

## Focus Group Meetings *Combined Summary*

- **Property Owners** (11 participants)—March 19, 2007, from 7–9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Educators** (4 participants)—March 20, 2007, from 11 AM–12 PM at Onekama School
- **Agriculture and Land Developers/Managers** (13 participants)—March 26, 2007, from 9–11 AM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Natural Resource Managers** (14 participants)—March 26, 2007, from 2–4 PM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Local Government** (9 participants)—March 26, 2007 from 7–9 PM at the Manistee County Road Commission Office
- **Recreation, Tourism, Business and Civic Organizations** (7 participants)—March 27, 2007, from 9–11 AM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Youth/Students** (15 participants)—May 22, 2007, from 10:30–11:30 AM at Onekama School (Mr. Hunter’s Earth Science class)
- **Community Forum** (38 participants)—May 29, 2007, from 7-9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center
- **Seasonal Residents** (35 participants)—June 28, 2007, from 7-9 PM at the Onekama Farr Center

### Question 1: What are some of the things that you do in the watershed?

#### Recreate

- Fish (inland, Great Lakes, ice fishing)
- Swim
- Snorkel
- Boat (pleasure, fishing, sail, personal water craft, tube)
- Hunt (deer, upland bird, ducks)
- Go to beaches
- Go to parks
- Use public access
- Use marinas
- Go to piers
- Access Lake Michigan through the channel
- Camp
- Camp fires
- Enjoy woods and variety of trees
- Watch the sunset
- Get inspired and refresh spirit
- Light fireworks
- Enjoy music, art, and entertainment
- Paint lake scenes
- Photograph
- Walk the beaches
- Picnics
- Garden
- Walk, hike, run
- Ice skate
- Cross-country ski
- Snowshoe
- Snowmobile
- Sled
- Take our kids to play/youth recreation
- Sightsee/enjoy natural beauty/enjoy the views
- Drive
- Transportation
- Fall color tour
- Bicycle/bicycle tour
- Golf
- Bird watch
- View wildlife
- Watch stars
- Hunt mushrooms
- Enjoy the local history
- Visit Portage Point Inn and Camp Tosebo
- Go to restaurants/eat
- Shop
- Visit library

## Question 1: What are some of the things that you do in the watershed?

### Live and Work

- Live/have our homes
- Return year after year
- Raise families
- Send our kids to school/go to school
- Work/make a living
- Volunteer
- Run businesses
- Agriculture/farm
- Organic farming
- Fruit farm/orchards
- Eat/pick local produce and fruit
- Raise livestock
- Shop (hardware, necessities)
- Drink water (wells, artesian wells)
- Irrigation
- Excavate
- Promote tourism
- Alter the land
- Sell/develop real estate
- Store fuel and other chemicals
- Apply fertilizer, pesticides, and other chemicals
- Drill for oil and gas
- Brine injection
- Dispose of waste and/or sewage (septic systems)
- Pick up garbage
- Heat and cool houses/buildings
- Appreciate clean air
- Enjoy small, safe, friendly community

### Educate, Manage, and Protect

- Build and maintain roads and related structures
- Pave, salt, and brine roads
- Manage timber
- Stock fish
- Educate the community
- Use wetlands to clean water
- Protect water quality
- Teach/use as an outdoor classroom (Salmon in the Classroom, water quality monitoring, service learning, school forests)
- Monitor water quality
- Pass regulations/zoning/ordinances

## Question 2: What do you consider to be some of the biggest problems facing the Portage Lake Watershed right now?

### Information, Education, and Outreach

- Lack of complete/accurate/up-to-date information or water quality monitoring data
- Lack of education/awareness/understanding of how actions impact water quality
- Feeling “out of the loop” when not living in the area
- Lack of control because can't vote (seasonal residents)
- Communication challenges between seasonal residents and community
- Lack of a single source of factual information
- Resistance to change and new ideas
- Apathy
- Reaching/educating seasonal residents and tourists

### Quality of Life

- Unmanaged/mismanaged public access to Portage Lake
- Channel filling in/no dredging
- Not enough/adequate public access and parking for boaters and other users
- Lack of family-oriented facilities and access
- Lack of current job opportunities and future opportunities for youth
- Lack of support for economic development in the watershed
- Lack of local capacity and resources to manage land use challenges
- Rising taxes make it difficult for average income people to live here
- Lack of affordability and economic opportunity
- Lack of population diversity
- Lack of resources and money
- Population changing to retirees and fewer young families (school enrollment declining)
- Unknown future of school
- Road conditions/past repairs
- Overuse by boaters
- Lack of community drug store/gathering place

