



HEALING OUR WATERS –
GREAT LAKES COALITION

Implementation Grant Program Outcomes and Successes

MEASURING PROGRESS

The Healing Our Waters–Great Lakes Coalition created the Implementation Grants Program in 2010 to help local organizations in the region participate in the federal Great Lakes restoration efforts and gain access to funding opportunities under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). The program helps groups fill a funding gap between a project idea and a complete proposal under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). As non-governmental organizations are seeing fewer resources for leveraging federal restoration grants, the HOW grant program steps in with relatively small awards that groups turn into large restoration proposals and projects. The grant program also helps to create local community buy in for, and ownership of, restoration work in those communities.

In creating the grant program, Coalition partner and grant program administrator Freshwater Future worked to put together a system for tracking its progress by determining the long-term cumulative outcomes and successes of the grants. The goal is to determine the results over many years not only of the project outcomes of individual grants, but the impacts on grantee organizations and on the ecosystem overall. These results include outcomes of individual grants, positive impacts on grantee organizations including increased capacity and enabling subsequent projects, and the cumulative impacts on the Great Lakes ecosystem. Because the intent of the grant program is to leverage larger awards, it is necessary to look at outcomes beyond the end of each HOW grant to evaluate the program’s success.

Tabulating outcomes of the program follow a rubric for assessing successes. This rubric lists standards that the program uses as benchmarks over the short term, medium term, and long term. This report examines some of the medium-term measures that the program has produced over several years, including restoration metrics, new efforts, and subsequent GLRI grants awarded to program grantees. These benchmarks are listed in Figure 1.



As part of a community engagement project by Michigan United Conservation Clubs, volunteers paddled through the Alpena Wildlife Sanctuary on kayaks, removing invasive frog-bit by hand. Photo courtesy of Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The HOW Grant program provides small grants to local groups to aid in the preparation of a full proposal under the GLRI—helping groups with work such as:

- Building Capacity
- Creating and fostering partnerships
- Adding administrative support
- Public engagement and community meetings
- Completing feasibility studies
- Completing engineering/design work
- Bolstering grant writing

In addition, the program also provides project assistance to groups already administering a GLRI grant, and, added later in the life of the program, assistance to groups doing community engagement around existing federal GLRI projects.

Examples of projects funded by the program include:

- St. Louis River Alliance received a \$10,000 grant in 2010, the first year of the program, for Piping Plover shorebird recovery. The grant helped the organization build capacity to work towards a larger grant application, including creating partnerships with at least 24 groups. St. Louis River Alliance and other groups were then able to apply for a multi-year grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and subsequently received \$250,000 for Piping Plover work. This work has led to recent

FIGURE 1: HOW GRANT PROGRAM BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS OVER THE MEDIUM-TERM

HOW IMPLEMENTATION GRANT PROGRAM BENCHMARKS OUTCOMES: YEARS 2-3			
Metrics of restoration in feet/ miles/acres of streams/wetlands/ shoreline/other	Number of restoration success stories to share with Congress- actual work completed	New restoration efforts building upon year 1 efforts	GLRI grants awarded to HOW grantees

observations that Piping Plovers are staying longer on Wisconsin and Minnesota Lake Superior beaches in many years.

- Huron Pines in northern Michigan has received several small grants from the HOW Grant Program. In 2012, the group received \$15,000 to expand the scope and impact of their conservation efforts in the Northern Saginaw Bay Watershed. The award allowed Huron Pines to create a priority map of sensitive ecosystems and then work closely with landowners and volunteers to complete several stream bank restoration projects. One stream bank erosion control project resulted in 600 feet of native plantings and eliminated an estimated 183 tons of annual sediment loading. The HOW grant helped Huron Pines to receive two subsequent GLRI grants and over \$900,000 total in funding that is allowing the group to complete habitat improvement projects, invasive species control, streambank erosion control, and fish passage restoration.
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs received a grant in 2014 to do community engagement around an existing GLRI grant. The group worked with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on a project to remove invasive European Frog-bit from waters near Michigan's Saginaw Bay. MUCC invited members of the public to volunteer directly on invasive species removal in the field — groups worked in boats to remove 2,472 pounds of the invasive plants from the water. This project spread awareness of GLRI work and encouraged Great Lakes stewardship among the community.

