

Procedural Justice within the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: Next Steps Towards Environmental Justice

A Report Prepared for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

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Executive Summary

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has been widely recognized as both an ecosystem restoration program and an economic driver in the region that provides at 3-to-1 return on investment.^{1, 2, 3} A needed question is: who benefits directly from these efforts? Even though the goal of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is ecological, these economic results show there are associated benefits for communities. But not all communities are impacted equally. Patterns of oppression in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities are pervasive within the United States, including in the Great Lakes. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome these structural barriers, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for success and it *is* the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression. This study will recommend initial next steps for the Initiative to advance and further equitable and just outcomes.

Project Background

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was first funded in 2010 and has since invested in more than 4,000 projects around the region that are aimed at cleaning up toxic pollution, stopping the spread of invasive species, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and preventing polluted runoff. This successful program has long been championed by the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition. The Coalition is made up of more than 150 organizations from around the region with the shared mission to secure a sustainable Great Lakes restoration plan and the federal funding to implement it. Over the last several years, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition has been reflecting on the importance of racial equity in its work. The Equity Advisory and Action Committee for the Coalition has pushed the organization to try new things and ask big questions. Given the success of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the supportive role the Coalition has played in advocating for the program, the Equity Committee began to consider how to ensure equity within this ecological restoration program. This report is one result of those considerations.

Methodology

Eleven case studies were selected to be representative of the geographic breadth and project diversity of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. These case studies were limited to the top three funding agencies of the program—the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Additionally, the case studies were limited to projects most recently completed, funded 2016 and 2017. To gather information about these case studies, a series of semi-structured interviews with people associated with the projects was conducted in the spring and summer of 2020. The framing for these interview questions was limited to procedural justice, which is interested in the processes and procedures used to make decisions and how those procedures engage communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.⁴

There are several limitations to this approach—first, people most impacted by these projects were not necessarily the people interviewed and their perspective must be included. Furthermore, no representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would agree to speak about this project. The interview did not capture all relevant information about current community engagement processes. Second, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is a complex program and it is likely that significant aspects of it were not captured in this report. Third, there are at least two other kinds of justice that work in concert with procedural justice to support outcomes that benefit all people regardless of the color of their skin, whether newcomer or native. These other pieces of the puzzle, namely distributive justice and restorative justice, also need to be included in next steps for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Findings

There are four themes that emerged from the interviews that were conducted: (1) the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has room to grow when it comes to formalizing the value of community connections in its work, (2) there are opportunities to adjust the language in grant Requests for Applications to get more equitable outcomes, (3) the Area of Concern program and Public Advisory Councils need to do a better job of community engagement, and (4) there is a need to acknowledge the impact of systemic oppression in how ecosystem restoration is framed. Many people who were interviewed recognized the value of community engagement, yet the only place this currently seems formalized is in the Public Advisory Councils that are associated with the Areas of Concern. Without including guidance in the Request for Applications for community engagement, the practice will likely be intermittent and inconsistent. A real opportunity also exists to expand the community engagement of the Public Advisory to be more representative of their communities. Finally, in many interviews, the idea that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is only an ecosystem restoration program that is unconcerned with social issues came up repeatedly. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome these structural barriers, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore, it is important to make the connection that collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for the success of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The Initiative needs to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression as a necessary part of ecosystem restoration.

Recommendation 1: Begin to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Level: National

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice strategic plan has already made a commitment to incorporate Environmental Justice into everything it does by 2020.⁵ And all federal agencies are subject to Executive Order 12898 requiring Environmental Justice to be incorporated into their work.⁶ By incorporating community engagement and procedural justice into the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, federal agencies can begin to uphold a commitment already in place that would center the needs of communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

Specifically, agency staff implementing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative should:

- **Provide additional Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants** to communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities, recognizing ecosystem restoration can also revitalize our communities at the same time.
- **Restore previously used language in Requests for Applications** that prioritized Environmental Justice, community engagement, and contracting with disadvantaged business enterprises.
- **Coordinate with the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group** on ways to expand Environmental Justice and community engagement within the Initiative.
- **Start the Action Plan IV process earlier and with intention** towards community outreach and engagement with communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- **Hold federal agencies accountable** to community engagement and procedural justice outcomes for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
- **Follow the lead of Environmental Justice organizations in the region** that are already doing Environmental Justice work.
- **Advocate for federal programs to be evaluated on equitable outcomes** regardless of intent, overturning the Sandoval decision.⁷

- **Seek an explanation for the small dollar amounts in Indigenous nation Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding.**

Recommendation 2: Ensure representative community engagement is a requirement for Area of Concern Public Advisory Councils

Level: National, State, Local

The Areas of Concern have been identified as some of the most polluted places around the Great Lakes region and have been given a plurality of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding. Given nation-wide patterns that show pollution is concentrated in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities, it is likely that Areas of Concern have opportunities to address environmental injustices.⁸ There is currently no community representation standard for the Public Advisory Councils and public engagement is inconsistent across the region. Project input will be most reliable when these councils engage people from communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities with intention.

Specifically, individuals at the federal and state level who implement and support Areas of Concern should:

- **Set standards around community representation and inclusion** that include demographic and socioeconomic indicators.
- **Adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing** as standards for Public Advisory Councils.⁹
- **Hold Public Advisory Councils accountable** to meeting representative standards and Jemez Principles for engagement and tie funding to meeting these metrics. Be prepared to shift power and change leadership if these metrics are not being met.
- **Allocate funding to implement these changes**, including cultural competency training for staff and compensation for community organizations that participate in the council work.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- **Raise awareness of Public Advisory Councils** throughout the region as a way to bolster representative community engagement.
- **Adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing.**⁹
- **Offer training and resources on cultural competencies** within Coalition membership and ensure these are multiracial spaces with accountability to people of color and Indigenous people.

Recommendation 3: Expand the restoration narrative to address racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic injustice

Level: National, Regional

Environmental and conservation movements have historically separated the injustices that people face from those that plague nature and this separation came up repeatedly in interviews. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is often seen as only focused on ecology without regard to social needs. This framework is increasingly recognized as unrealistic—there are not bright lines between where people live and where nature begins.¹⁰ Beyond unrealistic, this framing also creates sacrifice zones, where pollution and extractive natural resource industries are concentrated.¹¹ People who live in these sacrifice zones are overwhelmingly people of color, low-income people, and Indigenous individuals.

