



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 a general audience. 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:**

Wild Indigo Watershed Community Leadership Initiative

■ **Grantee Organization:**

Audubon Great Lakes

■ **Project Team**

Jeremiah Steen, Troy Peters, Carina Ruiz

■ **Contact Person**

Audubon Great Lakes:

Troy Peters troy.peters@audubon.org

Carina Ruiz carina.ruiz@audubon.org

■ **Grant Amount:**

\$51,640

■ **Time Frame:**

5/1/2019 – 1/31/2021

■ **Focus Area**

Stewardship

- **Brief Project Summary** (In 100 words or less, provide a summary of the project, including its purpose and key results.)

Working on Detroit's East Side, Audubon Great Lakes' Wild Indigo Nature Explorations program worked to build community appreciation of wetland ecology and support for their restoration along the Detroit River. This project developed a series of events that, via community science, recreation, and stewardship, fostered a pathway of opportunities to develop a deeper connection to wildlife along the upper Detroit River. With community partners, a local Detroit Wild Indigo Coordinator led a cohort of ten teen interns and two young-adult fellows to advocate for healthy watersheds in the region through community stewardship.

Project in Context

This orientation to the project should provide key background information on its purpose, location (where appropriate), and broader significance. You may wish to consider:

- Background research identifying a need for the work
- Stakeholder identification of a need for the work
- Specific focus of the work as it relates to Great Lakes ecology/resources
- Relationship to other, related products/services/programs
- Intended audience/population to be served

Besides important functions wetlands play for wildlife and the overall ecological health of the Great Lakes, they also provide important benefits for human communities along the lake. Despite the intense development along the river's shorelines and tributaries today, the Detroit River still provides important habitat for fish and migratory marsh birds and waterfowl. Meanwhile, communities of color make up substantial blocks within urban communities across the Basin, and yet they have often been left out of conservation discussions which imperials decades-long efforts to clean up the Detroit River watershed.

In order to sustain and strengthen the durable public will for conservation efforts in the Great Lake fisheries and watershed, we must ensure that communities of color in Michigan's most populous region are engaged in the positive impacts wetland habitats that provide for fish, birds, and people. To increase this engagement AGL focused its Wild Indigo Detroit program efforts primarily in East Side neighborhoods near the Upper Riverfront Parks. The Wild Indigo program is a framework for collaboratively designing nature-based educational activities that reestablish lasting connections between communities of color and local natural areas.

Goals of the Effort

In this section, identify the key goals and/or the specific purpose of the effort.

The goal of the work was to empower residents of Detroit's East Side to be advocates for wetlands critical to the health of their community through a series of capacity-building workshops about riparian watersheds. This project builds on Audubon Great Lakes' wetland restoration efforts.

To this end, the Detroit Wild Indigo Coordinator engaged East Side residents in activities in natural areas of the park along the river. Many of these areas are in the process of being restored by the City of Detroit and other partners. Building on these efforts The Wild Indigo program proposed to co-design outdoor community events that target diverse multi-generational audiences. Programs incorporated community

interests and concerns of the community (health, safety, education, and heritage, etc.), to demonstrate links between clean water, healthy fisheries, and birds, habitats while providing opportunities for stewardship and local advocacy.

Wild Indigo staff coordinated events that combine outdoor recreation with experiential learning, and urban environmental priorities to build deeper connections between communities and natural habitats along the Detroit River. Additionally, these events will include a workshop component that prepares participants to share the information they have learned to share with their social networks.

Results

In this section, briefly identify and summarize the key findings or results of the project (products developed, outreach engaged in, participation/use of materials achieved, feedback received).

Active participation in the program events demonstrated the need and interest of youth, young adults, and families to participate in accessible nature programming. In spite of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, Wild Indigo connected with over 440 people (70 in-person and 370 virtually) through 11 activities (7 in-person events, 4 virtual events) in Detroit, MI; including teens internship program and a young adults fellowship experience. This work focused on developing a series of programs and experiences that connect education about watershed ecology and local concerns about access to greenspaces.

Products and Resources

List and provide addresses for related websites that provide additional information or were developed for or through the project. Provide site title, full address, and a brief (one to two sentence) description of the relevant content.