The full suite of assistance programs under the Implementation Grant Program provides a needed service to the Great Lakes restoration community and has shown to be a highly effective and productive form of encouraging and enabling restoration projects.

QUANTIFYING SUCCESS

In the 6th year of the program, prior grantees were surveyed to gather information to start assessing the benchmarks of success for the program. Grantees representing 25 projects (out of 52 projects) participated. While this does not give a complete account of the results of the program, it gives a sizable and in-depth overview of the work that has been accomplished. Responders to the survey include local and regional, small and large groups with varied resources and project experience. The survey includes grantees from the program's early years that have had more time to complete work, apply for and receive subsequent funding and see the results of larger restoration projects funded by the GLRI or other programs. It also includes recent grants that are in earlier stages of project work — they are still undergoing their original project or have submitted an application and are waiting for funding decisions. Because of the nature of federal grant cycles — requests for proposals under the GLRI are announced infrequently, with several months in between application deadlines and funding decisions, and the inherently long duration of restoration projects due to the seasonal nature of the work, permitting, etc. — the time horizon for seeing restoration results often becomes several years.

CONCEPTUAL
IMAGE



Flowing through the heart of downtown Grand Rapids, the Grand River lacks its historic rapids. Grand Rapids Whitewater received a 2013 grant from the HOW Grant Program to address a critical step towards bringing the rapids back. The conceptual image shows what the Grand River could look like, with its rapids restored. Photo courtesy of Grand Rapids Whitewater.



Ecological Restoration expert David Mindell leads a training for a Friends of the Detroit River project group. Photo courtesy of Friends of the Detroit River

“The HOW seed money jump-started the program just as we had hoped.” – WINOUS POINT MARSH CONSERVANCY

Thank you! [The] funding helped us bridge the gap between GLRI and Partners for Fish and Wildlife grants. We are grateful for the opportunity to continue our restoration work!” – KALAMAZOO NATURE CENTER

BUILDING CAPACITY

The results of the survey show promising implications for the grant program overall. In particular, the capacity building for community-based organizations is a critical part of the long-term success of restoration work generally. Restoration projects that are administered, executed and funded by federal and state agencies may produce important restoration results, but restoration projects that engage, incorporate and empower local people and organizations in the restoration work produce important restoration results and a sense of community pride and investment in those restoration outcomes. Overwhelmingly, respondents reported increases in organizational capacity: 83 percent of groups said they would not have been able to complete their work if not for the HOW grant they received. Increasing capacity for some groups has had dramatic results: in 2012, Minnesota Land Trust received a HOW grant of \$7,189 for projects focused on habitat restoration in and around the St. Louis River. The grant allowed Minnesota Land Trust to participate in meetings, build partnerships, and have the capacity to write grant proposals. The group went on to receive nearly \$10 million in subsequent funding for larger restoration projects in the St. Louis River, including over \$4 million from the GLRI. In 2013, the St. Louis River Alliance was able to keep an administrative staff due to their HOW grant. This allowed the group to produce a newsletter and build momentum

around their work — this public awareness led to bigger restoration projects for the group and higher impact in the St. Louis River estuary.

Survey participants were also asked to rate the impact HOW funding had on their projects on a scale from one to ten and the average rating was eight. While this is an attempt to quantify a qualitative outcome, the results are nonetheless important. Taking into account the fact that there are few other sources for these types of capacity building grants for groups in the Great Lakes region, the grants available from the HOW program are a significant part of the Great Lakes restoration process. There are few resources available to groups needing to get restoration projects off the ground, but projects that receive HOW grants often see tremendous success in putting together grant applications and receiving subsequent funding.

