



GREAT LAKES Stewardship Initiative

Expanding classrooms. Strengthening communities.

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 GLFT 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 it could best support environmental and natural resource education that leads to stewardship of the Great Lakes. The GLFT 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 environmental 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 the study, the GLFT consulted again with state and national environmental education experts and practitioners to develop the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative. The *goal* of the 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 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 all three integral components:

1. 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 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 being 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 a potential to *eventually* evolve an infrastructure that includes a regional "hub." (The GLFT recognizes that this evolution 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 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 just one of these groups). To 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 Stewardship Initiative in 2009:

Planning Grants

- Help schools and the organizations that serve them develop a plan for regional hubs
- Up to 4 grants of up to \$20,000 each
- Proposals due February 2009
- Grants awarded February 2009
- Work completed by August 2009 (7 months)

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

- Support the establishment of hubs
- Up to 2 grants of up to \$200,000 each
- Proposals due August 2009
- Grants awarded September 2009
- Work completed by April 2011 (20 months)

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.

It is an exciting time! One could argue that developing active stewards of the Great Lakes has perhaps never been more important than it is today, and that likewise, it has never before 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 GLFT's Stewardship Initiative, please visit the GLFT website at www.glft.org. You may also contact Mary Whitmore, GLFT Education Coordinator (mwhitmore@glft.org) or Julie Metty Bennett, Assistant Manager of the GLFT (glft@glft.org).