Specifically, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- **Frame ecosystem restoration successes by including human impacts**, especially in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

- **Conduct polling and messaging research on a race-class message** that names differences and also unites people to support a collective action.^{12, 13}
- **Expand Coalition messaging materials using a race-class message** and provide a model for other advocates and elected leaders.
- **Demand and support the centrality of human rights in environmental issues.**

Conclusion

There are several opportunities for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to increase procedural justice in its work. The findings show that current Requests for Applications place little or no emphasis on community engagement. Helpfully, previous versions of the Request for Applications include language that should be reinstated and, in some places, revised to emphasize the importance of Environmental Justice, community engagement, and subcontracting to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. The findings also show that the Public Advisory Councils that are associated with Areas of Concern have a desire to be more representative of their communities. Besides setting goals for what representative community engagement might look like, there are also opportunities to influence the culture of organizing in the Public Advisory Councils by adopting and practicing the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. Finally, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administers the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative there is a leadership opportunity to not only implement these recommendations, but to expand upon them as well. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also leads the Interagency Task Force on Environmental Justice and should rely on the expertise within the agency to ensure the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's impact is equitable and just.

There are also opportunities for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition to help the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative make these changes. By responding to the findings that the Request for Applications should emphasize community engagement and Environmental Justice, the Coalition also has an opportunity to connect with long-standing Environmental Justice organizations working in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in the region. These organizations have already prioritized the needs in their communities and have direct connections with those most impacted by environmental degradation. By working in partnership, the Coalition can be a bridge to potentially new resources through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and through partnerships, learn lessons about barriers and opportunities that will strengthen the Initiative. Relatedly, the Coalition should adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. These principles are often adhered to by Environmental Justice organizations and, by making this change, the Coalition can model the recommendation being made to the Public Advisory Councils. Finally, there is a persistent understanding that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is just an ecological restoration program that is not concerned with social issues. The Coalition has a unique and powerful role to play in changing this narrative and expanding the Initiative's framing. By conducting message testing, by modeling a race-class message in communications, and by raising social issues in advocacy settings, the Coalition has the opportunity to make the social value of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative more explicitly connected to the ecological and economic benefits that are already associated with the program. The Environmental Justice movement has been making these connections for years, so there are plenty of leaders to learn from in this work.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has made progress restoring ecosystems throughout the Great Lakes while providing an economic boost for the region. However, there is more work to do before the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is engaging, benefiting, and responding to the restorative justice needs of *all* communities in our region. The good news is that we can work together to bring Environmental Justice principles into the fabric and outcomes of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The longer we delay, the harder and more expensive this work becomes.

Introduction

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative comes from collaborative beginnings. The shape of the program and the political will to fund it was built in 2004 from a series of stakeholder conversations throughout the region. These regional conversations resulted in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy which would become the scope of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.¹⁴ Once federally funded in 2010, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative set up an interagency funding structure to implement the program. Fifteen agencies work together to disperse Initiative funding, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency coordinating and administering the program.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative also collaborates through its work with state and local grantees. Analyzing data from all Initiative projects as of September 2019, almost half of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants are given to entities that are not part of the federal government, including Indigenous Governments, local governments, nonprofits or businesses, and schools (see appendix A). This diversification of funding relies in part on the expertise of people and institutions who are close to the restoration problems. And there are other examples, such as the Public Advisory Councils that influence the priorities for clean-up in some of the most polluted areas around the Great Lakes—the Areas of Concern.¹⁵ These Public Advisory Councils show that the Initiative understands that the expertise of those most locally impacted by environmental degradation have a role to play in defining solutions. Finally, as a federal program, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative also includes extensive public engagement every five years as part of developing the Action Plan for the Initiative. The Action Plan provides guidance on priorities for the program, akin to a strategic plan.¹⁶

These systems and structures place a kind of value on including a variety of perspectives, including those of local people, in determining the solutions for restoration. However, this does not always happen equitably. There are significant structural barriers to collaboratively engage communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in general in the United States. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome these structural barriers, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for success and it *is* the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression.

Role of the Coalition

For 15 years the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition has advocated for Great Lakes restoration.¹⁷ Recently, the Coalition has begun to ask questions about racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic equity and how systems of oppression might impact its work. The Equity Advisory and Action Committee of the Coalition has pushed equity and justice considerations forward significantly and continues to play a key role by raising important questions. Given the role the Coalition has played in supporting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and its ecological and economic successes, the Equity Committee has asked how the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative might be evaluated through a social lens. Who benefits from the ecological and economic impacts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative? How can the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative engage, benefit, and revitalize communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in the process of ecological restoration? This report is one step towards understanding these connections to social justice and opportunities for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to address systems of oppression.

Systemic Oppression

Systems of oppression, including racism, colonialism, and classism are wide-ranging, complex, and intersectional forces. These forces play out at four levels: ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and individual.¹⁸ This multilayered aspect adds to the challenge of intervening to interrupt these patterns. A complete explanation of systemic oppression is beyond the scope of this introduction.¹⁸⁻²¹ Here are a few dynamics that people of color, Indigenous people, and low-income individuals face that are particularly salient to this project.

- **Mistrust and distrust of the government** – Communities of color, perhaps especially Black and African American communities, can point to many times that federal, state, and local governments breached their trust. Starting with the horrific, 250-year institution of enslaving African Americans to more modern red-lining and segregated housing, the federal government has institutionalized oppression.^{22, 23} Similar patterns of brutality, mass murder, and disenfranchisement exist within Indigenous communities and among Indigenous nations when it comes to the United States' federal government. Tellingly, of the hundreds of treaties signed between Indigenous nations and the federal government all of them have been violated.²⁴ While federal agencies and other state authorities have work to do to repair relationships with communities of color and Indigenous communities, these communities do not owe the government their input, participation, or trust until reparations have been made.
- **Ill-health and environmental pollution** – Communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities have statistically significant health disparities as compared to wealthy, white communities. Environmental pollution is often the cause, giving rise to the idea of Environmental Racism.⁸ These concentrated areas of pollution have also become known as sacrifice zones, with the same kind of disposable logic applied to the land as to the people.¹¹
- **Settler colonialism** – Specifically for Indigenous individuals, the rights of access to environmental resources is codified in treaty language because settlers otherwise control these resources. While unreliable, these are rights that other historically disenfranchised groups do not have.²⁴ Furthermore, in 2000 President Clinton issued Executive Order 13175, which directed federal agencies to consult with Indigenous governments when considering policies that impact Indigenous communities.²⁵ Despite these specific rights and orders, the stolen land that the United States is currently occupying is a clear example that these obligations do not equalize power imbalances or restore historic wrongs.
- **Limited English proficiency** – Some communities where individuals may identify as people of color also face limited English proficiency as a barrier to public engagement. In the Great Lakes Region there are several states where between 40,000 and 2,000,000 people regularly speak Spanish, Arabic, Hmong, Polish, Russian, or Chinese at home, and of these households, 40 percent or more have limited English proficiency.²⁶ Limited English proficiency creates a communications barrier that could prevent individuals from sharing their views on where and how restoration should take place.
- **Smaller sized businesses and barriers to subcontracting** – The very existence of federal programs that set targets for employing “minority-owned business enterprises” acknowledges that barriers exist for many businesses owned by people of color.²⁷ Outright discrimination for many years prevented people of color from starting and growing their businesses.²⁸ Access to capital is also an issue that is shared by people with a low-income background. Federal government subcontracts are often awarded based on cost-savings criteria, something that larger firms that have been established for longer are able to offer more reliably. As businesses are awarded grants, they are able to grow and potentially become more competitive. And yet that first set of grants needed for growth and investment often will not happen because of size and capacity constraints.

