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Michigan United Conservation Clubs

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Conserving, Enhancing and Protecting Michigan's Natural Resources and Outdoors Heritage since 1937.



December 2, 2014

Jonathon Beard
Great Lakes Fisheries Trust
Lansing, MI 48909-7735

Dear Mr. Beard

Enclosed is our final narrative and financial report for the Great Lakes Fishery Trust project, 2010.1164, *Pier Michigan*, which ended on April 30, 2014.

We hope that this completes the reporting for this project and that you will approve disbursement of the remaining \$11,079 for the purposes of the project.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Amy Trotter
Senior Resource Policy Manager



STEWARDSHIP FINAL REPORT GUIDELINES

Final reporting requirements consist of (1) a completed profile of the grant for posting to the public GLFT website (see below), (2) a narrative response to GLFT final report questions (see following section), and (3) a final financial report (form and instructions attached).

PROJECT PROFILE

Your profile should be no more than three pages in length (preferably two). As it will be published to the GLFT website, please strive to communicate in language accessible to audiences **without** extensive familiarity with the specific subject matter of your work. The primary intended purposes of the profile are to (1) provide an overview of the work funded by GLFT and characterize results and achievements in an accessible manner, and (2) help interested parties access further resources or materials germane to the effort. The profile should follow this format:

Synopsis

- Project Title: Pier Michigan
- Grantee Organization: Michigan United Conservation Clubs
- Project Team:
 1. MUCC
 1. Erin McDonough, former MUCC Executive Director
 2. Tony Hansen, Michigan OutofDoors Magazine editor and former MUCC Communications Director
 3. Dondre Young, former MUCC Project Management & Policy Intern
 4. Amy Trotter, Resource Policy Manager, atrotter@mucc.org
 5. Del Belcher Marketing and Communications Associate, dbelcher@mucc.org
 2. Great Lakes Fishery Trust

1. Jonathon Beard, Grants Manager

- Contact Person: Del Belcher Marketing and Communications Associate, dbelcher@mucc.org
- Grant Amount: \$110,787
- Time Frame: 09/01/10-04/30/14
- Focus Areas: Stewardship
- Brief Project Summary:

Pier Michigan is a collaborative between MUCC and the GLFT to create a web-based initiative designed to increase public awareness and use of pier fishing opportunities: www.piermichigan.org. Shore-based fishing access in Michigan is plentiful, but until now, no clearinghouse has been available with all the information an angler needs to be successful, including fish species present and site amenities. Through Pier Michigan, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust will continue to increase the impact it has on recreational fishing in Michigan by exposing an increasing number of people to the recreational opportunities provided by our Great Lakes fishery assets.

Project in Context

Pier Michigan is a tool to build connectivity between the anglers, potential anglers and the investment in access opportunities afforded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust since its creation, as well as pier fishing access provided by other public and private funding sources. The Trust has invested around the Great Lakes basin in over 49 beautiful fishing access sites in areas with spectacular Great Lakes fishery resources, many of which are universally accessible. In addition, in expanding this site, our staff identified 43 more pier fishing access sites open to the public. Better utilization of these access sites by the public and the communities in which they are located will lead to an increased appreciation of our fisheries heritage.

Goals of the Effort

Grow Local Community usage of and knowledge of Great Lakes Fishery Trust-funded fishing access sites and other publicly accessible pier fishing access sites.

Grow general public usage of and knowledge of Great Lakes Fishery Trust-funded fishing access sites and other publicly accessible pier fishing access sites.

Grow recognition of the name of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust as the entity that funded many fishing access sites.

Develop a spatially-based tool the GLFT, other funders, and the State of Michigan for analyzing gaps in fishing access.

Results

Pier Michigan included the full concept, creation and implementation of an interactive website featuring maps, video, fishing resources and other amenities at Trust-funded and

other public pier fishing locations along the Michigan shore of the Great Lakes and lower tributaries. The project also included the creation and implementation of a Facebook site and page for Pier Michigan, as well as a marketing and outreach strategy.

Outreach included:

- Website ads, video and content on www.piermichigan.org
- Social media efforts. Continual updates and promotion of facebook page and Twitter followers to increase users. Analysis of the results is attached.
- Discussions with DNR and Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association on partnership and cross-promotion opportunities.
- Outreach to almost 40 county and local park systems and recreational departments
- Promotion of the website resource at MUCC's Annual Convention, through the Total Outdoors Challenge. Each of MUCC's major programs, including Pier Michigan, was highlighted in the form of an outdoor activity. Pier Michigan was featured during a casting competition. Participants received a stamp on their "passport" by participating and were entered into a free drawing if they attended 2 out of the 5 stations available. More than 40 people participated.

