

Policy on Funding Habitat Protection and Restoration Projects

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) pursues habitat protection and restoration projects through a combination of directed and competitive grants. Funded activities may include protection, enhancement, and/or restoration of habitat; Great Lakes wetlands restoration; removal or modification of dams or barriers to restore fish passage and enhance connectivity; field inventories that identify barriers at the watershed scale in priority watersheds; engineering and design studies; and targeted acquisitions of land or easements to protect essential habitat. Also of priority are opportunities to support significant habitat efforts that may be beyond the scope of any single funder, including efforts to engage and educate communities about significant opportunities to improve habitat.

This policy establishes the criteria the GLFT will use to evaluate grant requests that provide fish passage around barriers or modify or remove dams and other barriers to restore connectivity and enhance the quality and quantity of riverine fisheries habitat.

FUNDING CRITERIA

- **Geographic eligibility:** The GLFT will consider project sites located in Michigan, as well as projects outside the state of Michigan but within the Lake Michigan basin that demonstrate regional significance. For a project to demonstrate regional significance it must present a broader impact to the basin and illustrate replicability across the Great Lakes basin.
- **Consistency with watershed management plans:** The GLFT will consider projects that demonstrate connection to local and regional watershed plans, river assessments, and accompanying management plans, or comparable management plans in place. The proposed project:
 - Must be consistent with the plan's fisheries, habitat, and water quality management objectives
 - Is subject to review for consistency with sea lamprey control plans and policies of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission
 - Must demonstrate benefit to:
 - Great Lakes fisheries
 - Great Lakes fisheries habitat, including physical and chemical improvements such as dissolved oxygen or temperature conditions associated with barrier modification or removal.
- **Species rehabilitation:** The GLFT will consider projects that facilitate rehabilitation of a Great Lakes fish species, including lake sturgeon, lake trout, lake whitefish, and other species that have been targeted by the GLFT for rehabilitation.

- **Property owner support:** Project must have the express written support of the property owner(s), operator(s), or easement holder(s). Local community support for the project is also preferred.
- **Funding participation:** GLFT grants will generally not exceed 50 percent of the total project cost for projects sponsored by tribal, state, or local government or by a nonprofit organization.
- **Project Assessment.** Projects supported by the GLFT must include an assessment of project success, consistent with the GLFT's grant application guidelines.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The level of GLFT funding participation will be based on the extent to which the project satisfies the following evaluation criteria:

- Michigan projects in any Great Lakes basin may be considered; however, the level of grant support may be greater for projects that primarily benefit the Lake Michigan basin. For projects within the Lake Michigan basin, but outside the state of Michigan, the proposal must demonstrate regional significance.
- The GLFT prefers to support projects that offer an increase in long-term, sustainable, natural reproduction for species currently supported by hatchery production.
- Project benefits should be targeted toward salmonids and non-salmonid predator game species. Projects that offer secondary benefits, such as improved sea lamprey management or protection of state-listed threatened or endangered species, may be supported at a greater funding level.

ELIGIBLE COSTS

- Construction costs and engineering fees are eligible for grant funding.
- Applicants may request that a greater portion of a GLFT grant award be allocated to engineering and design services in lieu of construction costs.
- Project components that provide public access for fishing or public education related to fisheries habitat restoration may also be considered for grant funding.

Approved by the GLFT Board of Trustees on August 11, 2026.