- **Barriers to belonging in outdoor recreation** – Stereotypes around outdoor recreation have created unwelcome outdoor spaces for people of color.²⁹ Rigid categories around what it means to enjoy nature have created barriers for people of color, Indigenous individuals, and low-income people to participate in outdoor recreation or be seen as an environmentalist.³⁰ Some activities in particular are limited by cost—including park entrance fees and equipment. Despite often being ignored and excluded from active membership in big green environmental groups, polls show that people of color consistently care more about environmental issues and consider them priorities.^{31, 32} For African American communities in particular, swimming has a history of violence. Racially integrated swimming pools and beaches were often met with violent and deadly protest from white people.³³ These barriers need to be acknowledged and navigated if we hope to work together to restore the Great Lakes.
- **Federally segregated housing** – Redlining—the federal government’s practice of enforcing racial segregation and housing poverty on people of color through the Federal Housing Administration policies and loan access—has on-going impacts today on communities of color.²² Redlined neighborhoods are still predominantly under-resourced and majority people of color. This spatial segregation has negative impacts on education, health, and the environment.³⁴ Disinvestment and underinvestment in Indigenous communities has had similarly wide-ranging and segregated impacts.³⁵ This place-specific disinvestment and underinvestment means that the place-specific benefits of programs such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative need to be understood because place-based investments will not impact a racially or socioeconomically diverse group of people evenly.
- **Interpersonal oppression** – the ideologies and institutions that are prevalent in the United States have socialized many people to behaviors and ideas that reinforce systems of oppression. For many people who are white and carry other dominant group identities, their intentions may be very good while the impact of their actions on people of color, Indigenous people, and individuals with low-incomes may be harmful.³⁶ Therefore, even without meaning to, interpersonal oppression can still happen in public meetings, in judging grant proposals, and in working collaboratively on restoration projects. And repeated harm makes successful future collaboration significantly more challenging.

It is important to note that this list could be flipped around and make a similar argument that white, colonizing, wealthy people have disproportionately and unexpectedly high access to resources through the federal government, in healthy living conditions, in accumulated wealth, in defining outdoor recreation, in well-resourced segregated housing and associated school districts, and in an expectation of comfort in being able to ignore race, class, and colonization issues. The list was presented in this way to bring attention to the barriers that communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities face. These are structural barriers and should not be conflated with a deficit of engagement, care, or independent agency in these communities. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome these structural barriers, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for success and it *is* the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression.

Environmental Justice

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recognizes the need for justice in its work, in part to overcome the systemic barriers named above.⁵ The Agency defines Environment Justice as:

The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This goal will be achieved when everyone enjoys:

- the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards, and
- equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.³⁷

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's strategic plan for Environmental Justice has three goals: (1) deepen Environmental Justice practice within EPA programs to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities, (2) work with partners to expand our positive impact within overburdened communities, and (3) demonstrate progress on significant national Environmental Justice challenges.⁵ All regions of the Agency are involved in implementing the strategic plan, which aims to incorporate Environmental Justice into everything it does. The region that implements the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is responsible for achieving part of the second goal on partnerships and includes strategies for peer-to-peer learning and program innovation.

The Environmental Justice movement also exists outside of the federal government. A series of widely publicized actions led to pressure for President Clinton to sign Executive Order 12898 in the mid-1990's, which commits all federal agencies to make achieving Environmental Justice part of their mission and strategic plans.^{6, 38} Further work from the movement has created a great deal of resources, including the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice and the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing.^{29, 39, 40} Many of these ideas, such as the importance of community members speaking for themselves, have yet to be fully practiced by the federal government although there are some exceptions.^{5, 41}

Scope of the project

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition seeks to address this question: how can the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative engage, benefit, and revitalize communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in the process of ecological restoration? To begin an answer, the following boundaries were placed on this study.

First, the constituencies in this study match the Environmental Protection Agency's definition of Environmental Justice demographics—people of color and low-income individuals.³⁷ People of color are not a monolith and while there may be shared experiences between communities of color, there are distinctions between Indigenous communities, Black and African-American communities, Hispanic and Latinx communities, and Arab-American communities. Where possible, this report tries to use precise language and honor these distinct experiences. Even within a precise shared group identity—such as a race, an ethnicity, or a socioeconomic group—there will be significant individual differences that are erased by generalizing. The hope is that these generalizations and identified patterns will be used as a guide for further conversations that are able to bring in greater nuance and context, and not erase the specifics of lived experience.

Second, analyzing systems of oppression and recommending new systems of liberation and engagement is a complex task. In looking to literature on Environmental Justice, there are three broad categories referenced that helped organize the project: procedural justice, distributive justice, and restorative justice.⁴ Procedural justice is concerned with how people of color, Indigenous people, and individuals with low-incomes are engaged in the processes of problem-solving. Distributive justice examines how people of color, Indigenous people, and individuals with low-incomes are benefitting from solutions. And restorative justice is aimed at understanding past wrongs and harms that have impacted people of color, Indigenous people, and individuals with low-incomes and making strides to repair those harms. Each level of justice works together to yield a more liberated society. Procedural justice was chosen as a starting point given the author's skill set and lack of deep connections in the communities of color,

Indigenous communities, and low-income communities that make up the Great Lakes region. If this report leads to procedural justice then distributive and restorative justice must be sought and measured. The arc of the moral universe may be long, but it bends towards justice only as much as people work together to seek that goal.⁴²

Finally, a comprehensive review of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in September 2019 would have required analyzing more than 4,000 projects, many more subcontracts, and a host of different institutions—federal, Indigenous, state, and local governments; non-profits, universities, and more.⁴³ Rather than tackle that complex system in full, a snapshot of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative work was chosen to frame the inquiry. Ultimately, it is hoped that this project will be the catalyst for further conversations that expand well beyond this snapshot of projects and can work to make an impactful program even stronger.