Products and Resources

www.piermichigan.org

Pier Michigan Facebook page

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Background/Overview

1. *Briefly summarize the project description as outlined in the original proposal.*

The project is designed to improve usage and public knowledge of the shoreline fishing piers that have been funded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust and others along the Michigan shore of the Great Lakes and lower tributaries. This has been a long-term goal of the Trust. Since 2001, the last time the Trust undertook a project to raise awareness and use of the shoreline fishing sites, many new media sources, including Facebook and increased web usage have allowed viral marketing to be an effective form of communication. Coupled with the fact that most people use the internet to find opportunities, creation of a web-based platform made sense for the desired outcomes.

As originally proposed, the project was supposed to include the full wraparound marketing, communications, and promotion of the website resource to anglers, including a Facebook contest, mailings to MUCC members and purchased lists, promotion on Mike Avery's Outdoor Radio show and Michigan OutofDoors TV. These components were not completed in favor of shifting budget and time towards incorporating more sites and information into the web-based platform.

2. *Was the project completed as originally intended? If not, indicate how the final outcome(s) differed from what was anticipated. Does your experience suggest that original expectations were realistic? What factors hindered or helped progress?*

Overall the project addresses the four outcomes outlined in the original and Phase II project proposal. The web-based platform and social media channels were created for Pier Michigan to promote to the public the pier based fishing opportunities on the Great Lakes.

How-to videos that were created and added to the website included:

- Cleaning Fish
- Gear for Pier Fishing
- Species Available for Pier Anglers
- Rigging for Pier Fishing
- How to properly catch and release fish

Additional pier sites added to the project and the difficulty in finding information and displaying it in a systematic and accurate way led to a longer creation time for the site and Facebook page, but the information provided is more comprehensive. In Summer 2013, at least 37 shoreline county representatives were contacted to acquire specific information for pier fishing sites within their respective county. Counties, park systems, and local recreational departments had very little publicly-available information about the pier based fishing access in their communities, so it was up to our staff to seek out this information and write it for the website, which was a significant increase in work from the originally proposed model of having the locals upload and provide the information directly to the website.

There was trouble in mapping the sites accurately so the website had to be configured to use a more accurate location of geographical coordinates. In Fall 2013, additional work was done to improve the quality of the descriptions of the piers submitted to the website. After researching and posting many fish species available to anglers, there was some discussion about whether these fish were available within the counties of the pier locations. It was decided to leave the popular sport fish species *most likely* to be found at each location, though this is not necessarily *all* the species available; this can continue to be expanded upon in the future and as new sites are added. Due to the extended build out time to complete the website, the official “launch” of the project to the public happened more than two weeks after the April 1st starting date of the Michigan fishing season.

The originally proposed Facebook contest, mailings to MUCC members, and any broader promotion was not done within the grant time period and all the additional budget was devoted to staff time to research, add to, and amend the website. The

DNR has linked to the Pier Michigan site, which can be found at: www.michigan.gov/fishing → “Where can I fish?” → Pier Michigan.

The planned mailing to market the Pier Michigan website to ~20,000 MUCC members will go out as intended in December 2014, in combination with marketing the hard copy magazine to club members of affiliated clubs and organizations.

Outcomes

3. *What activities were pursued in relationship to intended outcomes, and to what extent did you achieve the following intended outcomes listed in your proposal? (Merge intended outcomes from proposal.)*

- Attracting new and retaining current Michigan anglers:
 - Creation of a central marketing tool to allow for increased access to both new and current users.
 - Outreach to partners and minimal Facebook and MUCC member promotion to help spread distribution of site.
 - There is a need for a greater outreach to anglers and potential anglers, particularly those that live in shoreline counties. The planned mailing to market the Pier Michigan website to ~20,000 MUCC members will go out as intended by December 2014, in combination with marketing the hard copy magazine to club members of affiliated clubs and organizations.

- Engaging urban shoreline communities in natural resource use and enjoyment:
 - Creation of a central marketing tool that communities can use in their outreach for tourism and public engagement.
 - There is still a need to promote this resource to the communities and the tourism industry.

- Engaging anglers in additional issues related to the Great Lakes fishery.
 - Website and Facebook page links to MUCC conservation education, especially as it pertains to Asian carp, invasive species and public engagement opportunities for Great Lakes fisheries decision-making.