Examples of project outcomes:

- Grand Rapids White Water received a HOW Grant of \$18,293.10 in 2013. The grant helped the group perform a survey of the endangered snuffbox mussel in the Grand River in Michigan. The survey was necessary to move forward with the project and the HOW grant was critical in securing an expert to perform the work. The small grant received for the survey was a catalyst for larger awards, both for work around the endangered mussel and work towards the group’s ultimate goal of restoring the Grand River. The original grant from the HOW program leveraged over \$2.5 million in subsequent funding.
- Friends of the Detroit River has received several HOW grants since 2011 in support of a variety of projects benefiting the Detroit River Area of Concern, a designation given to highly polluted and degraded areas around the Great Lakes. Friends of the Detroit River has worked to create partnerships, perform comprehensive community outreach and develop applications; the work the group has done has already led to nearly \$8 million in subsequent funding, a large portion of which is from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The momentum from the original HOW grant has allowed the group to build upon its first project in 2011 and the group continues to work on Belle Isle and other locations in the Detroit River to remove the AOC’s Beneficial Use Impairments (prioritized issues preventing the river from optimal use) and improve the health of the Detroit River. Most recently, the group received a \$25 million partnership with NOAA for restoration projects
- Milwaukee Riverkeeper received a \$15,000 HOW grant for work towards removing impediments to fish passage in the Menomonee River in Milwaukee, Wis. The grant

allowed the group to invest in staff capacity including hiring a grant writer, and the group subsequently secured \$50,000 in funding for projects that will lead to thousands of acres of spawning habitat for Great Lakes fish species. Furthermore, the project led to the identification of an additional project to address a former channelized portion of the Little Menomonee River—this project was not part of the scope of the original HOW grant.

- The Alliance for Rouge Communities received a \$15,000 award in 2014. The group applied HOW funds toward a fish migration barrier inventory, barrier removal design, and riparian restoration design to help with several grant applications. Due to this work, the group received nearly \$4 million in subsequent funding for fish passage and oxbow restoration projects in and around Michigan’s Rouge River. These projects will be valuable for fish spawning and fish populations and will allow the Rouge River Area of Concern to move closer to removing habitat Beneficial Use Impairments.

MEASURING RESULTS

Perhaps the most tangible metrics in restoration projects are those of the on-the-ground work completed. Through surveys of HOW Grantees, we were able to tabulate these metrics from those who responded. While the respondents did not cover all grant recipients, the information received is still significant and shows the substantial progress made by these projects.

The results show:

- Over 195,758 land acres restored or projected to be restored
- Over 2,002 wetland acres restored or projected to be restored
- 60,895 linear feet (11.5 miles) of riverbank or shoreline restored or projected to be restored

We also asked grantees to share other significant restoration work completed with their projects. This includes:

- 26,000 native plants installed
- 25 woody debris barriers to fish removed, 125 barriers planned to be removed
- 58.4 upstream miles reconnected and 108 upstream miles to be reconnected
- 2,500 feet of restored Lake Michigan shoreline
- 45 acres of additional fish nursery
- 14.4 acres of potholes restored

Restoration work is ongoing, but these results show that significant projects are happening across the Great Lakes region, made possible by the HOW Grant Program.

GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING OUTCOMES

HOW has undertaken yearly assessments of the HOW Grant program to tabulate the direct outcomes of each year’s grantees. For grant program years 2010–2014, we have data on the number of GLRI projects grant recipients applied for and the amount of subsequent funding received (see Figure 2 on the following page). We have found that the return on investment for each cycle of grants has been significant, averaging 50 to 1 overall. Between 2010 and 2014, the



Friends of the Detroit River has leveraged grants from the HOW Grant Program into several restoration projects in the Detroit River. The photo on the left depicts a project on the west end of Belle Isle: an excavator on a barge moves sediment from one location to another in the Blue Heron Lagoon. By changing the depth of the water column, a variety of habitats are being created. The photo on the right shows native species planted around Blue Heron Lagoon, both in and around the water. Native wildlife will be able to thrive thanks to the work of student volunteers. Photos courtesy of Friends of the Detroit River.

FIGURE 2: HOW GRANT PROGRAM FUNDING OUTCOMES BY YEAR

This chart shows the subsequent GLRI and other funding received by grantees as a result of HOW grants, including total applications, awards, and funding amounts. 83 percent of grantees surveyed said they would not have been able to complete their projects without the help of a HOW grant — a significant portion of additional funds from GLRI or other sources might never have been awarded to these groups without the support of the HOW Grant Program.