Methodology

Data used in this study to characterize the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative came from a publicly available dataset, which was accessed in September 2019.⁴³ At that time, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative had invested almost \$2.5 billion in eight states and 31 sovereign Indigenous communities over the last decade. 4,858 projects had been funded, restoring fish and wildlife habitat, cleaning up toxic pollution, and fighting invasive species. At that time, as well as now, fifteen federal agencies participate in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. To select case studies that were representative of this vast program, the following parameters were used:

- **Completed projects**, with a preference for those given grant funding more recently to capture most up-to-date practices.
- To understand how different levels of governance play a role with funding, at least one case study from **eight states and three Indigenous nations**.
- To represent where the majority of projects are funded through, and thus have potentially outsized impact, case studies should include **the granting agencies completing the most projects**.
- To represent **different kinds of funding distribution**, case studies should include funding that agencies spend directly on their own projects or their staff, that agencies contract out or create agreements for, and that agencies distribute by competitive grants.
- To capture a diversity of the kinds of projects undertaken, at least one case study from **each of the focus areas** of the Action Plan should be represented.

Using the full dataset, completed projects funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, granted in 2016 and 2017 were selected. From there, projects were chosen to represent a range of states, Indigenous governments, focus areas, and grant types to be representative of funding as defined by this parameter list.

Individuals associated with each of these projects were identified and contacted by email and phone. A series of semi-structured interviews with questions about procedural justice were conducted in the spring and summer of 2020. Wherever possible, multiple points of contact were made for each case study. A full list of questions is provided in Appendix B. In total, more than 50 individuals contributed their expertise to this project through email correspondence, phone conversations, or meetings. These interviews were used as a jumping off point for further inquiry into other information and reports about the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative more broadly.

There are several limitations to this approach—first, people most impacted by these projects were not necessarily the people interviewed and their perspective must be included. Furthermore, no representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would agree to be interviewed for this project and so potentially relevant data about the community engagement procedures used for about 20 percent of Initiative funding remains obscured. As a result of this optional interview structure, there is also uneven information about specific case studies—some case studies provided a lot of data, others did not. Second, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is a complex program and it is likely that significant aspects of it were not captured. Third, there are at least two other kinds of justice that work in concert with procedural justice to support outcomes that benefit all people regardless of the color of their skin, whether newcomer or native. These other pieces of the puzzle, namely distributive justice and restorative justice, also need to be included in next steps for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

The following 11 projects are the case study list (for a more complete description of each project, see appendix C):

Aquatic Plant Control Times Beach Demonstration

Project Leader: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Times Beach is a dredged material disposal facility located on the shore of Buffalo Harbor in Buffalo, NY and adjacent to the Niagara River Area of Concern. This project is demonstrating new and improved management strategies against invasive aquatic plants, including Phragmites. The project will restore 31 acres of wetland habitat adjacent to the Area of Concern. The FY 2017 GLRI funds were used for two chemical treatment plans, implementation of the restoration plan, and development of a transition plan to transfer the project (upon project closure estimated to occur in calendar year 2017) to Erie County, NY, the non-federal customer.

Expanding the Protection and Restoration of Hach-Otis Sanctuary and State Nature Preserve

Project Leader: Western Reserve Land Conservancy

Permanently protect 80 acres of riparian and upland forest habitat along the Chagrin River, a Lake Erie tributary in northeastern Ohio. Project will preserve high-quality stream habitat for numerous native species including brook trout and lake sturgeon.

Fond du Lac Sustainable Fish and Wildlife Program

Project Leader: Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa

The Fond du Lac Ceded Territories Fisheries Biologist and Natural Resources Program will conduct the following five projects: 1) Conduct fisheries assessments to evaluate walleye spawning success and recruitment in 19 lakes within the Lake Superior Basin, 2) Mapping of the St. Louis River habitat, 3) Surveying adult spawning population of lake sturgeon in the lower St. Louis River, Area of Concern (AOC), 4) Working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, sampling the lower St. Louis River AOC for invasive species, and 5) Participation in the annual moose survey in Northeast Minnesota.

Great Lakes Legacy Act Grand Calumet River Area of Concern Stateline Remedial Action

Project Leader: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) West Branch of the Grand Calumet River (WBGCR) Reaches 6 & 7 Stateline Remedial Action and Habitat Restoration Project within the Grand Calumet River AOC in Hammond, IN. The overall project objectives is [sic] to remediate contaminated sediments in a 0.4 mile stretch of the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Hohman Avenue and the Indiana/Illinois Stateline (designated as Reaches 6 and 7), which will facilitate removing beneficial use impairments (BUIs) and delisting the Grand Calumet Area of Concern.

Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan - St. Louis River Area of Concern

Project Leader: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Slip 3 involves providing design and technical support to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for the capping of contaminated sediments. The goal of the project is the removal of Beneficial Use Impairments and ultimately the delisting of St. Louis River as an Area of Concern. FY17 funds were used to complete the design and finish the project.

Implementation of Tribal ANS Plan

Project Leader: Keweenaw Bay Indian Community

Tribe will implement priority Great Lakes actions identified in Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan to prevent new introductions and control existing aquatic nuisance species.

Improving Aquatic Connectivity in the Genesee River Watershed

Project Leader: Potter County Conservation District

Replace a culvert to improve aquatic habitat connectivity and significantly reduce sediment input to a headwater tributary of the Genesee River. Project will reopen 10 stream miles and stabilize 2.5 miles of an adjacent road to improve passage and instream habitat for brook trout and other aquatic organisms.

Lake Huron Lake Trout and Lake Sturgeon Restoration Activities

Project Leader: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

In support of lake trout restoration efforts on Lake Huron, Alpena FWCO staff will conduct lake trout spawning surveys at two spawning reefs, juvenile surveys in two northern Lake Huron management units, and perform lake trout stock-assessment modeling analysis, and data analysis to evaluate progress in meeting goals of lake trout rehabilitation efforts, and participated in interagency collaborative efforts to guide the restoration program in Lake Huron. Using GLRI funds: Lake sturgeon surveys will be conducted in Lake Huron and the Huron-Erie Corridor. Adult lake sturgeon assessments will be conducted in the Huron-Erie Corridor. This data is used to obtain population information. Juvenile lake sturgeon surveys will be conducted in Lake Huron and Lake Erie. The Alpena FWCO manages the Great Lakes Sturgeon Tagging Database and works with commercial fishermen tagging sturgeon in Lakes Huron and Erie. Management plans are being developed.