List any other communications outlets, publications, media coverage, etc. for the work. If these are available online, please hyperlink the listing. Items that are planned or in process should be so designated.

Links to Presentation, program photos

- WI Youth position description, Interns [video](#) and program [Images](#) and Belle Isle Conservancy [Facebook post](#)
-The Wild Indigo teen interns produced a video and share about the lessons learned during their stewardship internship program experience on Belle Isle. The Belle Isle Conservancy highlights the efforts of the teen interns on their social medial outlet.
- WI Fellow Position description, and Project Proposals
-Dahlia Carmona created video highlighting her Community Project [Presentation](#) and outlines her engagement project with community partner, Detroit Mercy.
- WI Girl Scout [presentation](#)
-The Wild Indigo program developed a partnership with the Girl Scouts to develop a Wild Indigo Patch; the video highlights a girl scouts program experience.

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Background/Overview

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

The proposed project sought to build multigenerational environmental advocates of color by building on their existing knowledge of coastal habitats. Work will empower residents of Detroit's East Side to be advocates critical to the health of their community through a series of capacity building workshops about riparian watersheds.

The Wild Indigo program is a framework for collaboratively designing nature-based educational activities that reestablish lasting connections between communities of color and local natural areas. To this end, the Detroit Wild Indigo Coordinator will engage East Side residents in activities in natural areas the park along the river.

Building on these efforts Wild Indigo will co-design outdoor community events will target diverse multi-generational audiences. Programs will incorporate community interests and concerns of the community (health, safety, education, and heritage, etc.), to demonstrate links between clean water, healthy fisheries, and birds habitats, while providing opportunities for stewardship and local advocacy.

Wild Indigo staff will coordinate a series of 4 events (with at least two cycles over the year) that combine outdoor recreation with experiential learning, and urban environmental priorities to build deeper connections between communities and natural habitats along the Detroit River. Additionally, these events will include a workshop component that prepares participants who attend 3 of 4 sessions to share information they have learned to share with their social networks.

The 4 sessions will be held on a monthly basis with participants will be encouraged to conduct their presentations to groups in their respective networks (schools, churches, clubs, neighborhood groups, etc.) within two months after the culminating event.

The event series will include sessions like the following:

- Birding by kayak event that will highlight opportunities for aquatic recreation. It will introduce the concept of community science, and wildlife as an indicator of environmental health. Event address concerns around lack of access for communities of color to water-based activities will work to reduce barriers to participation and provide opportunities to increase their connection to local watersheds via positive experiences.
- Guided wetland nature walk will introduce wetland ecosystems, native flora, aquatic, and avian species. This STEM education event will feature a macroinvertebrate identification activity to discuss water quality impacts on food webs and include a water quality test strip demonstration.
- Riverbank clean-up event will demonstrate civic ecology and local stewardship. Event will highlight threats to local ecosystems and our impacts on them, focusing on relationships between birds and fish species within wetland habitats. Session will include a fishing demonstration and share best practices for responsible fishing in local parks.

- Green infrastructure planting event will feature native plants in local community gardens to activate a discussion on the connection between wetlands, native plants, and the reduction of neighborhood flooding during storms. Event will include partner Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ) session sharing resources to take local action in support of improved green infrastructure.

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?

The project was able to build community appreciation for Detroit wetland ecology, however, the path to reach that goal had to be adjusted. First, the loss of the original Wild Indigo Coordinator delayed the execution of the project as Audubon relaunched the hiring process for a new, Detroit local, Wild Indigo Coordinator. Further, the original plan had to be modified did not because a Covid-19 pandemic swept the nation and in-person restrictions were imposed in the city of Detroit this caused us to pause, assess, and move forward the project outcomes abiding by CDC recommendations. Where Wild Indigo would traditionally serve large groups in public programs, the ability to reach larger groups was hindered due to following safety guidelines by engaging no more than 10 people at a time. This created a more intimate engagement experience with the community and resulted in the empowerment of 10 teen stewardship interns at Belle Isle. Lastly, as a result of the economic impacts of the pandemic a planned partnership with Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice was not realized, and instead allowed us to build a partnership with University of Detroit Mercy that resulted in the engagement with 2 young-adult Wild Indigo Fellows who are implementing community projects.

