

**MICHIGAN RADIO
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN**

**Final Narrative Report
Great Lakes Fishery Trust
May 31, 2014**

Background/Overview

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

The Environment Report at Michigan Radio implemented the *Great Lakes Reporting Project*, which was a news and information project that promoted public awareness, appreciation, and concern for the changing ecology of the Great Lakes and its fish population. Over the course of two years, Michigan Radio produced and aired public radio news reports; developed multimedia and online resources; held public forums/discussions; and distributed copies of the media work as educator resources. The Great Lakes Fishery Trust was recognized for its support following each story aired for the project. The message read, "Support for *The Environment Report* comes from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust."

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

Yes, this project was completed as originally intended and we feel that the original expectations were realistic. One factor that was particularly helpful was that our reporters consulted with numerous fisheries experts to gain insight into the latest research for the stories, especially the climate change series.

Outcomes

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

Since our last progress report in April 2013, we have completed the grant activities and achieved the intended outcomes as outlined in our proposal. Specifically, *The Environment Report* produced and aired its second, five-part radio series, produced and aired nine feature reports, convened its second town hall meeting, and distributed 44 CD copies of the stories to educators. Overall, we achieved the following intended outcomes over the course of the two-year grant period:

- To produce and air eight public radio feature reports.
 1. *March 19, 2013 – [A New Life for Waste from Michigan's Lumbering Era](#) (4min), by Rebecca Williams*
 2. *March 26, 2013 – [Michigan Chefs Experiment with Asian Carp](#) (4min), by Peter Payette*
 3. *Thursday, April 11, 2013 – [A surprising comeback for Lake Huron's native fish](#) (4 min), by Peter Payette*
 4. *Tuesday, May 28, 2013 – [The curious history of a tasty little Great Lakes fish](#) (4min), by Peter Payette*
 5. *Thursday, May 30, 2013 – [Prehistoric fish species with 'personalities' get help from humans to survive](#) (4 min), by Lindsey Smith (with photos online)*

6. Thursday, July 11, 2013 – [Unlocking the secrets of sea lamprey love](#) (4 min), by Rebecca Williams (with photos online)
 7. Thursday, August 29, 2013 – [Hunting for plastic pollution in the Great Lakes](#) (4min), by Lewis Wallace (with photos online)
 8. Thursday, September 5, 2013 – [A good summer for raising baby sturgeon in northern Michigan](#) (4 min), by Lindsey Smith
 9. Tuesday, October 8, 2013 – [Algal blooms causing concern in northern lakes](#) (4min), by Peter Payette
 10. November 5, 2013 – [Lake Erie has 2% of the water in the Great Lakes, but 50% of the fish](#), by Mark Brush (with video online)
 11. Thursday, December 12, 2013 – [Go Lake trout! Native fish overcome seemingly “insurmountable” challenges in Lake Huron](#) (4min), by Peter Payette (with photos and video online)
- To produce and air two, five-part special radio series.
 1. *Media series I: Asian Carp and the Great Lakes*
 - *September 10, 2012 – [Separating the Basins \(Part One\)](#)* (4 min), by Adam Allington
 - *September 11, 2012 – [Industries Worry about Basins Separation \(Part Two\)](#)* (4 min), by Adam Allington (with photos online)
 - *September 12, 2012 – [Other Pathways for Carp \(Part Three\)](#)* (4 min), by Rebecca Williams (with photos online)
 - *September 13, 2012 – [What if the Carp Make a Home Here? \(Part Four\)](#)* (4 min), by Rebecca Williams (with photo online)
 - *September 14, 2012 – [Investing in Carp \(Part Five\)](#)* (4 min), by Adam Allington (with photo online)
 2. *Media series II: In Warm Water: Fish and the Changing Great Lakes*
 - *Monday, September 30, 2013 – [A chilly Lake Superior warms up](#)* (4min), by Jess Mador (with photos online)
 - *Tuesday, October 1, 2013 – [Great Lakes fish on a diet](#)* (4min), by Chuck Quirnbach (with photos online)
 - *Wednesday, October 2, 2013 – [A mystery at the bottom of the Great Lakes food web](#)* (4min., 1sec.), by David Summerstein (with photos online)
 - *Thursday, October 3, 2013 – [Too warm for your fried perch dinner?](#)* (4min), by Jennifer Jordan (with photos online)
 - *Friday, October 4, 2013 – [Warmer waters fuel toxic algal blooms in the Great Lakes](#)* (4min), by Rebecca Williams (with photos and videos online)
 - To provide online resources for each radio report/series.
Each radio report/series, was posted to the Michigan Radio website with accompanying photographs and a space for comments (links for each story are provided above). The stories were also shared via Facebook (“Michigan Radio”) and Twitter (“@MichiganRadio”).
 - To produce two, multi-media online features.
 1. September 12, 2012 – [VIDEO: Keeping Asian carp out of the Great Lakes in Indiana](#), by Mercedes Mejia
 2. November 5, 2013 – [VIDEO: Lake Erie has 2% of the water in the Great Lakes, but 50% of the fish](#), by Mark Brush

- To hold two public forums.

