

# INTEGRATING CONTEXT AND PRACTICE: HOW TO ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN MY AOC

Katie Williams, USEPA Office of Research and Development  
2019 Great Lakes Areas of Concern Conference

# What is Participation?

- Who participates?
  - ▣ Stakeholders
  - ▣ The Public
- Meetings and deliberation
- Other methods
  - ▣ Restoration activities
  - ▣ Sense of place
  - ▣ Citizen science, events



Adopt-a-Beach event at South Shore Park

# Methodology

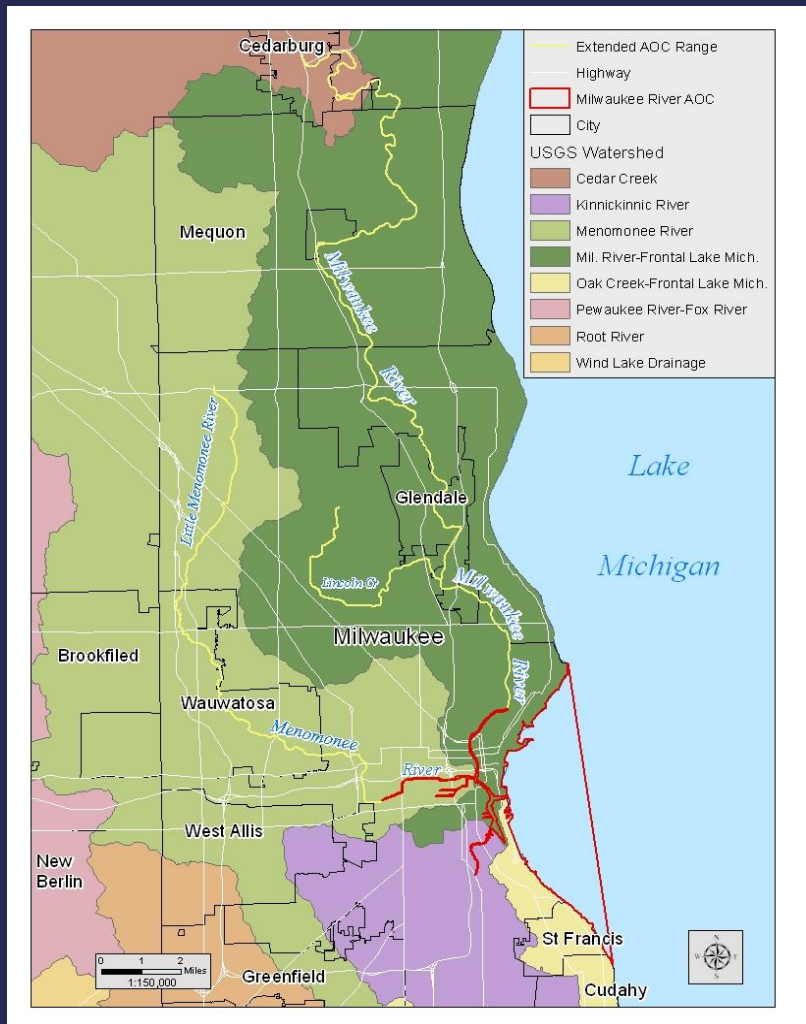
## □ Data collected Fall 2011-2014

- Meetings and Events
- Participation as a volunteer aesthetics monitor
- Participation on Milwaukee Stakeholder Delegation
- Semi-structured interviews
- Document analysis
  - RAP Documents
  - Educational Materials



