



## GREAT LAKES STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM: RESOURCE DOCUMENT

### Program Goal and Objective

In 2024, the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) embarked upon a yearlong effort to update its strategic plan. Through that process, the trust updated its Great Lakes Stewardship funding priorities. Under the 2025 strategic plan, the GLFT intends to issue two distinct requests for proposals (RFPs). The first will be focused on place-based stewardship education and the second will focus on fishing education. The long-term goal of the GLFT's investment in this area is to increase residents' awareness and understanding of the lakes' ecology so they can advocate for strategies that support long-term sustainability of the Great Lakes fisheries and become stewards of the Great Lakes. The trust will pursue its funding goal and outcomes through investments in the following:

1. **Place-based stewardship education (PBSE):** PBSE is a method of teaching and learning that extends the walls of the classroom into the local community and landscape through experiential, hands-on learning for studying natural, built, and social environments.
2. **Fishing education:** Fishing education opportunities include angling activities with stewardship components to increase participation in fishing while also encouraging participants to think and engage beyond angling to broader environmental and stewardship considerations.

### Purpose of the Resource Document

This document aims to help potential applicants understand best practices for fishing education and stewardship-related youth leadership programs as well as to consolidate best practices developed through the GLFT's past PBSE investments in communities and preK–12 education.

Sources of research literature identified through the strategic planning process for each of the investment areas are summarized below. These documents are supplementary and do not necessarily represent specific activities the GLFT will support. For specific information regarding eligible activities and the priorities of the Great Lakes Stewardship grant program, please review the current stewardship application guidance document on the trust's "[Apply Now](#)" page.

# I. Place-based Stewardship in PreK–12

## Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative’s Guiding Principles for Exemplary Place-based Stewardship Education

Link: [Guiding Principles for Exemplary Place-based Stewardship Education](#)

The Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (GLSI) provides PBSE to teach about the environment and develop capacity for environmental stewardship. Through more than ten years of experience, the GLSI has developed guiding principles that exemplify its vision of PBSE in a K–12 setting. The principles, listed in the following section, are organized into four sections, and, in some cases, include multiple subprinciples.

### *Part One: Set the Focus*

1. Situate environmental learning and stewardship where students live, grow, and play.
2. Equip students to understand how all humans affect and are affected by the natural environment, and how the community’s environmental resources, laws, beliefs, and perspectives influence and are influenced by broader physical and social systems.

### *Part Two: Develop the Foundation for Place-based Teaching and Learning*

3. Build a PBSE effort out of rigorous experiential learning, support it with appropriate teaching practices, and integrate it into the local educational system.

### *Part Three: Deepen Impact*

4. Cultivate collaborative, mutually beneficial school-community partnerships.
5. Explore local environmental issues over a period of weeks or months—with sufficient time for all parts of the inquiry cycle and relationship development—offering opportunities to repeat the process over the years of schooling.
6. Deliver meaningful benefits to the local environment and community through PBSE.

### *Part Four: Develop Skills for Participation in Democratic Practices*

7. Cultivate students’ voices and involve them in democratic practices throughout the course of a PBSE effort.
8. Use deliberate processes to identify and consider multiple perspectives regarding a stewardship issue or project.
9. Incorporate opportunities for students to develop and clarify their personal values related to nature and community and to develop the social competencies essential to stewardship.

10. Support and enable the visible, meaningful participation of students in the community's public discourse.

## **North American Association for Environmental Education's Guidelines for Excellence: Community Engagement**

Link: [Guidelines for Excellence: Community Engagement](#)

The North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) is a member organization focused on promoting excellence in environmental education throughout North America. NAAEE facilitated the creation of these guidelines to provide a foundation for environmental educators to engage communities in pursuing environmental quality, social equity, and shared prosperity. The guidelines are organized based on the following five key characteristics that successfully engage communities in environmental education:

1. Community centered
2. Based on sound environmental principles
3. Collaborative and inclusive
4. Oriented toward capacity building and civic action
5. A long-term investment in change

## **II. Fishing Education**

### **The Aquatic Resources Education Association's Highlights of Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) Literature**

Link: [Highlights of Angler Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation \(R3\) Literature](#)

Individuals can move in and out of the angling community with relative ease, resulting in a larger, more dynamic angler population. Because of this, fishing education must focus on recruiting new anglers while retaining current ones and reactivating past ones. The primary goal of this strategy is to reverse a long-term decline in angler participation. The Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation reviewed long-term fishing license purchase data as well as surveys conducted by various organizations to determine areas for improvement to increase angler counts. R3 efforts highlight the following:

1. Increasing the number of active anglers through recruitment, retention, and reactivation. Efforts that focus on retaining first-time anglers and transitioning them to repeat anglers will likely have the greatest impact. However, first-time anglers are twice as likely to lapse than those who have purchased their second license, making it important to focus on retaining current anglers and reactivating past ones.

2. Encouraging fishing education programs that focus on family involvement. Evidence supports that encouraging individuals to fish is more effective within the social structure of families. Children are more likely to become anglers if one or both of their parents are.
3. Developing strategies to increase the number of days per year an individual fishes. The majority of anglers who purchase their first license or license after an extended period lapse in angling activity think they will continue to fish, but license data demonstrates the majority of these individuals will not. Strategies that increase the number of days per year an individual does fish will help reverse this trend.
4. Developing strategies to encourage invitations from existing anglers to nonanglers. Family and friends who are experienced anglers are the most common source of fishing information and instruction, followed by state agency websites and small bait and tackle retailers. Encouraging avid anglers to invite nonanglers will increase angler populations and decrease the dropout rate.
5. Promoting and using fishing access sites near target audiences' homes, as fishing access close to home is an important consideration for anglers. Fishing education will be the most effective at creating reoccurring anglers if participants are informed of fishing access availability close to home, including instruction on successful angling methods for the area. Much like other recreation opportunities, anglers are less likely to fish regularly if extended travel is required.
6. Promoting fishing opportunities in urban and suburban areas. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 75 percent of Michigan residents lived in an urban environment in 2017. Therefore, it is important to reach both urban and suburban areas with fishing education opportunities and promote available angling opportunities near these areas to encourage participation.
7. Promoting fishing opportunities close to ethnically diverse neighborhoods is critical to diversifying angler populations. Diversity is important in increasing the relevancy of fishing to the general population and growing the total angler population.