1. *Issues & Ale: Asian Carp in the Great Lakes, September 18, 2012*

Approximately 60 people attended the event at the Kirby House in Grand Haven from 6-7:30pm. Panelists included Dr. Carl Ruetz - Grand Valley State University, Tammy Newcomb - Michigan DNR Fisheries Research Program, and Denny Grinold – owner Old Grin Sport Fishing. Rebecca Williams from *The Environment Report* served as moderator. In our panel discussion, we talked about everything from how to identify the four species of Asian carp that officials are concerned about, to ways that carp might enter the Great Lakes, to measures that are being taken to try to keep the carp out. The panelists weighed-in on how environmental DNA is used to test waters for the presence of carp, and talked about potential negative impacts carp might have if they become established in the region. The audience also participated in a survey via audience polling technology. A [video](#) from the event is posted on our website.

2. *Issues & Ale: Fish and the Changing Great Lakes, October 1, 2013*

Approximately 45 people attended the event at Mark Ridley’s Comedy Castle in Royal Oak from 7-8:30pm (admission was free to the public). Host of *The Environment Report* Rebecca Williams led the discussion, along with three panelists: Marc Smith - Senior Policy Manager, National Wildlife Federation; Ed Rutherford - Research Fishery Biologist, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory; and Dave Spangler - Lake Erie charter boat captain / President - Lake Erie Waterkeeper. The discussion looked at changing water levels in the Great Lakes, the impact that warmer weather is having on fish and fishing, and the cause and impact of harmful algal blooms that are creating dead zones in the lakes. A [video](#) from the event is posted on our website:

- To distribute audio and visual resources to Michigan educators.

In January 2014, Michigan Radio distributed 44 CD copies of the stories at no cost to schools, libraries, GLSIs, and others throughout Michigan and in Ohio, Wisconsin and Ontario. We worked with Tom Occhipinti, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Joan Chadde, Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education, to spread the word about the availability of this resource. Tom and Joan spread the word via listserves (i.e., MAEOE, Michigan Matters, ICCARS), DEQ-EE website, and the MAEOE conference. We also made GLFT aware of the CDs and mailed several copies. Please see attachment for a list of organizations that requested CDs.

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

The *Great Lakes Reporting Project* reached a broad audience through Michigan Radio’s three signals, which span thirty-one counties in the southern half of Lower Michigan, from Grand Rapids (WVGR 104.1 FM), to Ann Arbor and Detroit (WUOM 91.7 FM), to Flint (WFUM 91.1 FM). More than 500,000 people tune-in to Michigan Radio each week while in their car, at home, at work, etc. In addition, Michigan Radio serves a virtual audience through its website (220,000 unique visitors/month) and social media sites (54,800 combined fans/followers on Facebook and Twitter). Stories from the project were also broadcast on Interlochen Public Radio (IPR), which extended the reach of the program to an additional 23,000 weekly listeners in

Northwest Lower Michigan in the Manistee (WLMN 89.7 FM), Traverse City (WICA 91.5 FM), and Harbor Springs (WHPB 90.1 FM) areas.

In order to determine how many people were touched by the *Great Lakes Reporting Project* in particular, we can share several figures. It is estimated that 28,900 people listened to each report that aired on Michigan Radio (National Regional Database; FA13; 6a-10a/4-7p AQH). There were also an average of 1,353 pageviews/story on the Michigan Radio website. In addition, the stories generated some discussion on social media and on the website as well. For example, here are some website comments written in response to Peter Payette's story, "Curious history of tasty little Great Lakes fish":

- "Great angle on a Great Lakes/fishery story! Not really a Bloody Mary fan, and I'm pretty sure putting a smoked fish in it won't change that, but love that you covered this." – MyGirlFermi
- "I personally did some really neat research on this exact question in Lake Michigan, as related to the potential that bloater eggs were being consumed before they could hatch, limiting their recruitment to populations. Chuck helped me out quite a bit, here are the articles: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi...> and: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/s...>" – Justin G. Mychek-Londer.

In addition, more than 100 people participated in the two town hall forums that took place in Grand Haven in September 2012 and Royal Oak in October 2013. And, lastly, the three stories written by Allan Allington and edited by Rebecca Williams won a regional Edward R. Murrow Award in the "news series" category from the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA).