Lake Superior Coastal Wetland Protection: Kakagon Sloughs Land Acquisition

Project Leader: Bad River Band Lake Superior Chippewa

This project will purchase 260 acres within the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs complex in northern Wisconsin along the Lake Superior coastline. This land purchase and return of land to tribal protection and management will significantly reduce fragmentation of this globally important and recognized coastal wetland. The recipient will protect into perpetuity 260 acres of coastal habitat including 210 acres of wetlands.

Sustainable Shoreline Green Infrastructure Implementation

Project Leader: City of Waukegan

The City of Waukegan, Illinois, will construct vegetated drainage systems (bioswales) at the parking lot adjacent to Waukegan Beach to filter and reduce the flow of stormwater. The bioswales will reduce beach closures and 1.1 million gallons of untreated stormwater (and associated sediments, nutrients, and pathogens) from discharging into Lake Michigan annually.

Underwood Creek, Wauwatosa

Project Leader: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The project is the reach of the River between the confluence at Menomonee River and the Canadian Pacific Railroad bridge in the City of Wauwatosa. The project involved the removal of 4400' of concrete lining in the river channel with restoration of habitat and fish passage to help eliminate one or more beneficial use impairments in the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. FY17 funds were used for supervising and administering construction.

Findings

There are four themes that emerged when considering best practices to increase procedural justice for communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities. One, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has room to grow when it comes to formalizing the value of community connections in its work. Two, there are opportunities to adjust the language in grant Requests for Applications to get more equitable outcomes. Three, the Area of Concern program and Public Advisory Councils need to do a better job of community engagement. Finally, fourth, there is a need to acknowledge the impact of systemic oppression in how ecosystem restoration is framed. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome structural barriers like a mistrust of government, housing segregation, and the wealth gap, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for success and it *is* the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression.

1. Community Input and Engagement in Case Studies

Judging by a list of grant recipients, funding to non-federal organizations makes up 46 percent of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.⁴³ In several of the case studies direct community input and engagement is expressed as a value. In each example, the grantees are not required to show their ability to engage a representative portion of their communities, nor are grantees given specific funding to ensure engagement is able to happen. These few examples suggest that community engagement happens incidentally and not as a requirement of receiving grant funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects.

- A. **Indigenous community engagement.** The most explicit example of community engagement within a grant was the *Fond du Lac Sustainable Fish and Wildlife Program*. The outputs and outcomes named in the grant included:
- Tribes are appropriately integrated into Great Lakes management initiatives.
 - Increased communication and coordination about management of the Lake Superior Basin. Opportunity to share Indigenous perspectives and priorities with state, federal partners in the Lake Superior Basin.

In interviews, it became clear that these tasks were accomplished through regularly held meetings that the Fisheries Biologist and the Wildlife Biologist on staff have with appointed representatives of the Fond du Lac Nation. These meetings are a part of their job and would happen with or without funding for this project. This seems an efficient and effective use of funds that benefits from institutionalized community engagement, specific to the Fond du Lac Indigenous community.

- B. **Regional community engagement.** In the case of the *Lake Huron Lake Trout and Lake Sturgeon Restoration Activities* grant, constituency engagement was again a core part of individual job descriptions and roles. However, the engagement does not seem representative of the community. Staff shared that they get feedback and input from both the Citizen Fishery Advisory group and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. Based on a list of Advisory member names, more than 90 percent are men.⁴⁴ If gender is unevenly represented, it is possible other demographic or socioeconomic factors are also not being considered. Therefore, an opportunity exists to ensure membership of the Citizen Fishery Advisory group is representative of fishing constituencies throughout the region, with attention to communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

- C. **Unclear community engagement.** Two case studies, *Sustainable Shoreline Green Infrastructure Implementation* in Waukegan, Illinois and *Aquatic Plant Control Times Beach Demonstration* near Buffalo, New York, had unclear community engagement. In some interviews around the Waukegan project, there were perceptions that an infrastructure project like this was too technical for community engagement to have much room for meaningful impact. In reviewing previous project reports for an earlier grant on the same project, community outreach did happen in a variety of ways. In theory, the constituencies for this project include individuals living in the City of Waukegan who use the beach where the specialized green infrastructure gardens were installed. The population of Waukegan is 55.4 percent Hispanic or Latino as identified in the most recent census, with a 17.8 percent poverty rate.⁴⁵ It would be worth understanding if—at a minimum—community engagement was representative, and that might be easier if there were goals around what good engagement looks like and how that feedback impacts project outcomes. Similarly, *Times Beach* project reports provide very technical invasive species management findings and almost no reference to community engagement.⁴⁶ The beach is near the City of Buffalo, which has 30 percent of residents below the poverty line and 37 percent African American people per the most recent census.⁴⁷ Many Haudenosaunee people also live near and around the area, and so there is a rich opportunity for engaging people of color, Indigenous individuals, and low-income people in use and management. It remains unclear if community groups might have worked with the Army Corps on this project. From their materials, it appears very little community engagement occurred.
- D. **Lack of formalized community engagement.** In the case of the *Expanding the Protection and Restoration of Hach-Otis Sanctuary and State Nature Preserve* grant, the value of community engagement is acknowledged, but also not formally tied to this grant. In reviewing grant application language, several aspects of public input are referenced—the project aligns with the Balanced Growth Plan from the City of Willoughby Hills which “suggests the strong potential for local political/community support.” Similarly, the property is valued in the grant because it enables walking and fishing access to the Chagrin River. Educational efforts are planned for after the project is complete, and yet community engagement concurrent with the project is not mentioned, nor a requirement of the grant. Therefore, while the value of the community using the property and the need for community support seems to have been recognized, the follow-through with community engagement ahead of time or even concurrent with the project is not formalized. This format makes ensuring that community interests are balanced with ecosystem benefits very challenging.

2. Request for Applications

Request for Application forms from 2015 and 2016 include language promoting a civilian conservation corps model, projects that address Environmental Justice concerns with special attention to community engagement, and the application of “Minority Academic Institutions,” such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Additionally, there is a requirement that applicants set Disadvantaged Business Enterprise goals—a formalized pathway to increase contracting to businesses owned by people of color, in particular—and a list of suggestions for institutionalizing competitive and accessible subcontracting.⁴⁸ These are strong examples of ways to center communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in request for applications and are quoted at length in appendix D.

- A. **Disadvantaged business enterprises in subcontracting.** In a few interviews, people mentioned the challenges of meeting disadvantaged business enterprise subcontracting targets. These are businesses owned by people of color, women, and veterans. Interviewees explained that the bid process emphasized cost savings and that this often puts smaller businesses at a disadvantage.