Ashmun Bay, St. Marys River

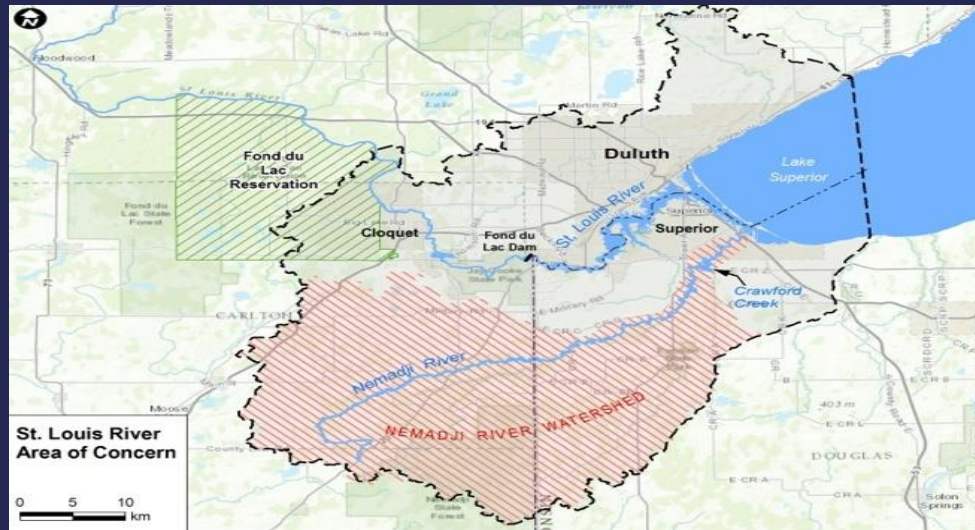
# Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern



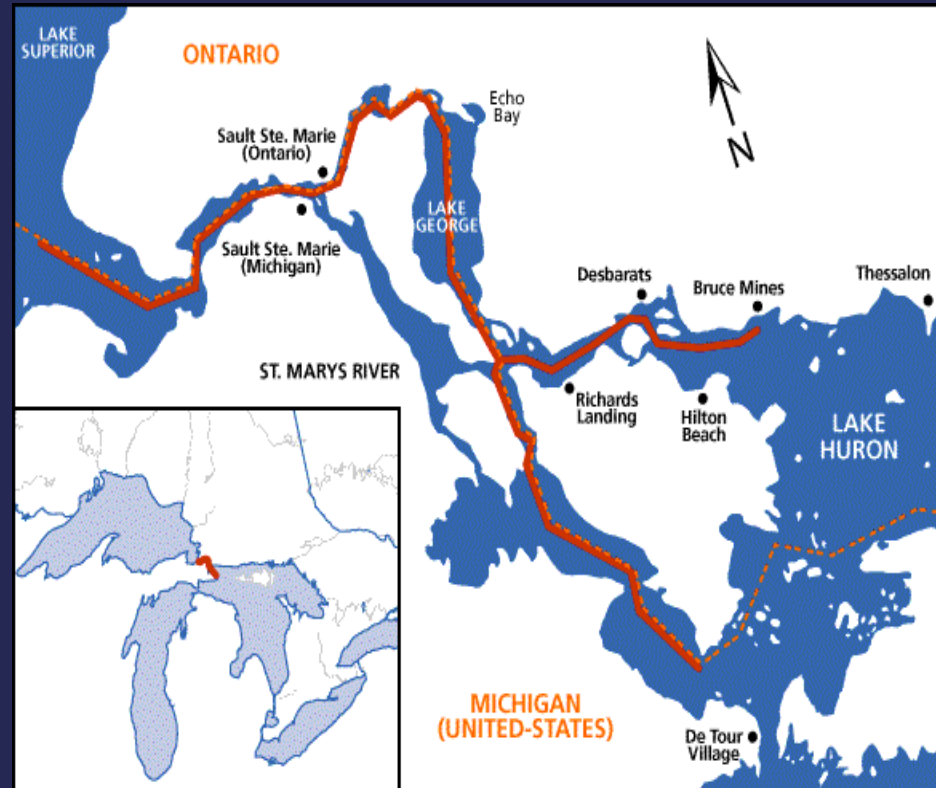
Source: UW-Extension



# St. Louis River Area of Concern



# St. Marys River Area of Concern



Source: Sault Ste. Marie Sustainable Water Portal

# Research Question:

## State-Local Agency Relationships

- What elements characterize Public Advisory Council structures in AOCs?
- What relationships can impact RAPs?
  - structure and organization (internal)
  - relationship to the lead state agency (external)

# Public Advisory Councils

|                                    | Milwaukee Estuary  | St. Louis River   | St. Marys River   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| How is the PAC organized?          | Small “Stakeholder Delegation” Organized by UW-Extension   | A 501(c)3, nonprofit organization   | Traditional advisory committee Facilitated by the Canadian RAP Coordinator  |
| What role do they have in the AOC? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach and Education</li> <li>• Provide letters of support</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate meetings between state agencies</li> <li>• Organize meetings to gather public input</li> <li>• Organize outreach and education</li> <li>• Stream and wildlife monitoring</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a forum for public input</li> <li>• Outreach and tables at community events.</li> <li>• Host a yearly educational event</li> </ul> |
| Tenure                             | 3 years  | 18 years  | 26 years  |



