

REGIONAL PLANNING NEWS

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Racine, WI
Credit: Alex Simpson, March 2020

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Passenger Rail Corridor Study Underway

The Commission is currently assisting with a study exploring the possibility of establishing passenger rail service in the corridor between Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee. Currently, there is no passenger rail serving this corridor, as Metra commuter rail service stops in Kenosha. The City of Racine obtained \$5 million in Congressionally Directed Spending and is using part of those funds to complete the study, including the Commission's work (no regional tax levy dollars are being used for the current study).

The Commission previously participated in studies related to establishing a commuter rail line in the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) corridor, which is recommended in VISION 2050 as part of a larger commuter rail network. While the current study will incorporate the previous studies and their results, the study will differ in important ways to reflect changes since the previous studies were completed in 2011. It will explore alternative service designs, station locations, organizational structures, and funding mechanisms.

The Commission's role in the current study is to provide project management support through an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Racine. This includes assisting with study scoping; forming and participating on the project team, the advisory Steering Committee, and the advisory Technical Working Group; procuring consultants and overseeing their work; and supporting an anticipated request to enter a federal funding program.

Public and stakeholder engagement will be conducted to obtain input as the study works toward a preferred alternative. Stay tuned for announcements on how to get involved. For more information visit www.sewrpc.org/Passenger-Rail-Corridor-Study.

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Also in this Newsletter:

- Education and Networking to Protect High-Quality Lakes..... **Page 2**
- New FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas for Lake Michigan Coastal Communities..... **Page 3**
- New Report Compares the Milwaukee Metro Area to Peers..... **Page 4**



Education and Networking to Protect High-Quality Lakes

In 2022, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) identified high-quality waters (streams, lakes, and wetlands) across Wisconsin as part of its Healthy Watersheds, High-Quality Waters (HWHQW) initiative. Additionally, the Commission has identified the most significant remaining natural areas in the Region through its Regional Natural Areas Plan. The goals of these designations are to bring attention and funding to protect high-quality waters, since historically the focus has been on restoring impaired waters.

Supported by WDNR Surface Water Education Grants, the Commission is fostering networking among stakeholder organizations from identified high-quality lakes within Walworth and Waukesha Counties. The Commission will provide a toolkit and a practice-based workshop to train stakeholders on lake data inventory, best management practices, and funding while forming connections and inspiring protection of these lakes.

The Commission’s main goals across the grants are to:

- Collect information about WDNR-identified high-quality lakes in Walworth and Waukesha Counties, and reach stakeholder organizations affiliated with these lakes through discussions and interviews to understand current practices.
- Educate stakeholders on how to collect information about lake conditions and management. Facilitate learning and communication between similar lake type network members through a practice-based workshop.
- Publish a best management practice toolkit for each lake type.

For more information please email lakeandstream@sewrpc.org.

Across Waukesha and Walworth Counties, there are 24 lakes that are identified as either High-Quality Water (HQW), a Natural Area, or in many cases, both. There are multiple types of high-quality lakes in Southeastern Wisconsin identified using the WDNR Natural Community model, which categorizes lakes based on surface area, stratification status, hydrology, and watershed size.

High-Quality Lakes in Walworth and Waukesha Counties

Walworth County	Waukesha County
Booth Lake	Beaver Lake
Geneva Lake	Big Muskego Lake
Lake Beulah	Eagle Spring Lake
Lake Wandawega	Fowler Lake
Lulu Lake	Golden Lake
Middle Lake	Little Muskego Lake
Pleasant Lake	Lower Nashotah Lake
Turtle Lake	Lower Phantom Lake
Whitewater Lake	Nagawicka Lake
	Oconomowoc Lake
	Ottawa Lake
	Pine Lake
	Pretty Lake
	Spring Lake
	Upper Nemahbin Lake

4/2022



Fowler Lake
Credit: Commission Staff



Nagawicka Lake
Credit: Commission Staff



New FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas for Lake Michigan Coastal Communities

Severe flood events can happen along the Lake Michigan coast when strong winds drive lake water and waves on shore. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has been rolling out new floodplain maps for four counties in Southeastern Wisconsin that identify areas at high risk for coastal flooding.

Whenever new floodplain maps are released, properties may be included in the coastal Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHA) for the first time and lenders may require these properties to obtain flood insurance policies.