While not all businesses owned by people of color, women, or veterans are small, these businesses do often lack access to capital and, particularly for people of color, intergenerational wealth.²⁸ At least one interviewee felt that the goals around contracting with disadvantaged business enterprises were not taken seriously and needed more support to ensure the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was meeting these goals. The emphasis on disadvantaged business enterprises that was present in the 2015 and 2016 Request for Applications seems to no longer be present in current grants.

- B. **Conservation corps model.** The conservation corps model that previous grants emphasized was very successful for the Friends of the Forest Preserves in Chicago. In the Calumet area, near Chicago, invasive plants have taken hold and spread aggressively in unattended green spaces. The aggressive growth of invasive plants means regular maintenance is important. The Friends of the Forest Preserves use a conservation corps model to train youth to identify and remove invasive plants, helping the ecosystem recover. The training that these young people receive includes certifications for things like conducting a controlled burn to let fire clear an area. This training has helped several graduates of the program find jobs in environment restoration work and so this project has been able to impact individual lives as well as ecological restoration.⁴⁹
- C. **Race-explicit Environmental Justice.** Currently circulating Requests for Applications do not emphasize the value of Environmental Justice and community engagement and there is an opportunity for new language to be added that includes both. The Request for Applications from 2015 describes Environmental Justice in relationship to community engagement, but the application is problematically race-neutral: “Environmental Justice concerns generally relate to issues that have resulted in some communities being more adversely, disproportionately, and/or historically impacted by environmental issues and problems than other communities because of location, poverty, income levels, etc.”⁴⁸ This contrasts notably with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s definition of Environmental Justice as including race and national origin as a consideration.⁵
- D. **Match and shovel ready.** Additionally, there are opportunities to expand the competitive pool of grant applicants by decreasing match requirements and downplaying the benefits of “shovel-ready” projects. Both criteria benefit larger organizations that can leverage outside funds and accomplish preparatory activities needed to justify the proposal’s impact. Within the last two years, a recurrent invasive species grant changed criteria to include match funds. The successful conservation corps model shared above from the Friends of the Forest Preserves is now unable to secure a grant because of the new barrier of match funding. This new emphasis on match funding is a blow to community organizing that fought for jobs and healthy green spaces. In order to attract new grantees from smaller institutions, and a wider variety of funding recipients, match requirements need to be decreased. In some recent Requests for Applications, including the Trash Free Waters application, match funding is not required nor are “shovel-ready” projects given preference, which seems to be a positive change.
- E. **Examples of Environmental Justice work.** There is an opportunity to provide concrete examples of Environmental Justice in the outcomes and outputs section of Request for Applications. Projects that include these community engagement plans could also be given additional points. In reviewing the 2015 and 2016 grant language, there is a disconnect between the priorities listed at the beginning of the Request for Applications—where Environmental Justice is named—and the examples given in the project outputs and outcomes provided later in the grant application. For example, the 2015 grant application had a section addressing invasive species prevention and the outputs included “technology and methods that prevent the introduction of invasive species.” This output could be modified or another output could be

included around blocking pathways for invasive species in communities where subsistence fishing is high. Being more direct could provide applicants with greater guidance on what the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is looking for in assessing project proposals to fund.

3. Areas of Concern

Currently, the Areas of Concern—high pollution areas throughout the Great Lakes identified in 1987—have a built-in value for public engagement.¹⁵ Each of these polluted sites has an associated Public Advisory Council made up of community members and tasked with representing public interests in key decision points in the restoration and clean-up process. These councils help prioritize work and are consulted mid-way through restoration projects.

- A. **Public engagement goals.** While the value of public engagement is important, in practice it is inconsistent. There do not seem to be any standards for community representation, either in the leadership of the Public Advisory Councils or in public engagement. Several reports agree that representation is an issue: “we noted profound similarities in barriers to [Area of Concern] progress; the most prominent involving communication and outreach to the broader community. We found that the communities who live within the neighborhood of [Area of Concern] waters are largely unaware of the [Area of Concern] program and its mission to restore their local water resources, due in part to a lack of concerted and organized [Area of Concern]-specific communication.”⁵⁰ A lack of community engagement is a problem for the Public Advisory Councils associated with the Areas of Concern. This is also a concern that is shared by several Public Advisory Councils along with a desire to expand the representation and engagement in their communities.⁵¹ The long-term support for the restored area is likely to be diminished, as the community is unaware of why work is being done.
- B. **Awareness of Public Advisory Councils.** Even within the Great Lakes Advocacy community, awareness of the Public Advisory Councils is low. The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition is made up of active Great Lakes advocates, but in surveying 85 Coalition member organizations, one-third were unaware of the existence of these groups. For such engaged Great Lakes advocates, this number seems alarmingly high. More organizations and communities in the Great Lakes region would benefit from understanding how Public Advisory Councils work, when they can provide input on projects, and how decisions are made.
- C. **Timing of public input.** As a result of the standard timeline for Public Advisory Council input, public guidance on specific projects starts out significantly constrained. Often, engagement seems to start after the initial scope of the project has been defined by those implementing the project. Public input has had a significant impact on a few projects. The Kinnickinnic River in Milwaukee is an example of good public input. The Kinnickinnic had been confined with concrete walls, to create a narrow channel through the city, but this had led to serious flooding problems for houses near the river. By removing the concrete walls and creating a low-lying grassy area, the river would have room to overflow its banks, and space for the excess water to soak into the soil. Before this vision could be realized, the community—which includes many low-income and Hispanic individuals—needed to weigh in because the project would displace more than 60 families. By working with the community, the project leaders found new housing for displaced families and built up support for the restoration work. As a bonus, the community collaboratively designed a park for the floodplain so that it could be used by the neighborhood to stay connected to their river. Working with community members ahead of time yielded more impressive results and support than a project without input.⁵²

4. Framing

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has an opportunity to frame the program in a way that balances community revitalization with ecological restoration. Currently, the specific needs, barriers, and interests of communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities are not considered to be a goal of the Initiative.

