses to understand public opinion and making informed decisions. Once we have collected the community and stakeholder feedback through surveys/questionnaires, verbally, social media, and comment cards, we will compile all the feedback into a centralized system such as an excel spreadsheet, to facilitate analysis. Once the comments are coalesced, we will work to identify themes from documented issues and topics and develop categories or codes for the different types of feedback. Each piece of feedback will be tagged with one or more codes that correspond to the identified themes. Our

team will then conduct both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the comments and themes (such as using statistical or visualization methods, or thematic or sentiment analysis). Once our analysis is complete, we will summarize the key insights, make visuals (such as charts/graphs and infographics), and provide context around the feedback, all of which we will make publicly available through our website. We will also include this information as part of the Resilience Plan. Once our team fully understands the feedback, we will make the appropriate recommendations and changes to our engagement approach and/or our approach to the Resilience Plan. It is also important that we follow up with the public on their feedback. We will demonstrate our actions to incorporate their opinions, monitor the impact of our changes to approach, and continue to collect feedback to assess the effectiveness of the changes. Through this process we hope to establish an ongoing feedback loop where the public and stakeholder input is regularly sought and analyzed to continuously improve the project.

## 5.3 Online Engagement

As noted throughout this PPP, CPA plans on engaging with interested parties through various means of communication, including utilizing online platforms for information gathering and dissemination. Below is an outline of some of the online tools we will be using during the development of the Resilience Plan.

### 5.3.1 Virtual Meetings & Webinars

Hosting virtual meetings and webinars is one way of potentially increasing participation and input into the Resilience Plan, particularly regarding the stakeholders. The stakeholders, as defined previously, are those organizations such as regulatory agencies, landowners, and advisory groups that have a technical and financial interest in the project. Coordinating with these entities to meet all together in-person is extremely difficult due to work schedules. And as the implementation of the proposed green designs that will be developed in the Resilience Plan will be relying on stakeholder buy-in, and as the regulators input into the resilience approach is critical to establishing the projects as feasible, it is vitally important that our technical team is able to gather their input as efficiently as possible. Therefore, we plan on interacting with the stakeholders virtually. If the opportunity arises, or it becomes a necessity, CPAs team will meet with stakeholders in person, likely meeting with one organization at a time. Online meetings will be held using platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. We plan on recording and transcribing each meeting for our records. Where appropriate, we will share information from these meetings with the public via our website. General information about these meetings, including feedback about the project from the stakeholders, will be included as part of the Resilience Plan.

The audience for the potential webinars will be the public. The webinars will be used to give updates on the development of the Resilience Plan, or to provide the public with another avenue for feedback. Webinars may be hosted live, with opportunities for discussions, input, and questions and answers. However, webinars may also be prerecorded, as appropriate. For example, if the CPA wants to give an update on the Resilience Plan, then the technical team may record a short video which will be posted online through our website and social media. The video will include the various ways in which the public can ask questions (such as a QR code to a survey, or an email address). All webinars will be recorded and posted online for public review.

### 5.3.2 Website

CPA is currently developing a landing page on our website that is project specific. On the Resilience Plan website, we will host information about the overall Conneaut Marina District Redevelopment Plan, the Resilience Plan, and our public outreach efforts. We will include links to feedback forms and surveys, as well as links to other technical resources that will provide the public with educational materials on green design and the importance of community resilience. We will post the recordings of all the public meetings and webinars on our website to encourage participation from those individuals who were

unable to attend the live events. Our website will also include information about our technical team and our funding sources (i.e., information about the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s National Coastal Resilience Grant Program).

### 5.3.3 Social Media Platforms

The CPA has active accounts on social media platforms such as Facebook. Using such platforms, we will disseminate project information and encourage participation in the Resilience Plan. We will work with our engagement team to create engaging content through the use of images, infographics, videos, etc. to capture the public’s attention. We will also work to create interactive content through the use of polls, quizzes, question and answer sessions, etc., to encourage active interactions. Social media will also be a key platform for us to promote our engagement events. In addition, we will explore the possibility of using live streaming on these sites to broadcast our in-person meetings.

## 5.4 Targeted Outreach

To achieve diverse and expansive participation in the Resilience Plan, CPA will be making a targeted effort to engage with many different organizations. Targeted outreach is vital to a public engagement process because it ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, increases the effectiveness of communication efforts, and fosters trust and inclusivity. In addition, we want to be sure that the organizations and individuals that are involved in similar projects across Ohio and the Great Lakes are also included in providing input into our project, as they have valuable lessons learned that our technical team can incorporate into our designs and approaches to community and environmental resilience.