### Health of Fishery and Other Aquatic Life and Wildlife

- Changes in fish population and increased weeds
- Invasive and exotic species (plants and animals—zebra mussels, weeds, cormorants, swans, impact on food web)
- Boat/ship waste
- Development too close to the lake/fragile environments
- Shoreline development
- Increasing development and pressure to block views and access
- Increased population/growth rate

## Question 2: What do you consider to be some of the biggest problems facing the Portage Lake Watershed right now?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not enough/changes in fish stocking</li> <li>• Not enough/no long-term plan for water quality monitoring</li> <li>• Fish disease</li> <li>• Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses</li> <li>• Nutrient loading (specifically phosphorus)/speeding up the natural aging process</li> <li>• Leaf burning</li> <li>• Atmospheric deposition of chemicals</li> <li>• Uncapped/abandoned wells</li> <li>• Mud in well water due to gas/oil drilling</li> <li>• Chemicals entering aquifers</li> <li>• Road salt</li> <li>• Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses</li> <li>• Slant drilling under Portage Lake</li> <li>• Loss of/filling/building on wetlands</li> <li>• Lack of a public water supply system/numerous individual wells</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased runoff due to new developments/subdivisions</li> <li>• Increased storm water runoff/storm sewer overflow</li> <li>• Loss of trees due to development/management</li> <li>• Road and stream bank erosion</li> <li>• Erosion in general</li> <li>• Loss of public lands</li> <li>• Inability of aquifers to filter water as fast as it is being contaminated</li> <li>• Unmanaged tourism/use</li> <li>• Potential for water withdrawal</li> <li>• Low lake water level</li> <li>• Overuse by anglers</li> <li>• Lack of management of hydrology</li> <li>• Lack of stewardship (boaters, anglers, residents)</li> <li>• Old trash in gulleys (cars, appliances, fuel tanks)</li> </ul>
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<b>Body-Contact Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improperly functioning/maintained septic systems</li> <li>• Lack of sewer system around the lake</li> <li>• Dog and other animal waste entering water/on beaches</li> <li>• Presence of <i>E. coli</i></li> <li>• Fertilizers and chemicals from lawns, agriculture, and golf courses</li> <li>• Increased weeds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nutrient loading (specifically phosphorus)/speeding up the natural aging process</li> <li>• Unmanaged tourism/use</li> <li>• Garbage on beaches</li> <li>• Blight/garbage</li> <li>• Lack of stewardship (boaters, anglers, residents)</li> </ul>
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<b>Regulation and Enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of unity among property owners on goals</li> <li>• Lack of communication among various local government agencies</li> <li>• Differences in views between seasonal and permanent residents</li> <li>• Inconsistent application/enforcement of various government regulations</li> <li>• Confusing/multiple/complex government regulations and multiple jurisdictions</li> <li>• Lack of enforcement resources/police</li> </ul>	
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## Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