Outcomes

1. *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.)*

Wild Indigo Outcomes and Impact

2020 Program Engagement Achievements (during grant period):

In spite of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, Wild Indigo connected with over 440 people (70 in-person and 370 virtually) through 11 activities (7 in-person events, 4 virtual events) in Detroit, MI.

This work focused on developing a series of programs and experiences that connect education about watershed ecology and local concerns about access to greenspaces.

Report of grant metrics.

1. Coordinate and execute eight interpretive recreation and stewardship activities – 7 of 8 interpretive events facilitated.
2. Engage 700 participants from Detroit’s East Side – 440 people of 700 people engaged directly.

3. Develop four partnerships with community partners that are not typically engaged with conservation
4 of four partnerships developed with the MOCAD Teen Council, AfroFuture Youth Program, and Chapel Vision CDC, University of Detroit Mercy/Detroit Collaborative Design Center
4. Fulfill 800 community science and natural stewardship hours – 300 hours.
5. Develop 20 community ambassadors to engage their networks with messages tailored to the community – 12 ambassadors developed (10 teens and 2 young adults)

2020 Program Highlights:

- Piloted a Teen Internship in Detroit in July. This week-long youth-focused experiential internship program engaged 10 local teens to build ecological awareness through stewardship, nature exploration, and leadership skills development at the Belle Isle Nature Center. Here is a video highlighting the impact of Wild Indigo from our Detroit program participants:
<https://vimeo.com/468175662>
- Working Detroit Mercy University, 2 Wild Indigo Fellowships were offered to 2 students to build on Wild Indigo community engagement and science communication of water related projects. Fellowship description and Fellow presentation. Fellow, Dahlia Carmona, created video highlighting her Community Project [Presentation \(onenote:#GLFT%20-%20FINAL%20REPORT§ion-id={6B1AD80F-DA8A-4E5D-B776-3460BB0E77CE}&page-id={77DA96FB-F1B7-4060-A799-763D80963E90}&object-id={3DD8FFD7-363F-44F2-B0E3-7FD23BCA8461}&1C&base-path=https://audsoc-my.sharepoint.com/personal/cruiz_audubon_org/Documents/](#) (and outlines her engagement project with community partner, Detroit Mercy).
- Working with the Girl Scouts of Southeastern MI, we coordinated a backyard bioblitz in July and August, during which over 300 Girl Scouts identified specific plant or animal species in their backyard or local parks. They then used a species-identifying app or guidebook to identify the species and learn everything they could about it. The girls then did an in-depth study: counting, coloring, and gathering information. Then they shared video presentations to earn newly developed Wild Indigo Nature Explorer patches.

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

The project aimed to reach multigenerational audiences with a focus on youth and young adults. The youth shared their feedback and program experience in a video they produced [here \(https://vimeo.com/468175662\)](https://vimeo.com/468175662). Further, the Belle Isle Conservancy shared their appreciation for the stewardship support and youth engagement in a social media [post \(https://m.facebook.com/BelleIsleConservancy/posts/10157930996483743\)](https://m.facebook.com/BelleIsleConservancy/posts/10157930996483743) Lastly, a new relationship was developed with the University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit Collaborative Design Center, which resulted in a fellowship experience with two Detroit locals communicating and implanting water related projects in their school and community.

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

A new relationship with Detroit Mercy was developed to help strengthen existing youth-led environmental efforts by connecting them to science professors and Audubon Great Lakes

science and engagement staff. This allowed the Fellows to network with conservation professionals and build their facilitation experience through the partnership program.

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

An exit survey was administered to the 10 youth participants and the findings showed that the youth engaged demonstrated an interest for a longer engagement experiences, more hands on stewardship, and stipends. It also highlighted how lack of transportation and lack of accessible bathrooms are existing barriers to accessing the Belle Isle location for teens.