### 5.4.1 Engaging with Similar Projects

Our technical team is currently conducting outreach to the proponents of similar ecological and coastal resilience projects that have occurred, or are in the planning stages, within Ohio and neighboring states. These projects are:

- **Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS)**—The Cleveland Harbor Eastern Embayment Resilience Strategy (CHEERS) project is a concept that emerged from a yearlong study to determine how to transform Cleveland’s lakeshore through reconnecting communities to the lake, improving public health, bolstering the economy, and benefiting the environment and natural habitat. It is now in a design phase with the help of a consultant team to move the original study towards implementation. CHEERS will utilize beneficial use of dredge material to improve shoreline resilience, build habitat, expand parks, and work to heal damage done by past unjust developmental practices and industrial use.
- **Ashtabula Harbor Wetland Initiative**—Through the Continuing Authorities Program under the authority of Section 204 of the Water Resources Development Act, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will be creating 18 acres of submerged aquatic and emergent wetlands inside the eastern breakwater of Ashtabula Harbor. The wetland project involves using approximately 400,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment to achieve an optimal water depth for aquatic and emergent vegetation, protected by a submerged rubble mound breakwater structure to guard against wave action and high water. The wetland project is currently in the design phase.
- **Presque Isle Bay Fish Habitat Structures**—In 2018, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission partnered with S.O.N.S. of Lake Erie, Pennsylvania Sea Grant, and DCNR to place sixty artificial fish habitat structures in Misery Bay. The project was intended to support local fish populations by providing fish with safe breeding habitat and refuge from predators. The GPS coordinates of the habitat structures are also posted on maps on the Fish and Boat Commission website, so that local anglers can strategically choose their fishing locations for a more successful catch.

## 5.4.2 Engaging Underserved Communities

Underserved communities are characterized by limited access to economic, social, and civic resources. In Conneaut, Ohio, and its neighboring areas, several communities could be considered underserved based on various factors such as economic status, access to healthcare, and other social determinants. For instance, Conneaut and the broader Ashtabula County have faced challenges typical of many rural and semi-rural areas, including limited access to healthcare services and economic opportunities. According to federal definitions, underserved communities often include those with high poverty rates, limited access to healthcare and education, and inadequate infrastructure ([The White House](#)).

Efforts to identify and support underserved communities typically involve looking at demographic data, economic indicators, and access to services. For example, communities with higher percentages of low-income households, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities are often classified as underserved. CPA's engagement team is currently working on identifying which communities are considered historically underserved, so that targeted outreach to these communities can occur. Targeted outreach and engagement are crucial to ensure these communities are involved in the planning process, as they are likely impacted to a higher degree by resilience issues and socioeconomic opportunities more so than other demographics. Identifying and understanding these underserved areas is the first step toward promoting equity in the Resilience Plan and improving the overall quality of life for all residents in Conneaut and its neighboring towns.

# APPENDIX A.

## CONNEAUT PORT DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT – MASTER PLAN

The CPA has received monies to further its plans, including a Coastal Zone Management Assistance grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) in 2022, which is currently being used to complete preliminary project planning activities. The result of the ODNR grant was a high-level Master Plan focusing on waterfront community planning that integrates nearshore habitat enhancement and improved public access with sustainable strategies for economic and environmental resilience.

In the final Master Plan, five specific areas within the larger project area have been identified as possible locations for climate resilience restoration projects: the sandbar, marina drive extension, Canadian National Lakefront, shoreline east of the port, and the lagoon. These areas have undergone conceptual nature-based design feasibility analysis as part of CPA's ongoing planning efforts. Nature-based solutions in these areas could include coastal wetland creation/restoration/enhancement, living shorelines, beach nourishment, and estuary restoration. For example, at the sandbar area, the dynamic sand dune environment provides an opportunity to support rare coastal marsh habitat. Fluctuating lake levels and climate change impacts threaten to disturb the accumulation of sand and alter the hydrology of the wetland marsh. In addition, the breakwall impedes the natural flow of sediment down the coastline depleting sand resources east of Conneaut.

Below is a rendering of the Master Plan as it was presented to the public and stakeholder in 2023. As shown, the Master Plan also includes socioeconomic work along the marina area of Lake Erie in Conneaut, Ohio. While the proposed Conneaut Coastal Resilience Plan (Resilience Plan) is focused only on the green design for climate resilience and fish and wildlife benefits, it is important to understand CPA's overarching socioeconomic goals as well for the Conneaut marina district.