<b>Information, Education, and Outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify facts</li> <li>• Develop fact-based solutions</li> <li>• Provide accurate data/information</li> <li>• Additional/continued air and water quality monitoring</li> <li>• Gather additional information/data about watershed concerns</li> <li>• Provide a central source for current, factual information sharing</li> <li>• Develop a comprehensive website including maps and information about the health of the watershed</li> <li>• Increase community outreach and education</li> <li>• Leverage existing communication/education/outreach opportunities</li> <li>• Educate visitors and seasonal residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education about exotic and invasive species and how they can be managed</li> <li>• Distribute information from MSU Extension and Manistee Conservation District</li> <li>• Increase communication and collaboration among stakeholders</li> <li>• Establish an environmental ombudsman</li> <li>• Achieve attitude and behavioral change</li> <li>• Messaging/branding of value of watershed</li> <li>• Positive social pressure to be a good watershed steward</li> <li>• Submit article to the Michigan Township Association Newsletter</li> <li>• Increase boater/other user education and stewardship</li> <li>• Increased community engagement and volunteering in watershed</li> </ul>
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### Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Educate public/watershed users/landowners/tourists about watershed problems and what they can do to help</li> <li>Explore expanding mailing of “Grapevine”</li> <li>Promote relationships of various watersheds (subwatersheds, Lake Michigan, Great Lakes Basin)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education about impacts of septic systems and fertilizer practices</li> <li>Study current status of and options for sewage treatment (pros, cons, cost)</li> <li>Enclose educational information in tax bills</li> <li>Build community capacity through periodic meetings related to watershed plan</li> </ul>
<b>Quality of Life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Money/resources</li> <li>Money to support local government capacities</li> <li>Securing grants and donations to address problems</li> <li>Resources to support local government regulations</li> <li>Leverage school resources/increased engagement of youth</li> <li>Integrate water into all aspects of school curriculum</li> <li>Develop a paid/intern program and/or after-school for students</li> <li>Promote/increase awareness of local amenities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community organizing, leadership development, facilitation</li> <li>Vibrant economy with jobs to support young families</li> <li>More jobs</li> <li>Economic development planning</li> <li>Affordable housing</li> <li>Increased family-friendly vacations/visits/recreational opportunities</li> <li>Continue to dredge the channel to allow access to and from Lake Michigan</li> <li>Endowment funds</li> <li>Development of a strategy for access</li> <li>Promote Monday night music programs</li> <li>Offer boat and bike rentals</li> </ul>
<b>Health of Fishery and Other Aquatic Life and Wildlife</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased participation in hazardous waste disposal days</li> <li>Environment-friendly alternatives to road salt (beet juice) and brine (soy)</li> <li>Lake-friendly fertilizer/phosphorus-free fertilizer</li> <li>Get soil tested to determine fertilizer needs</li> <li>Land protection/assist those interested in learning more about their options</li> <li>Protection of public lands and strategy for land protection</li> <li>Development of a strategy for public lands</li> <li>Identify and adopt best practices for land use and watershed stewardship</li> <li>Protect feeder creeks and groundwater</li> <li>Restoration of critical lake habitat</li> <li>Maintain buffer strips along lake and streams</li> <li>Protect biodiversity of plant and animal life</li> <li>Continue/increase fish stocking</li> <li>Get rid of swans</li> <li>Develop long-term water quality monitoring strategy and increase involvement of Onekama School and residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt forest management practices</li> <li>Reduction of agricultural runoff through education and voluntary action</li> <li>More storm water retention ponds</li> <li>Management of exotic and invasive species</li> <li>Clean Marina Program</li> <li>Public water supply</li> <li>Predictive modeling (to determine impacts of land use on water quality)</li> <li>Inventory uncapped wells</li> <li>Explore costs/benefits of alternative energy sources</li> <li>Pave eroding roads</li> <li>Develop practical solutions</li> <li>Management for the “total health” of the watershed and everything in it</li> <li>Increase/continue use of local resources (MSU Extension, Conservation District, Groundwater Stewardship program, Little River Band, etc.)</li> <li>Promote low impact activities like canoeing, kayaking and sailing</li> <li>Clean streets and storm drains in Village</li> <li>Develop a plan to control oil and gas drilling and to cap abandoned wells</li> </ul>
<b>Body-Contact Recreation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify inadequate septic systems</li> <li>Septic system ordinance</li> <li>Options for sewage treatment needs</li> <li>Clustered septic systems</li> <li>Extend the sewer system around the lake</li> <li>Mandated hook-up to sewer</li> <li>Expand trash options (days and locations)</li> <li>Expand/advertise recycling options</li> <li>Offer yard waste drop off and use for</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get soil tested to determine fertilizer needs</li> <li>Reduction of agricultural runoff through education and voluntary action</li> <li>Fix/upgrade storm sewers to help with overflow</li> <li>More storm water retention ponds</li> <li>Increased beach maintenance/cleanup</li> <li>Management of exotic and invasive</li> </ul>

### Question 3: What are some possible solutions to these problems?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compost</li> <li>Lake-friendly fertilizer/phosphorus-free fertilizer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>species</li> <li>Clean Marina Program</li> <li>Identify and adopt best practices for land use and watershed stewardship</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation and Enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land use planning/planned growth (cluster developments)</li> <li>Attend citizen planner/land use education training</li> <li>Update/develop township master plans</li> <li>Develop effective/focused regulations</li> <li>Planned developments to maintain trees</li> <li>Develop unifying, responsive plans among various units of local government</li> <li>Convene local units of government to discuss unifying goals</li> <li>Continue County Summits</li> <li>Community consensus on goals and actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulation</li> <li>Zoning</li> <li>Ordinances</li> <li>Enforcement of regulation, zoning, ordinances</li> <li>Increased awareness of governmental regulations, zoning, ordinances Additional, sensible zoning</li> <li>Use of the political process/legislation (local, state, federal)</li> <li>Political pressure</li> <li>Support local, state, and federal legislation that will help the watershed</li> </ul>

