Ocean Literacy Principles

1. The Earth has one big ocean with many features.
2. The ocean and life in the ocean shape the features of the Earth.
3. The ocean is a major influence on weather and climate.
4. The ocean made Earth habitable.
5. The ocean is largely unexplored.
6. The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected.
7. The ocean is a major influence on weather and climate.
8. The ocean is largely unexplored.
The Great Lakes are a vast and diverse water system that span the northern United States and southern Canada. They are the largest group of freshwater lakes in the world and are a critical part of the global water cycle. The Great Lakes are interconnected via the St. Lawrence River and are nestled within the densely populated Midwest region of North America. The basin is often referred to as the `American Lake Belt` and is sourced from more than 200 rivers in the region. The Great Lakes are sustained by fresh water from the melting Laurentian ice sheet during the last ice age and are the world’s largest surface freshwater system. The Lakes are critical to the region’s economy, culture, and ecological integrity.

The Great Lakes contain five of the world’s largest freshwater bodies: Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Erie, and Lake Ontario. They make up 20% of the world’s freshwater surface area and are the most significant freshwater system on the planet. The Lakes are interconnected via the St. Lawrence River and are the source of drinking water for approximately 40 million people. They are also an important source of recreational and commercial opportunities, providing habitat for a diverse array of aquatic species. The Great Lakes are an integral part of the water cycle and have a coastline longer than the East Coast of the United States. Most of North America’s fresh water surface (95%) is in the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are affected directly by the decisions and actions of people throughout their watershed, which includes parts of the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and Wisconsin, the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and tribal lands. The Great Lakes are a key focal point for large-scale water resource management and protection, and efforts to preserve and restore the lakes are underway. The Great Lakes are a source of inspiration, recreation, and discovery. They are also an important element in the heritage of many cultures.

Understanding the Great Lakes is more than a matter of curiosity. Exploration, inquiry, and monitoring promote better understanding and protection of Great Lakes ecosystems, resources, and processes. The Great Lakes are a source of inspiration, recreation, and discovery. They are also an important element in the heritage of many cultures. The economy is diverse in the Great Lakes, with major sectors in industry, recreation and tourism, agriculture, commercial and sport fisheries, forestry, and mining. The Great Lakes were dramatically degraded and challenged by human endeavors in recent times. Basic ecosystem processes have been restored through individual and collective efforts. Proper foresight and informed decision-making will continue to make the Great Lakes a model of environmental protection, restoration, and innovation.