4. *What audience(s) were you particularly hopeful of reaching? To what extent did you reach them? Did you receive any feedback?*

The targeted audience was anglers or potential anglers interested in finding easily accessible fishing locations that do not require boats or a lot of specialized equipment.

The project was successful in creating a site that presents that information in one central location. As the site expands its reach and is utilized by more people, the ripple effect will allow it to become even more useful. We expect future outreach and marketing efforts will continue to grow site traffic and use now that it is completed.

5. What relationships or opportunities were developed or strengthened through the work?

As part of this work, we have had conversations with the DNR about how we can work together to further communicate shoreline fishing opportunities. The DNR has linked to the Pier Michigan site, which can be found at: www.michigan.gov/fishing → “Where can I fish?” → Pier Michigan. We need to reconnect with them now that the project is completed about how we can jointly market this resource to the public.

An early meeting was held with the Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association, who has been more focused on legislative advocacy around protecting the Great Lakes and stopping invasive species such as Asian carp. Follow up is necessary to now discuss dissemination of this tool to their members and cross promotion opportunities.

6. Was an evaluation included as part of this project? If so, what were the key findings? (Please attach a copy of the evaluation report).

Attached is a copy of the Google Analytics for the Pier Michigan website, which shows 100% growth since the launch in April (~5 months). The analytics from the Pier Michigan Facebook page is also attached, which now boasts 480 “likes” from residents across the state, but particularly connecting with people from key urban locations such as Detroit, Grand Rapids, Muskegon and Chicago, IL.

7. Whether they were intended or unintended, what do you consider the most important benefits or outcomes of this stewardship project?

First, the site creates a one-stop shop for anyone looking to find a pier or shore-fishing location, leading to great access to the resource. It also greatly enhances awareness and understanding of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, its mission and projects. It also gives us a better platform to connect the GLFT and its sites as regional economic drivers by being tourism generators.

Related Efforts

8. Was this project a stand-alone effort or was there a broader effort beyond the part funded by the GLFT? Have other funders been involved either during the time of your GLFT grant or subsequently?

This was a stand-alone effort.

9. Has there been any spin-off work or follow-on work related to this project?

We have learned that the website for Pier Michigan and the Facebook page must be dynamic to be viewed and used by the intended audience. This requires an entity with staff dedicated to populating the social media with regular content, monitoring the website, evaluating the use of these pages, and ensuring that there are no technology failures. Additionally, there should be a larger and continued marketing and outreach effort.

MUCC looks forward to discussing the possibility of ongoing related work with the GLFT.

Communication/Dissemination

10. List publications, presentations, websites, and other forms of formal dissemination of the project deliverables, tools, or results, including those that are *planned* or *in process*.

Pier Michigan has its own website (www.piermichigan.org), Facebook page and Twitter account. As part of future marketing efforts, it can be featured in Michigan OutofDoors Magazine, MUCC.org, in MUCC's Conservation Insider weekly e-newsletter, on MUCC Facebook pages and on Mike Avery's Outdoor Radio.

Additional contact is planned with the Michigan Lodging and Tourism Association and others in the tourism industry.

11. Please characterize your efforts to distribute and encourage use of products, processes, programs, etc. developed through this grant.

MUCC has only just begun to disseminate the Pier Michigan website resource. It is now linked to the DNR's website and has a Facebook page to encourage and promote its use. It has been discussed with MUCC Board of Directors as well as attendees of MUCC's Annual Convention.

Reflections

12. Please describe any unanticipated benefits, challenges or surprises, and/or important lessons learned over the course of the project.

We learned that there is interest in shore-fishing opportunities, but a general lack of readily-available information for users, both in terms of access sites and in fishery information. The creation of the Pier Michigan site provides a much needed resource.

We also learned that we need to keep working to generate the buzz and to connect the site to other sites in order to achieve its full potential. This will not happen without dedicated resources.

13. What recommendations (if any) would you make to other project directors working on similar efforts, or to the GLFT?

We suggest expanding the project to include more sites and locations and potentially expanding the other types of access sites (both boating and inland fishing opportunities), as well as driving linkages to as many other websites and Facebook sites as possible.

GLFT staff can be helpful in disseminating this resource to other Great Lakes funders to provide the basis for a gap analysis of public fishing access to the Great Lakes and other water bodies.

Attachments

14. Please attach any reports or materials developed through the grant.