# Local Contributions to RAP Documents

|  | Milwaukee Estuary   | St. Louis River  | St. Marys River   |
|--|---|--|---|
| What did the PAC contribute?                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b><u>No PAC</u></b> in 2008</li> <li>* Community leaders were invited to review documents by WDNR</li> </ul>  | SLRA were <b><u>facilitators</u></b> and <b><u>participants</u></b> in developing delisting criteria   | Statewide Public Advisory Council and BPAC provided <b><u>input</u></b>   |
| Who (what background) informed the document? | <p><b><u>Local studies</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original RAP</li> <li>• Milwaukee River Basin Indicators Pilot Project</li> <li>• MMSD Corridor Study</li> <li>• SEWRPC Water Quality Plan</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>Local studies and experts</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 66 individuals</li> <li>• 31 organizations</li> <li>• Existing reports include the original RAP documents and other local plans</li> </ul> | <p><b><u>State and federal agency documents and consultation</u></b></p> <p>Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Community Health, US EPA, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Great Lakes Commission</p> |

# State – Local Agency Relationships

|  | Milwaukee Estuary  | St. Louis River   | St. Marys River   |
|--|--|---|---|
| State agency-local organization relationship | <b>Agency as funder</b><br><b>Consults with experts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local RAP Coordinator consults with the Technical Advisory Committee</li> <li>Stakeholder Delegation performs outreach and education</li> <li>The WDNR funds Tech Team and Stakeholder Delegation members for project work</li> </ul> | <b>Agencies as funders</b><br><b>CAC convenes experts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts outreach and education for the AOC</li> <li>States of Minnesota and Wisconsin fund the SLRA on a yearly, rotating basis</li> <li>Agencies also contract with SLRA to conduct specific activities</li> </ul> | <b>Agency updates PAC</b><br><b>PAC funded by GLC</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Four Agencies send a report (USEPA, EC, MDEQ, OMOE)</li> <li>MDEQ assigns a Coordinator (not their only AOC)</li> <li>The Great Lakes Commission provides a grant to the BPAC</li> <li>Environment Canada supports a RAP Coordinator, who provides administrative support to the BPAC</li> </ul> |

# Building Relationships through Education and Outreach

- Reflect AOC priorities
- Important for relationship building with stakeholders and communities
- Each AOC has a unique audience

| Area of Concern   | Educational Opportunities   |
|-------------------|---|
| Milwaukee Estuary | Clean Rivers-Clean Lake Conference, stormwater management, citizen outreach about AOC, clean-ups, aesthetics monitoring |
| St. Louis River   | St. Louis River Summit, TPF, community events, clean-ups, and tours   |
| St. Marys River   | St. Marys River Environmental Summit for local stakeholders   |



Sinking boat at Barnacle Bud's Marina, Fall 2013

## Question for discussion

What is your role in your AOC? What is the structure that you work in as an individual or organization?



# Lessons Learned

- ❑ Stakeholder engagement is not a panacea
- ❑ Locally-responsive adaptive management (if allowed)
- ❑ Built-in cheerleaders
- ❑ Partners in the heavy lifting
- ❑ You are ALL doing this work

*“Their [St. Louis River Action Committee] main purpose was to make sure the plan did not just put on the shelf.”*

(Stakeholder interview, 10/12/2012)

# Acknowledgements

- Ryan Holifield, Tim Ehlinger, Glen Fredlund, Tracey Heatherington, and Kristin Sziarto
- Mary Jo Read Travel Fund & Clinton Edwards Fund, IAGLR Paul W. Rodgers Scholarship
- Lake Superior National Estuarine Research Reserve, St. Louis River Alliance, St. Marys River BPAC/RAP, USEPA Mid-Continent Ecology Division, UW-Extension
- The many people who took time to talk with me about their rivers, communities, and work (many people in this room)

# Contact

Katie Williams

Mid-Continent Ecology Division

Duluth, MN

[williams.kathleen@epa.gov](mailto:williams.kathleen@epa.gov)

218-529-5203



Lincoln Avenue Bridge, Kinnickinnic River