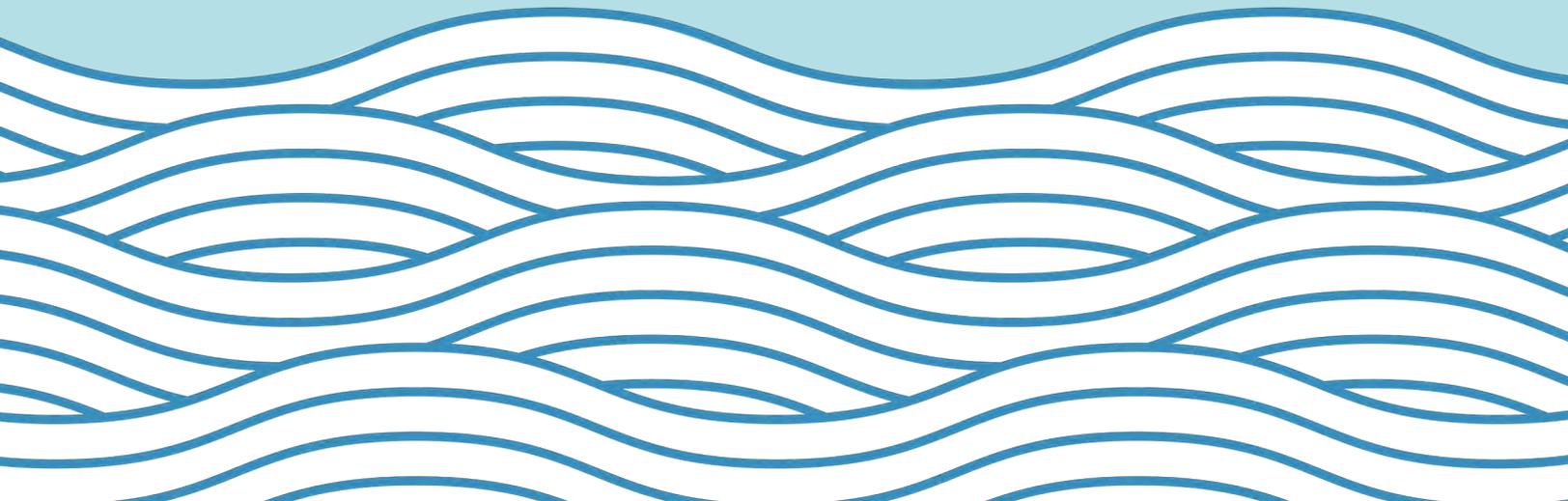


# CONNEAUT PORT DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

CONNEAUT, OHIO



# MCDA Results



		Marina Drive Reconstruction and Constructed Wetland		Wetland Park and Boardwalk		Bank Stabilization at Kelsey's Run		Bluff Protection in Reach 10		Conneaut Creek Shoreline Assessment		Turkey Creek Stabilization		Living Shoreline at Canadian National		Coastal Marsh Restoration		Restoration Plan for Kelsey's Run Watershed		Naylor Drive Green Infrastructure		Beach Replenishment East of Conneaut Harbor	
Proposed Criteria	Proposed Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight	Raw Score	Final Weight
<i>Technical Feasibility</i>	<b>0.18</b>	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9	4	0.72	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9	5	0.9
<i>Permittable</i>	<b>0.16</b>	4	0.64	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	5	0.8	3	0.48
<i>Time to Implement</i>	<b>0.08</b>	3	0.24	5	0.4	4	0.32	4	0.32	3	0.24	4	0.32	4	0.32	5	0.4	4	0.32	3	0.24	4	0.32
<i>Ecological Benefits</i>	<b>0.13</b>	5	0.65	4	0.52	4	0.52	3	0.39	4	0.52	4	0.52	4	0.52	3	0.39	1	0.13	2	0.26	2	0.26
<i>Cost</i>	<b>0.1</b>	3	0.3	4	0.4	4	0.4	5	0.5	5	0.5	4	0.4	4	0.4	5	0.5	5	0.5	4	0.4	4	0.4
<i>Long-Term Sustainability</i>	<b>0.13</b>	5	0.65	4	0.52	4	0.52	4	0.52	4	0.52	3	0.39	4	0.52	2	0.26	4	0.52	3	0.39	1	0.13
<i>Community &amp; Stakeholder Support</i>	<b>0.1</b>	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	5	0.5	3	0.3	4	0.4	3	0.3	4	0.4	4	0.4	3	0.3	3	0.3
<i>Human &amp; Economic Risk Reduction</i>	<b>0.12</b>	5	0.6	3	0.36	3	0.36	4	0.48	3	0.36	3	0.36	2	0.24	2	0.24	1	0.12	3	0.36	1	0.12
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.48</b>		<b>4.4</b>		<b>4.32</b>		<b>4.23</b>		<b>4.14</b>		<b>4.09</b>		<b>4</b>		<b>3.89</b>		<b>3.69</b>		<b>3.65</b>		<b>2.91</b>	