### Question 4: Have you ever had a conflict with other people who use the watershed differently than you do?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal watercrafts/other water users</li> <li>Boats and personal watercrafts/swimmers</li> <li>Sewer/septic systems (costs, concerns about population increase)</li> <li>Clear cutting/preserving trees</li> <li>Snowmobilers/other watershed users</li> <li>Private property rights/government regulation</li> <li>Seasonal residents/permanent residents</li> <li>Population growth and increased use/water quality</li> <li>Growth/no growth</li> <li>Development that would block views of lake/preservation of views</li> <li>Development and impact on trout streams</li> <li>Outdoor wood stoves/air quality</li> <li>Car races cause noise pollution</li> <li>Road ends that are public access sites</li> <li>Public access adjacent to private property (trespassing)</li> <li>Bicyclists and drivers (no bike lanes)</li> <li>Conflicts between governmental agency regulations and watershed maintenance (i.e., MDEQ critical dune designation and beach and public access maintenance)</li> <li>Fishermen/other recreational users</li> <li>Over fertilization of property</li> <li>Projects that remain unfinished</li> <li>Commercial/private interests</li> <li>Public parking on private property</li> <li>Kids jumping off channel wall (drugs, drinking, no security or life jackets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of angler stewardship (overharvest, keeping undersized fish, disposing of undersized or undesired fish)</li> <li>Boaters and no wake zones (in channel too)</li> <li>Native American fishing rights</li> <li>Wind energy/blocking views</li> <li>Portage Point Inn/permanent residents</li> <li>Oil/gas drilling/impacts on well water quality</li> <li>Agricultural practices (fertilizer, pesticide application) that don't promote sustainable agriculture</li> <li>Road maintenance/road users</li> <li>Pro- and anti-development</li> <li>Land developer/community relationship</li> <li>Competing land use interests</li> <li>Enforcement issues/lack of enforcement resources</li> <li>Development/subdivision covenants</li> <li>Wetland fill/preservation of wetlands</li> <li>Complex/multi-layers of government and regulations</li> <li>Regulatory conflicts and inconsistencies</li> <li>Misguided regulation</li> <li>Perception/fact</li> <li>Dog waste and beach users</li> <li>Wounded water fowl</li> <li>Duck season is disruptive (sound, safety)</li> <li>Hunting season/difficult to walk and feel safe</li> <li>Large power boats/quiet time</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> of July activities start sooner and last longer</li> </ul>
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### Question 5: Are there certain cultural, historic, or environmental sites or resources that you think should be protected?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Little Eden well</li> <li>ALL Parks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Library</li> <li>Camps</li> </ul>
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- Glen Park
- North Point Park
- Gazebo at Portage Point Beach
- All parks
- Trails
- All public access/boat launches
- Conservancy-owned land and access
- Beaches
- Access through channel to and from Lake Michigan
- Sailing and races
- Charter boat industry
- Views of the lake
- Aesthetic quality of watershed
- Open space
- Green space
- Trees
- Farming/agriculture
- Orchards
- Centennial farms
- All registered historical sites (5)
- Historic homes
- Historical artifacts
- Tribal resources
- Portage Point Inn
- School
- Timberline around watershed
- Keep the remaining sand roads as sand (rural character)
- County fair grounds
- Economy/economic base
- Tourism
- Commercial development/property
- Dunes
- Wetlands
- Marshes
- Groundwater
- Springs
- Artesian wells
- Feeder creeks and streams
- Fishery
- Fish stocking
- Wildlife
- Fish and wildlife for consumption
- Lake water quality
- Air quality
- Health of everything in the watershed (natural resources, people, economy, etc.)
- Current or similar population densities
- Arts and culture
- Morals and values of community members
- Private property owners willing to provide access to lake
- Rights of all people in the watershed
- Knowledge of historic and ancient shorelines of Portage Lake and Lake Michigan
- Walk-in health clinic

### Question 6: How do you get most of your information about the Portage Lake Watershed?

- Newsletters
- *Grapevine*—Portage Point Summer Resort Corporation newsletter
- Portage Lake Association newsletters and website
- Internet
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR)
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ)
- MSU Extension
- NOAA
- Little River Band of Ottawa Indians
- USDA
- Michigan Land Use Institute
- Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
- Mike Acton
- Word of mouth
- Portage Lake Garden Club
- Homeowner/subdivision meetings
- Past Studies of Portage Lake and watershed
- Onekama School's water quality monitoring reports
- Teachers and students at Onekama Schools
- Local government meetings and minutes
- Township offices
- Manistee County offices
- Community/public meetings
- Onekama Township Planning Commission and Master Plan
- Rumor
- Innuendo
- Manistee Conservation District
- Health Department
- Tosebo News Chain
- People who use the watershed
- *Manistee News Advocate*
- Bulletin boards
- Community websites
- Library
- Realtors