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

As a result of the *Great Lakes Reporting Project*, host of *The Environment Report* Rebecca Williams developed beneficial relationships with several research units, including NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory. In addition, Michigan Radio developed a relationship with DEQ Environmental Education Coordinator Thomas M. Occhipinti and MAEOE Board Member Joan Chadde, who assisted in promoting the project's CD resources to educators throughout the state. They were a tremendous help, and we hope that we can work together again in the future on similar outreach efforts.

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)*

An evaluation was not included as part of this project. Please see *Question 4* for audience metrics.

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

As a news organization, Michigan Radio can't solve the ecological problems facing the Great Lakes; but, perhaps more than any other resource, public radio has the ability to bring these issues to the attention of general audiences, legislators and community leaders who can take action and make positive change. The William Penn Foundation and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation may have said it best in a 2011 report⁴:

“[...] the bottom line is that few, if any, community challenges can be faced, or local issues debated, or happy outcomes achieved, without a healthy flow of news and information. [...] After all, how can a city engage in development issues if no one knows where or when a new building is planned? How can the water be cleaned if no one knows it’s dirty? How can schools be improved if people don’t understand why they are failing?”

We know that quality news programming can lead to important outcomes like increased awareness, appreciation and concern. For example, in a 2007 study, the Pew Research Center found that the media have more influence than any other source on adult Americans’ “thinking about the environment.” And a 2013 survey conducted by Jacobs Media found that 63% of Michigan Radio listeners took action as a result of listening to the station, such as discussing a story with family and friends, sharing stories digitally, and contributing to a charity.

The *Great Lakes Reporting Project* enabled Michigan Radio and *The Environment Report* to bring important stories about the Great Lakes ecology to tens of thousands of public radio listeners throughout the state, from Flint, Detroit and Grand Rapids to Manistee, Traverse City and Harbor Springs. We were able to deliver more than the daily episodic coverage of the state’s environmental issues; we provided space on the air, online, and in communities for the exchange of ideas. We were also able to package and distribute the work as an education resource. In these ways, this project helped to amplify the reach and impact of the GLFT stewardship program and further its goal to increase awareness and understanding of the ecology of the Great Lakes.

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?*

The *Great Lakes Reporting Project* was a one-time project that enabled Michigan Radio to devote more resources and feature more in-depth coverage on the ecology of the Great Lakes and its fish population on *The Environment Report*. TER was created 16 years ago to meet the need for more and better media coverage of environmental news in the Great Lakes region. The program is funded by Michigan Radio listener contributions, business sponsors, and foundations; however, no other funders contributed directly to the *Great Lakes Reporting Project*.

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

No, there has not been any spin-off work; however, *The Environment Report* is continuing to report on Great Lakes fisheries and to build on the knowledge that we have gained through this project.

Communications/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.*

The main purpose of the *Great Lakes Reporting Project* was to publish public radio stories via radio broadcasts and on the web. Please see *Question 3* for a list of publications, website and the dissemination of those publications to educators.

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

The majority of our efforts to promote our media work focused on the two special radio series and the two public forums. Specifically, we promoted each series and event on the air and on Michigan Radio's website, Facebook and Twitter pages, and in the weekly e-newsletter. Our paid/outside marketing efforts for this grant consisted of three phases. The first involved a paid print ad (Grand Haven Tribune) and online Facebook advertising for the Asian Carp Issues & Ale event in Grand Haven in Oct, 2012.

The second phase involved extensive online banner & tile ads for the "In Warm Water" on-air series and accompanying Issues & Ale discussion in Sept-Oct, 2013. This included ads in the Michigan Out-of-Doors website and newsletter, Michigan Sportsman website, M Live and numerous other websites targeting outdoor enthusiasts, sportsmen, the environmental community and the general public. This "In Warm Water" campaign generated over 932,000 gross impressions and over 1,500 visits to the ["In Warm Water" website](#).

The third phase involved promotion, creation and distribution of the CD containing both the "In Warm Water" and "Asian Carp & the Great Lakes" series. We promoted the availability of the CD resource on the air and on Michigan Radio's website, Facebook and Twitter pages, and in the weekly e-newsletter. We also worked with Tom Occhipinti, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Joan Chadde, Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education, to spread the word about the availability of this resource. Tom and Joan spread the word via listserves (i.e., MAEOE, Michigan Matters, ICCARS), DEQ-EE website, and the MAEOE conference.

Reflections

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

One challenge we faced was creating and distributing the CD resources to educators. The process of compiling the stories and videos, developing an online order form, and packaging and mailing the CDs took more time than anticipated. In the future, we will consider including staff time needed to do these tasks in the budget.

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

We do not have any recommendations at this time.