



Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative *Overview*



The mission of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) is to provide funding to enhance, protect, and rehabilitate Great Lakes fishery resources and to compensate for lost use and enjoyment caused by the operation of the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant. The Trust funds projects in the areas of fishing access, stewardship, and research, and also makes grants for special projects. (For more information about the GLFT, visit <http://www.glft.org>.)

BACKGROUND

For the past several years, the GLFT has sought information and funded several projects that have helped define how the Trust could best support environmental and natural resource education that leads to stewardship of the Great Lakes. The GLFT has provided funding for “A Great Lakes Fisheries Education Assessment and Summary of Needs” (2000–2001, University of Michigan in cooperation with Ohio State University), which resulted in a Web-based Information Clearinghouse for Great Lakes Education (2004–2006, University of Michigan), as well as for the Great Lakes Ecosystem and Fisheries Education Networking Conference (2003, Michigan State University). The results of these GLFT-funded projects show that the most pressing unmet need for environmental education about the Great Lakes is a system that supports the delivery of both effective resources and powerful services.

To examine the nature of systems that could develop environmental stewards, the GLFT funded a study through a grant to Northwestern Michigan College (NMC). Experts in education, including teachers, nonprofit conservation and environmental organizations involved in developing and disseminating instructional materials, and community organizations interested in nurturing environmental stewards, contributed to this study, *Creating Stewards of the Great Lakes*, which is available at: <http://www.glft.org/resourcelibrary/PBEFinalReport.pdf>.

THE GREAT LAKES STEWARDSHIP INITIATIVE

Following this study, the GLFT, with the support of the Wege Foundation and with the advice and counsel of an Advisory Group and Funders' Collaborative, launched the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. (For a list of Advisory Group and Funders Collaborative members, go to <http://www.gift.org/StewardshipInitiative/people.htm>.) The goal of the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative is to increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes so that Michigan's residents become active and effective stewards of the Great Lakes and advocates for strategies that support the long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes fisheries. The Stewardship Initiative's *strategy* involves an integrated model that features three components: place-based education, sustained professional development for K–12 teachers, and K–12 school/community partnerships. The *structure* required to deploy the Initiative's strategy features regional "hubs." Hubs provide sustained support and leadership for the collaborative work of community-based organizations and K–12 schools.

The Strategy

With respect to *strategy*, Planning and Implementation Grants funded through the Initiative must address the following three components:

■ **Place-based Education**

- The local community and environment are the starting points for teaching, learning, and developing attitudes and behaviors associated with stewardship of natural resources (with a special emphasis on water resources) among K–12 students.
- Hands-on, student-driven, problem- or issue-based experiences for students are emphasized.
- Instruction actively engages students in real-world activities and is strongly connected to student achievement, academic outcomes, and schools' curricular goals.

■ **Sustained Professional Development for K–12 Teachers**

- Teachers are engaged over time in studies of both content and pedagogy, according to their needs.
- The format for professional development reflects best practices in adult education.
- Collegial relationships are formed and sustained among teachers and between teachers and others in the community.

■ **School-Community Partnerships**

- People in schools and communities undertake mutually meaningful and productive work that addresses environmental needs and issues of local importance.
- Students are viewed as valuable assets in the community.
- Community organizations are viewed as significant contributors to the education of young people.

The Structure

With respect to *structure*, the Planning and Implementation Grants awarded through the Initiative must exhibit the potential to *eventually* evolve an infrastructure that includes a regional “hub” that can be sustained over time. (The GLFT recognizes that achieving sustainability may take time.) A regional hub provides leadership and support for place-based education, professional development for K–12 teachers, and school/community partnerships; works with other hubs in Michigan and beyond to improve services to schools and communities; offers outreach services to other regions; and strengthens leadership for environmental stewardship and education in the Great Lakes region. Rather than creating new organizations to serve as hubs, the GLFT anticipates that organizations already working in environmental education and stewardship will assume these roles within most regions.

Funding Opportunities

The Stewardship Initiative will fund significant and sustainable efforts in which community organizations and K–12 schools in Michigan work together to increase stewardship of the Great Lakes—particularly among young people. For some, adopting the strategy and working toward the structure described above may involve a new approach to environmental education (e.g., working across audiences—with community members *and* K–12 students *and* K–12 teachers, rather than with only one of these groups). For others, it may involve focusing more intently on a particular aspect (e.g., sustained professional development of K–12 teachers). Either way, the GLFT expects that collaborators within a region will need to engage in a thoughtful process in order to chart the path ahead.

Two categories of grants will be available through the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative in 2007:

■ Planning Grants

- Help schools and the organizations that serve them develop a plan for regional hubs
- Maximum of six (6) grants of up to \$20,000 each
- Proposals due 25 May 2007
- Grants awarded early June 2007
- Work completed by October 2007 (5 months)

■ Implementation Grants

- Support the establishment of regional hubs
- Maximum of two (2) grants of up to \$200,000 each
- Proposals due 20 October 2007
- Grants awarded November 2007
- Work completed by June 2009 (20 months)

The GLFT and the Wege Foundation have convened a Funders’ Collaborative with a goal of engaging other funders in the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. Please note that

Planning and Implementation Grants *in addition* to those funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (as described above) may be awarded to applicants who submit proposals through the Initiative.

Planning Grants

Planning Grants allow key stakeholders within a region to (1) gain experience with a planning process that is collaborative and inclusive; (2) learn more about environmental stewardship, place-based education, professional development of K–12 teachers, and school/community partnerships; (3) consider data and input from the community or region in order to identify relevant needs and opportunities in stewardship, K–12 education, and community development; and (4) create a specific plan to develop environmental stewards within a region by using the *strategy* and *structure* described above.

Implementation Grants

Looking ahead, the GLFT expects that those who receive a Planning Grant will use those funds to develop and submit an Implementation Grant proposal to the GLFT or another funder of the grantee's choosing. The GLFT will not award Implementation Grants to applicants who do not include a hub as part of their organizational structure; this needs to be considered during the planning process. In addition, the GLFT will award Implementation Grants only to those applicants who are committed to 1) making a significant difference within their regions (as measured by outcomes/impact rather than strictly by number of participants), and 2) becoming sustainable over the longer term. Those whose vision is more limited (e.g., one classroom working with one community partner) will be at a disadvantage in the review process and should seek funding from other sources.

It is an exciting time! One could argue that developing active stewards of the Great Lakes has never been more important than it is today, and that likewise, it has never been more important for communities and schools to work together to involve young people in meaningful explorations and studies that lead to real learning. The GLFT looks forward to working with those in the field to advance environmental education through collaborative, regional efforts to develop young stewards.

For more information about the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, please visit the GLFT website at <http://www.glft.org>. You may also contact Mary Whitmore, GLFT Education Coordinator (mwhitmore@glft.org) or Julie Metty Bennett, Assistant Trust Manager of the GLFT (glft@glft.org).