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

The most important outcome was the engagement of youth at Belle Isle and providing them with the opportunity to be in a safe environment where they worked during a time where fear and stress brought on by Covid-19 and social unrest. This effort provided a space for collective wellness while also working to heal the land. The youth learned about how racism not only affects people, but also the environment, and took action by stewarding Belle Isle over the summer. Additionally, the partnership with University of Detroit Mercy, was also a result of unintended pandemic fallout, as the change in leadership at Detroiters Working for Environment Justice caused the organization to not have the capacity to follow through with support for this project. This resulted in a pathway experience that engaged teens and young adults with STEM, place-based community efforts leading to the exposure and development of the next generation of Detroit stewards.

Related Efforts

6. *Was this project a standalone 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?*

There was a broader effort to support the project with the support of the Peslar foundation, and has fostered conversations with Michigan Department of Natural Resources that look like they will garner funding for the program in Detroit, and potentially other parts of the state.

7. *Has there been any spinoff work or follow-up work related to this project?*

Yes, this project and the development of Wild Indigo youth interns and fellows has encouraged Wild Indigo Coordinators in Chicago, and Milwaukee to plans similar projects.

Communication/Dissemination

8. *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.*
9. *Please characterize your efforts to distribute and encourage use of products, processes, programs, etc. developed through this grant.*

- WI Youth position description, Interns [video](https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/peygsr1x7426dtvhef7jj9sjawci24m9) (<https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/peygsr1x7426dtvhef7jj9sjawci24m9>) and program [Images](https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/wq8fmbj84b3d36744rf1khyihdd1tyt) (<https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/wq8fmbj84b3d36744rf1khyihdd1tyt>) and Belle Isle Conservancy [Facebook post](https://www.facebook.com/BelleIsleConservancy/posts/10157930996483743) (<https://www.facebook.com/BelleIsleConservancy/posts/10157930996483743>)
 - The Wild Indigo teen interns produced a video and share about the lessons learned during their stewardship internship program experience on Belle Isle. The Belle Isle Conservancy highlights the efforts of the teen interns on their social medial outlet.
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- WI Girl Scout [presentation](https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/6eyi8n2x3urter0mfe1i7209xuviaai0) (<https://nationalaudubon.box.com/s/6eyi8n2x3urter0mfe1i7209xuviaai0>)
 - The Wild Indigo program developed a partnership with the Girl Scouts to develop a Wild Indigo Patch; the video highlights a girl scouts program experience.

Reflections

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

The Covid-19 outbreak curtailed the ability to coordinate in-person spring events as planned. Beyond the common barriers that made it difficult for our target audiences to access outdoor natural areas—like transportation or lack of awareness—the issues related to the Covid-19 health and economic crisis created tremendous insecurity for the communities served.

Wild Indigo Coordinators have been in ongoing communication with our community partners across the Great Lakes region about community challenges during the pandemic. These include food insecurity, economic insecurity, the need for educational materials for programs working with young people remotely, and broader health concerns. We have identified nature-based activities as a particular method for managing stress that has resulted from the health and economic crises facing these communities.

These concerns were factored into the contingent execution of programs region-wide, and in Detroit in particular. The importance of accessible quality greenspaces for fostering healthy sustainable communities has been a driving focus of both messaging for this project and the project outputs. In this way, by connecting these challenges, birds' need for habitat oases, and residents' need for environmentally healthier spaces will be part of long-term solutions to immediate community crises.

Lastly, an unanticipated surprise was the ability to build a pathway of opportunities that engaged children (through the partnership with the Girls Scouts/Wild Indigo patch); teens (through the intern's program that took place in Belle Isle); and young adults (through the fellowship in partnership with the University of Detroit Mercy). These programs were

developed intimately with each group to accommodate Covid-19 safety measures, but ultimately established a framework for engagement which in turn served to inform other Wild Indigo programming in the Great Lakes Region.

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

Representation is an important factor and should be top of mind where possible. The Coordinators of this project were intentionally recruited from the communities the Wild Indigo Nature Exploration program was looking to work in. Another key recommendation for other project directors is the importance of including community voice/partners in the project from the inception of the program. By incorporating community input into the program early, we increase the cultural relevance for participants.