

Project Profile

Woodlands & Waters—*Three Tiers of Stakeholder Engagement in the Heart of the Great Lakes*

Grantee Organization: Huron Pines

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Project Summary

Huron Pines built on existing partnerships and fostered new relationships to provide opportunity and support for citizens (K-12 students, adults and Michigan leaders) in Northeast Michigan to become Great Lakes and environmentally literate citizens. Through hands-on stewardship projects, ecosystems tours, and connections between students and leaders/adults, participants increased their ability to tackle the challenges and opportunities facing the Great Lakes basin. This project strengthened the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NEMI GLSI) network by supporting over (300) students and (25) teachers in implementing stewardship projects, engaging (100) adults in conservation learning and actions, and fostering an understanding of the importance of protecting the Great Lakes in over (50) community leaders.

Project in Context

Three tiers of citizens were identified as key to accomplishing the goal of a citizenry that has the knowledge and skills to tackle the challenges and opportunities facing the Great Lakes basin: K-12 students, adults and Michigan leaders. Project activities within each tier were developed to increase the participants access to learning in the context of natural resources, understanding of the value of natural resources, and connecting stewardship to a sense of place. When possible, these activities also linked the tiers by encouraging sharing and learning among the tiers. The need for the work with students was identified in coordination with the NEMI GLSI network as a gap existed in the network's ability to reach counties across the northeast region, in particular inland counties. The need for the work with adults and Michigan leaders was identified through Huron Pines' on-going work in restoration and community engagement that require public support and ecological understand of citizens. The diverse landscapes of Michigan's northeast lower peninsula provided a powerful context for this work to take place in and the unique communities that live in these landscapes are better poised to protect the Great Lakes basin.

Goals of the Effort

1. K-12 Students: This project met a critical gap identified by Huron Pines and our NEMI GLSI partners in implementing place-based stewardship education (PBSE) across our region. PBSE enhances learning, improves schools, offers community development opportunities and empowers students to be active stewards of the region's natural resources. PBSE allows adults and Michigan leaders to learn from students' experiences and efforts while students are learning from different

perspectives and expertise than their teachers alone can provide. The project aimed to reach at least 6 schools and 150 students through PBSE and bolster existing NEMI GLSI efforts.

2. Adults: This project reached new adult audiences from silent sports and hunters/anglers to gardeners and private landowners. Because these people enjoy natural resources, they are key people to empower in protecting the environment and preserving the experiences and wild places they love. The key piece of engaging this group of citizens is recognizing that each individual and group has their own motivation and established value system that will impact how they become environmentally literate and active stewards of the Great Lakes. The project aimed to engage new audiences of adults (groups and individuals) in the use of citizen science tools and events that would foster conservation learning and actions.
3. Michigan leaders: Through this project, township, county and state officials and decision-makers participated in hands-on learning opportunities that increased understanding of the science of ecosystem restoration, the value of natural resources and the importance of continued investment in the health of the Great Lakes. These learning opportunities provided leaders from different organizations and levels of government time and space to have conversation and realize common goals in light of a natural resource challenge or opportunity. The project aimed to reach at least 10 elected officials and foster learning between and with students and adults.

Results

- (331) students and (14) teachers from (6) schools engaged in stewardship projects such as invasive species removal and monitoring, forest management, and water quality protection through rain gardens.
- (18) teachers and (26) community partners participated in a pilot Fall NEMI GLSI Network Meeting that reached previously underserved schools and community partners.
- (27) elected officials and community leaders participated in ecosystems tours that encouraged conversation about the importance of public lands, threatened and endangered species, and how their decisions impact conservation efforts.
- More than (25) elected official and community leaders participated in presentations, facilitated discussions and planning meetings to highlight project efforts and sustain stewardship efforts beyond the grant period.
- (100) adults participated in learning opportunities and stewardship projects aimed at increasing their understanding of the connection between the activities they enjoy in the outdoors and the stewardship of the resources that allow them to do that activity.

Products and Resources

Landscape Stewardship Stories were developed to reflect stewardship actions taken by private individuals. Through this project, the northern hardwoods and jack pine story categories were produced and can be found at stewardshipstories.org.

Three case studies were produced to highlight efforts in three different geographies where on-the-ground conservation and stakeholder groups involvement were highly successful. These can be found at huronpines.org/publications.