

FINAL REPORT

Ludington Beach House Exhibits
2014.1408

PROJECT PROFILE

Synopsis:

- **Project Title:** *Ludington Beach House Exhibits*
- **Grantee Organization:** Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- **Project Team:**
Theresa Neal, DNR/ Annamarie Bauer, DNR/ Jan Miller, Michigan Department of Technology Management and Budget (DTMB)/ Robert Ford, LAP/ Matt Hull, LAP/ Matt Lincoln, DNR
- **Contact Person:** Matt Lincoln, DNR
- **Grant Amount:** \$179,300
- **Time Frame:** 7/17/2014 to 05/26/2016
- **Focus Area:** Stewardship
- **Brief Project Summary:** The purpose of this project was to design and construct interactive interpretive exhibits related to Great Lakes Fisheries to provide outreach and inspire beach visitors at Ludington State Park. The exhibits are interactive and able to be updated to engage repeat visitors.

Project In Context:

Ludington State Park offers a unique location in west Michigan for visitors to experience the Lake Michigan shoreline and its natural resources. The park hosts more than 800,000 visitors a year, which is among one of Michigan's busiest State Parks.

Ever since the park's visitor center collapsed due to heavy snow, the park has been without a good location to stage programming and interpretive activities. A couple of years ago, the Ludington Beach House was renovated and provided an opportunity for providing a hub for park programs and interpretive exhibits. This location also provided a unique opportunity to capture the interest of day use beach visitors, which will provide educational information about Great Lakes fisheries and inspire visitors to become involved with stewardship activities in the park and in their communities.

Goals and Effort:

The key goal for the project was to provide interactive Great Lakes fishery exhibits and materials to enhance educational programming at Ludington State Park and to reach a larger audience at the beach.

Results:

The result of the project is the attraction of visitors into the Ludington Beach House with a curious level of interest observed. The key take-away components of the exhibits have inspired visitors to become more involved in Great Lakes stewardship. This has been measured through increased numbers of participants in programming activities at the park. Interpretive programs have been developed around the exhibits, including invasive species programs centered on sea lamprey and the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Products and Resources

A press release is planned for the entire project. This will be posted on the DNR's website: www.michigan.gov/dnr.

DNR will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure that the programming associated with the interpretive exhibits will continue to offer new and engaging activities in response to ever-changing Great Lakes issues. This model will be evaluated for the potential to replicate it at other State Parks.

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Background/Overview

1. The project included developing educational interpretive materials and exhibits to be used by park visitors on their own and also by our park staff for outreach programs.
2. The project was completed as originally intended except for the Plaza Map, which was to be a map of Michigan and the Great Lakes etched into the existing concrete pad on the west side of the Beach House. After consulting with the building's architect and researching methods for installing a durable map into the existing concrete, it was determined that this could not be done in a manner that would be durable enough to withstand the harsh beach elements and Michigan's freeze/thaw cycle, while remaining within the budgeted amount. Instead, the Great Lakes map was incorporated into one of the picnic tabletop graphics. Nevertheless, the DNR was able to provide a quality project outcome by developing a portion of the project scope in-house. The finished project accomplishes the original project goal by developing interactive interpretive exhibits and programming materials, which provides educational outreach opportunities for park visitors.

Outcomes

1. Activities pursued included hiring a contractor to help fabricate and install exhibits at the Ludington Beach House, along with an electrician to install outlets for the exhibits. Pursued and achieved outcomes of the project included increased use of the Ludington Beach House for invasive species education and interpretation programming and increased use of the Ludington Beach House from beach visitors.
2. The audience we were hopeful to reach were visitors of Ludington State Park with a focus on beach users and local school groups. Visitor feedback has been extremely positive. The picnic tabletops, in particular, have been very popular. One longstanding

complaint from visitors was that the park no longer showed short videos, such as “Rise and Fall of the Great Lakes” and “Paddle to the Sea”, among others. Installation of the touch screen video monitor has brought these videos back, along with new content. The installation of the interpretive components provided by this grant has demonstrated our commitment to reimagining how we convey important messages about the health of the Great Lakes.

3. The DNR Parks and Recreation Division’s (PRD) relationship with DNR Marketing and Outreach Division (MOD) played an integral part in this project’s success. In order to reach the desired audience, MOD worked with PRD and the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission (GLFC) to ensure that the design of the exhibits worked for this audience. The information provided by MOD and GLFC staff proved to be vital to the project outcome.
4. While an evaluation of the project was not developed, positive feedback and increased interest in DNR programs measured the success of the project.
5. The most important benefit to this project is the outreach opportunities the exhibits provided to park visitors that resulted in increased interest in DNR programs offered at the park. The Beach House now serves as a hub where visitors can get information on the park and Lake Michigan through hands-on activities and interaction with DNR staff and exhibits.

Related Efforts

1. The project is part of a larger goal to develop the Ludington Beach House as a hub for interpretive programming at Ludington State Park. The exhibits help draw in visitors and introduce them to Great Lakes ecology, invasive species and fisheries. Interpretive staff compliment this effort through informal programming and hands-on displays during busy times throughout the summer season.
2. DNR is hopeful that the momentum will continue from this project and additional exhibits and programming materials can be developed in the future.

Communication/Dissemination

1. A press release is planned for the entire project. This will be posted on the DNR’s website: www.michigan.gov/dnr.
 - a. DNR will continue to work collaboratively with our partners to ensure that the programming associated with the interpretive exhibits will continue to offer new and engaging activities in response to ever-changing Great Lakes issues. This model will be evaluated for the potential to replicate it at other State Parks.
2. In addition to the press release being developed, a component of the project’s exhibits and interactive tools is the integration of smart phone and online apps, allowing visitors to communicate their experiences using social media.

Reflections

1. The most challenging aspect of this project was purchasing items without violating any State of Michigan purchasing rules, which can be complicated and time consuming. An unanticipated benefit of this project was collaborating with staff at the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission (GLFC). The GLFC staff was eagerly willing to share their

knowledge and resources to assist with our invasive species programming and fisheries exhibits. A positive relationship was also developed with a talented artist who created the artwork for the countertop exhibit. DNR will likely work with this artist in the future.

2. Recommendations for similar projects in the future would be focused around the project schedule. DNR underestimated the project timeline. Between the State's procurement process and coordination with multiple partners, it became evident that more time needed to be built into the project schedule. DNR's recommendation to future grant recipients is to build into the project schedule ample time for coordination with partners and purchasing processes.

Attachments

1. Photographs of the completed project and design schematics are included in this submittal.