- A. **Ecosystem restoration only.** As previously mentioned, some interviewees associated with the *Sustainable Shoreline Green Infrastructure Implementation* grant shared that a lack of community engagement made sense. They felt there was no engagement because the project was technical and largely surrounded by manufacturing facilities near the beach. While it seems that person involved in this project was missing information about community engagement that did occur, the perception of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects as just an ecological restoration program that is separate from community needs, especially when facing structural oppression, is not uncommon. Indeed, the idea that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative should not be responsible for racial justice was a refrain heard from current Environmental Protection Agency staff. Other interviewees not associated with the agency raised similar objections to connecting the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to social justice. This perception reveals a deep challenge for the agency and our wider culture to see the interconnectedness of people's problems with ecological problems. Since there are structural disparities in how people accrue and receive benefits, like the ones outlined in the introduction, these will show up in the outcomes of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. For example, if you live in a formerly redlined neighborhood, chances are you will be further from outdoor recreation opportunities, face higher heating and cooling bills, and live in an underfunded school district.³⁴ Green infrastructure projects, environmental education resources, and other investments from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative could have a positive impact on the environment and on revitalizing the community.
- B. **Privilege and inequitable benefits.** Without intentionally understanding how Great Lakes Restoration Initiative investments are benefiting individuals or communities, people who hold more power will have a disproportionately easy time accessing the economic and ecological benefits of the restoration. The combination of cleaning up waterfronts, developing these areas with mixed use development, and not creating jobs for people who live in those communities results in gentrification.⁵³ The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative does not exist in a vacuum and therefore it is in the program's interest to bring an Environmental Justice frame, with awareness of systemic oppression, to all its work. It is not the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative alone to overcome these structural barriers, but the Great Lakes will not be fully restored if only selective communities are healthy and others are not. Therefore collaborative, community-based inclusion is a requirement for success and it *is* the responsibility of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to do its part to create just and equitable systems that foster collaborative engagement and seek to undermine patterns of oppression.

5. Other issues

There are a few additional observations worth sharing that do not fall into a theme. Some of these are ideas that became apparent in reading more about the processes followed by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. And some of these came up in the course of thinking critically about procedural justice opportunities that exist in areas outside of only the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

- A. **Public engagement opportunity in the Action Plan.** Every five years the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative undertakes a region-wide project of public engagement as part of creating the next strategic plan. Known as the Action Plan, these public meetings are an opportunity to provide feedback on the priorities that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has set out for itself as well as set the vision for the next five years. There is an opportunity here to make explicit

plans for engaging communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in these conversations.

- B. Tribal community funding and number of grants.** In selecting case studies for this project, it was important to establish some baseline information for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. This baseline information included gathering data about the types of organizations receiving grants: agencies, Tribal governments, local governments, nonprofits or businesses, and schools and universities. In comparing the dollar amount of grants given with the number of grants, a discrepancy emerged for tribal grants.

Grant Types	GLRI # of grants	GLRI \$ of grants
To Agency	54%	56%
To Tribal Government	12%	3%
To Local Government	18%	27%
To Nonprofit/Business	10%	8%
To Schools	6%	6%

Grants to Indigenous communities and governments seem to be for smaller dollar amounts than grants for other types of recipients. It is not clear why this is and it should be looked into. Other differences between the number of grants and the monetary amount of grants seem explainable—for example toxic pollution projects receive higher monetary grants because these projects are consistently very costly to clean up (see appendix A).

- C. Ongoing Environmental Justice work.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has an office of Environmental Justice and leads the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice. The Agency also has a strategic plan for this work, known as EJ 2020 Action Agenda.⁵ Within this plan there are some opportunities for collaboration with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, including the following strategies (wording taken directly from the Action Agenda): *Goal 1, deepen Environmental Justice practice within EPA programs to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities*

- Promote the use of decision support tools for identifying and prioritizing environmental concerns, assessing cumulative impacts and evaluating mitigation options.
- Address special focus areas: (a) promote tribal sustainability and well-being and (b) advance efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change in vulnerable communities.

Goal 2, work with partners to expand our positive impact within overburdened communities

- Support peer-to-peer learning to identify best practices on how to address environmental justice concerns.
- Foster cross-program discussion, planning and actions to build program capacity.
- Seek opportunities to catalyze revitalization of overburdened communities through federal partnerships that connect protection of public health and the environment with economic development, land development, infrastructure investment and resiliency planning.
- Foster the capacity of EPA and our sister federal agencies to meaningfully address environmental justice concerns through the use and continued development of environmental justice tools, resources, and ways to integrate environmental justice into programs and policies of all agencies.
- Expand the positive impact of EPA’s efforts by building stronger on-the-ground partnerships with communities and involving government, academia, business, philanthropy and other sectors.

- Build the capacity of communities to take part in critical environmental and public health issues that impact them through the sharing of tools and other resources.
- Strengthen consideration of federally recognized tribes' and indigenous peoples' issues, their involvement in EPA's decision-making processes, and responsiveness to their concerns when EPA directly implements federal environmental programs.
- Help federally recognized tribal governments build capacity and promote tribal action on environmental justice.
- Reduce disproportionate impacts, improve engagement, promote meaningful involvement, and improve responsiveness to the environmental justice concerns of indigenous peoples.
- Promote intergovernmental coordination and collaboration to address EJ concerns in Indian country and in areas of interest to tribes and indigenous peoples throughout the United States.

Recommendations

From the findings gathered through case study analysis, conversations, and relevant reports, the following next steps are recommended.

1. Begin to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.
2. Ensure representative community engagement is a requirement for Area of Concern Public Advisory Councils.
3. Expand the restoration narrative to address racial and socioeconomic injustice.

Begin to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

Currently, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice strategic plan has already made a commitment to incorporate Environmental Justice into everything they do by 2020.³⁷

Furthermore, each federal agency is obligated under Executive Order 12898 to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”⁶ One way to live up to this vision is to begin applying it to a successful program coordinated by the Agency—the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

The findings section outlines the opportunity to formalize community engagement as well as concrete adjustments that should be made to the Request for Applications process. By beginning to incorporate Environmental Justice throughout the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative the program would work to counteract systems of structural oppression, especially as they commonly play out in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities where they live, work, play, and pray. Many of the agencies on the Environmental Justice Interagency Task Force overlap with those overseeing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects, including the Department of the Interior, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Transportation, and the Department of Health and Human Services.⁵⁴ There are opportunities for interagency learning to take place.

Specifically, agency staff implementing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative should:

- Provide additional Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants to communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities, recognizing ecosystem restoration can also revitalize our communities at the same time. Consider creating a new focus area as a bridge to eventually integrating this throughout all focus areas of the program.
- Restore previously used language in Requests for Applications that prioritized Environmental Justice, community engagement, and contracting with disadvantaged business enterprises.
- Coordinate with the Environmental Justice Interagency Working Group on ways to expand Environmental Justice and community engagement within the program. This aligns with strategies co-led by the Office of Water and Region 5 in the second goal of the EJ 2020 Action Agenda, including “fostering cross-program discussions, planning, and actions” and “support peer-to-peer learning to identify best practices on how to address environmental justice concerns.”⁵⁵
- Recognizing public input on Action Plan IV is another venue for community engagement, start the next process earlier and with intention towards community outreach and engagement with communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- Hold federal agencies accountable to community engagement and procedural justice outcomes for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Consider tactics that involve Congressional allies early on, such as a legislative task force.