### Other ideas for how to get information to the public?

- Include in tax bill
- Could adopt *Grapevine* newsletter to entire community
- Mailings/newsletters/web sites of various lake associations and community organizations
- Brochures
- Contact with property owners
- Contact with other townships

- Local media (newspaper, radio, public access channel)
- Websites
- Thematic signage when entering Portage Lake Watershed
- Post in the community
- Extend cable internet

### Question 7: Are there certain sources of information you consider more trustworthy than others?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All are trusted but there is no central source for fact-based information</li> <li>• US Army Corps of Engineers</li> <li>• Mike Acton</li> <li>• MDNR</li> <li>• MDEQ</li> <li>• Manistee Conservation District</li> <li>• Colleges/Universities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fisheries researchers</li> <li>• Health department</li> <li>• Avid fishermen</li> <li>• Past studies</li> <li>• Data collected by the school and students</li> <li>• <i>Grapevine</i> newsletter</li> <li>• MSU Extension</li> </ul> |
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### Question 8: Imagine the Portage Lake Watershed 50 years from now (2057)—what do you want it to look like?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a lot different/a lot like it does right now/similar landscape</li> <li>• Not overpopulated or overdeveloped</li> <li>• Fewer weeds</li> <li>• Same or higher water levels</li> <li>• Improved property values</li> <li>• Protected parks</li> <li>• Enhanced/more parks and public access</li> <li>• Access to and from Lake Michigan via the channel</li> <li>• Better than now</li> <li>• Big yachts on Portage Lake</li> <li>• Enhanced streetscapes</li> <li>• Vistas/views of lake as drive/walk around</li> <li>• Views of the lake and landscape</li> <li>• No condos blocking views of lake</li> <li>• More condos</li> <li>• More and safe trails (bike, walking, hiking)</li> <li>• Still see trees</li> <li>• More paved roads and less dirt and erosion</li> <li>• Better zoning</li> <li>• Village has progressed with planning</li> <li>• Lake still takes on the colors of the sky</li> <li>• Abundant wildlife</li> <li>• Economic opportunities—place for future generations to live and work</li> <li>• Proper/sufficient infrastructure</li> <li>• Proper plans in place</li> <li>• Planned growth and development resulting in green space and views of the lake</li> <li>• Open space</li> <li>• Forests/woods</li> <li>• Protected and wisely planned community</li> <li>• All watershed interests are engaged and benefit</li> <li>• Progress</li> <li>• Unity/stakeholders focus on common good of lake</li> <li>• Well paying jobs</li> <li>• More enticing employment for young people</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Central sewer system</li> <li>• Land preservation and plans</li> <li>• Thriving fishery</li> <li>• Continued fish stocking</li> <li>• Lack of exotic and invasive species</li> <li>• More and diverse jobs</li> <li>• Viable, year-round businesses</li> <li>• Entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Support for businesses that fit watershed goals</li> <li>• Good neighbors</li> <li>• Lake is aging at a natural pace</li> <li>• Sustained public access</li> <li>• Habitat that supports fish and wildlife</li> <li>• Universal access boardwalk</li> <li>• Universal access for all types of activities</li> <li>• Clean, fresh drinking water</li> <li>• Abundant water</li> <li>• Strict, enforced zoning ordinances</li> <li>• Enforcement</li> <li>• High water quality</li> <li>• Healthy, outstanding schools with water curriculum/first-class school</li> <li>• Natural setting</li> <li>• Protected fragile environments</li> <li>• Quality and safe swimming</li> <li>• Sustainable community</li> <li>• Families/multi-generations</li> <li>• Activities for multi-generations</li> <li>• Healthy, vibrant tourism economy</li> <li>• Thriving business community</li> <li>• Vibrant cultural focus</li> <li>• Bible camps</li> <li>• Attractive lighthouse at mouth of channel</li> <li>• Farms and agriculture remain</li> <li>• More entertainment for youth</li> <li>• No litter or waste</li> <li>• No blight</li> </ul> |
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**Question 8: Imagine the Portage Lake Watershed 50 years from now (2057)—what do you want it to look like?**

- Good air quality
- Historic restoration
- Affordable housing
- Future generations hold community meetings to discuss managing growth and development
- Rural feel (farms, orchards)
- Emergency first aid
- More bicycles and fewer cars