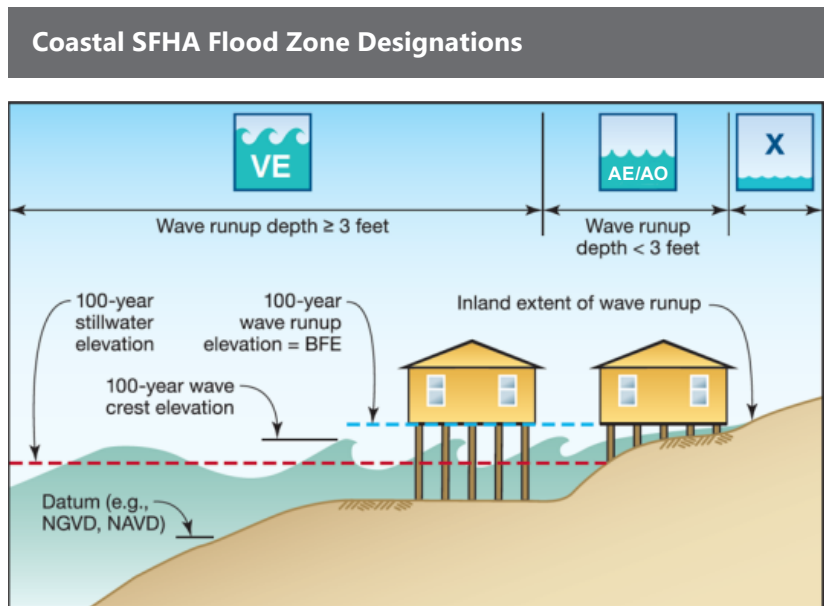
Letters of Final Determination (LFD) and effective dates for flood maps are essential milestones for flood risk projects. Maps that include new coastal flood zones recently became final, or “effective,” in Racine, Kenosha, and Ozaukee Counties. FEMA has issued an LFD for Milwaukee County, stating that there is a new or updated flood insurance rate map (FIRM) for this area. The receipt of the LFD starts a six-month adoption phase. Cities, villages, and counties must update their floodplain ordinances before the end of the six-month adoption period to remain in good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The table above provides the dates of the LFDs and the effective dates of the new floodplain maps for each of the Lake Michigan coastal counties of Southeastern Wisconsin.

County	Status
Racine	Effective date 1/11/2024
Kenosha	Effective date 4/11/2024
Ozaukee	Effective date 7/31/2024
Milwaukee	LFD 4/24/2024, effective date 10/24/2024

For more information about the coastal SFHA and flood zones, see the Great Lakes Coastal Flood Study (<https://rb.gy/ea18dm>). In addition, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) has updated the model ordinance to include coastal floodplain districts, and offers assistance in drafting floodplain ordinances free of charge for communities. Contact the WDNR at DNRfloodplain@Wisconsin.gov.

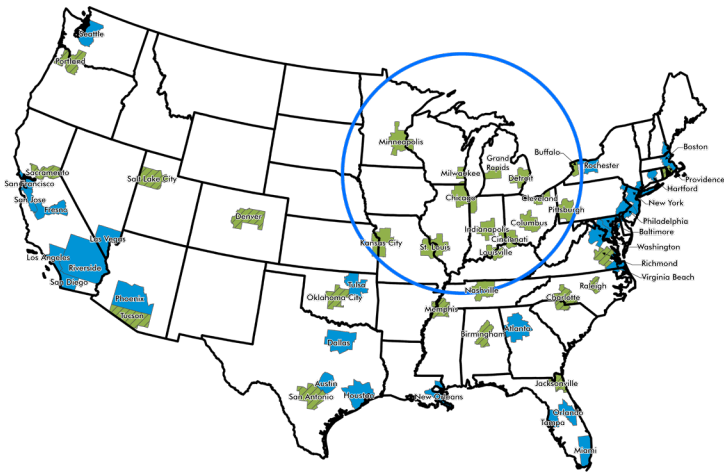
The coastal SFHA has three flood hazard zones: Zones VE, AE, and AO.

- Zone VE:** Coastal high-hazard zones where wave action and/or high-velocity water can cause structural damage during the 1-percent-annual-probability flood. Wave height or wave runup is expected to be greater than or equal to three feet in these zones. Base flood elevations (BFEs) are assigned on the new floodplain maps.
- Coastal Zone AE:** Areas subject to lower wave energy or inundation by the 1-percent-annual-probability flood. Wave height or wave runup is expected to be less than three feet in these areas.
- Zone AO:** Areas of special flood hazard having shallow water depths and/or unpredictable flow paths between one and three feet. These zones often appear to the landward side of a VE zone where waves overtop a bluff or coastal structure—also known as the overtopping “splash zone.”
- Zone X:** Areas of low risk for flooding.



Source: FEMA

Visit the FEMA Flood Map Service Center (msc.fema.gov/portal/home) to learn more!



New Report Compares the Milwaukee Metro Area to Peers

What does the four-county Milwaukee Metro Area look like when compared to 28 peer metro areas in the U.S.? We recently released the third edition of a report that assesses several key measures such as population growth and characteristics, the economy, and transportation.

Read the report at www.sewrpc.org/mr-221.

Did You Know?

A new online game, "Choosing Your Great Lakes Future," has been launched by the International Joint Commission's Great Lakes Water Quality Board to educate and inspire people to consider how today's actions can impact the Great Lakes in decades to come. In the game, players make choices based on 13 system drivers that lead to one of four possible scenarios for the health of the Great Lakes in 2050. Play the game at ijc.org/horizon.