	2010 Program	2011 Program	2012 Program	2013 Program	2014 Program (to date)	Cumulative Totals
Total GLRI Funding Leveraged	\$1,693,963	\$1,079,050	\$5,803,000	\$501,000	\$11,791,480	\$20,868,493
Total Other Funding Leveraged	\$4,215,832	\$499,721	\$5,810,813	\$2,791,000	\$202,500	\$13,276,866
Total Funding Leveraged Overall	\$5,909,795	\$1,578,771	\$11,613,813	\$3,292,000	\$11,993,980	\$34,145,359
Total GLRI Applications	12	10	8	4	10	44
Total GLRI Awards	6	3	7	2	7	25
Total HOW Grant Expenditures	\$200,000	\$133,000	\$145,000	\$100,000	\$104,000	\$682,000
Total Return on Investment	29:1	12:1	80:1	33:1	115:1	50:1

Coalition’s \$682,000 in grants led to awards of \$34,145,359 — and results from the 2014 program are still coming in. GLRI projects were a significant portion of these new projects: grantees for these five years submitted 44 applications, receiving 25 awards from those applications. The total amount of money received from the GLRI was \$20,868,493. These numbers alone show the capacity building enabled by the grant program, and it is important to note that many grantees shared that their group would not have been able to complete grant applications without the support of the HOW Coalition.

Beyond the money raised and restoration work completed, many HOW grant projects led to an additional benefit: the discovery of a new project that was not part of the original grant scope. In the course of activities like performing research, building partnerships, or meeting with the public, these groups identified a new project that was not part of the original project funded by HOW, and in many cases were able to pursue that project as well. Out of those surveyed, 57 percent said that they had discovered a new project due to activities under the original HOW grant project. Again, this demonstrates not only the need for this type of capacity-building and foundational work, it also shows that there continues to be more restoration work to be done in the Great Lakes.

LOOKING FORWARD: ADVANCING GREAT LAKES RESTORATION

The HOW Grant Program has helped numerous groups build capacity, create partnerships, complete projects, and put together funding proposals under the GLRI and other programs. Many of these groups have received subsequent grant awards for their work, producing significant return on HOW’s original investment overall. On top of these monetary outcomes, these groups have produced measurable restoration outcomes, including tens of thousands of acres restored and miles of shoreline or riverbank restored. There are qualitative benefits as well: the capacity to involve the community in a project, lasting partnerships, the ability to retain staff and hire grant writers. This support is important to groups of all sizes as there are fewer and fewer resources available for organizational capacity and grant writing. As the amount of money available for restoration projects is increasingly directed at larger and more expensive projects, such as cleaning up toxic areas of concern, less money is going to smaller grants. With this shift in funding priorities, the HOW Grant Program plays a critical role in providing non-governmental organizations with the opportunity to engage in increasingly competitive, smaller-scale restoration work.

(Cover, top image) As part of a community engagement project by Michigan United Conservation Clubs, volunteers were trained on how to recognize invasive frog-bit, and how to successfully remove it. Photo courtesy of Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

(Cover, bottom image) HOW grantee Minnesota Land Trust received funding that led to restoration work in the St. Louis River's severely impaired Radio Tower Bay. Photo courtesy of Celia Haven.

(Top) Boat washing stations were set up by Michigan United Conservation Clubs to demonstrate practices that avoid spreading frog-bit. Photo courtesy of Michigan United Conservation Clubs.

(Bottom) Friends of the Detroit River has leveraged grants from the HOW Grant Program into several restoration projects in the Detroit River. This photo depicts an aerial view of one project, construction of the south fishing pier near Belle Isle. The various shoals and the changes of depth in water are all visible in this photograph. Photo courtesy of Friends of the Detroit River.



Healing Our Waters® –Great Lakes Coalition
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The Healing Our Waters–Great Lakes Coalition consists of more than 140 environmental, conservation, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people, whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes. Learn more at www.healthylakes.org or follow us on Twitter @healthylakes.

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