- Get to know organizations in the region that are already doing Environmental Justice work. Explore partnerships where the Coalition is not the leader and understand trust-building and repair may be needed.
- Advocate for federal programs to be evaluated on equitable outcomes regardless of intent, overturning the Sandoval decision.⁷
- Seek an explanation for the small dollar amounts in Indigenous nation Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding.

Ensure representative community engagement is a requirement for Area of Concern Public Advisory Councils.

Currently, the Areas of Concern, some of the most polluted places around the Great Lakes region, have a built-in structure for public engagement that is influenced at the Federal, State, and sometimes local levels. There are currently no community representation standards for the Public Advisory Councils to meet and so public engagement is inconsistent across the region. Additionally, the standard engagement timeline with Public Advisory Councils seems to be midway through a project, leaving little room for significant feedback or course-correction if members of the community have concerns.

A best practice for community engagement is to involve representatives in decision-making through the length of the project, including in discussions that define the problem and solutions.⁹ The Public Advisory Councils will be strongest if they represent—demographically and socioeconomically—the community they are in. As the findings show, there are consistent shortfalls in the current Public Advisory Council structure including transparency in the decision-making process and representative community engagement as recurring themes.

Specifically, individuals at the federal and state level who implement and support Areas of Concern should:

- Set standards around community representation and inclusion that include demographic and socioeconomic indicators.
- Adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing as standards for Public Advisory Councils.⁹
- Hold Public Advisory Councils accountable to meeting representative standards and Jemez Principles for engagement and tie funding to meeting these metrics. Be prepared to shift power and change leadership if these metrics are not being met.
- As Public Advisory Councils are meeting representative standards and following Jemez Principles, include them earlier in the decision-making process to ensure projects are meeting community needs.
- Allocate funding to implement these changes, including cultural competency training for staff and compensation for community organizations that participate in the council work.

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- Use the Coalition network to raise awareness of Public Advisory Councils throughout the region as a way to bolster representative community engagement.
- Adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing.⁹
- Offer training and resources on cultural competencies within Coalition membership and ensure these are multiracial spaces with accountability to people of color and Indigenous people.

Expand the restoration narrative to address racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic injustice.

Currently, the connection between people and nature is generalized in framing for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The Initiative website says that the program’s long-term goals include: “fish safe to eat, water safe for recreation, [and] safe source of drinking water”—but for whom?⁴³ Different people face different barriers to safe fish, safe outdoor recreation, and safe drinking water, and often these differences are associated with demographic traits and systemic oppression.⁸ Therefore, in order to achieve its goals,

the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative needs to address injustice and systemic oppression. By remaining neutral on the analysis of oppression, the benefits from the program are disproportionately accruing to people who do not face systemic barriers like those listed in the introduction. Environmental racism and sacrifice zones mean that representative community engagement and procedural justice will not just accidentally happen. Intentionality is needed to overcome the barriers of structural oppression.

The way some interviewees saw the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative—often as just an ecosystem restoration program, disconnected from a project of social revitalization and justice—confirms this narrative must change. An overwhelming amount of data, research, and stories make it impossible to deny structural oppression.* And yet this reality remains controversial and is denied by many people in the United States.⁵⁵ The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the wider advocacy community need to both consistently acknowledge and address systems of oppression, while also uniting people around a common cause. Naming differences, especially by racial and socio-economic identity, can undermine collective action and prevent people seeing themselves as part of a larger project. However, denying a history of oppression does not give us the tools to address systemic oppression either. It will be important to understand how to talk about this work as a way to build power and engagement, because this will lead to transformational change.

Specifically, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition should:

- Frame ecosystem restoration successes by including human impacts, especially in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities.
- Conduct polling and messaging research on a race-class message that names differences and also unites people to support a collective action.^{12, 13}
- Expand Coalition messaging materials using a race-class message and provide a model for other advocates and elected leaders.
- Demand and support the centrality of human rights in environmental issues.

Recommendations for Future Work

Given the breadth of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and the complexity of systems of oppression, these findings are certain to be incomplete. Future work would benefit from including greater representation in interviews and more exploration of parts of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative not included here.

Importantly, this analysis is missing direct input from those communities most impacted by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative case studies. For example, in the *Fond du Lac Sustainable Fish and Wildlife program*, it would have been helpful to speak with several members of the Fond du Lac Band to include their perspective to my understanding of how procedural engagement is working. The author does not have the trusting relationships that are necessary to gather this level of deep community feedback. While this report is not presuming to speak for any particular community in providing these recommendations, it hopes to emphasize the value of taking the time to understand what different communities want and need, particularly communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities. To the extent that future work can directly engage community leaders, outcomes and findings will be strengthened.

Future work should also include a greater investigation into the language in Interagency Grant Agreements. These agreements are set up between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the 14 other agencies that receive funding to implement Initiative priorities. Implementation requirements and practices in regards to community engagement, disadvantaged business enterprises, and the interconnectedness of social injustice and the environment may be very different for different agencies.

*For more information, see citations 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 18-24, 28-30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 53, and 56.

External grant Request for Applications only tell part of the story, with a bit more than half the funding staying internal to different federal agencies (see appendix A). The Government Accountability Office has been asked to provide oversight before, and has praised the efficiency of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.¹ Future studies from the Government Accountability Office and others should explore opportunities that the Interagency Grant Agreement language may or may not present.

Additionally, this project is limited to exploring procedural justice opportunities for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Processes used to gather input and make decisions are just one aspect of justice. Future work should include an investigation of distributive justice (who benefits from the outcomes of the program) and restorative justice (what is needed to make communities whole given past events like industrial pollution and settler colonialism). These are vast and complex ideas. A federal task force may be more well suited to investigating these topics given the role the government needs to play in their solutions.

Conclusion

The recommendations provided in this report are a starting point for more expansive and deeper conversations that should center the voices and needs of those most impacted by environmental harm. There are several opportunities for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to increase procedural justice in its work. The findings show that current Requests for Applications place little or no emphasis on community engagement. Helpfully, previous versions of the Request for Applications include language that should be reinstated and, in some places, revised to emphasize the importance of Environmental Justice, community engagement, and subcontracting to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises. The findings also show that the Public Advisory Councils that are associated with Areas of Concern have a desire to be more representative of their communities. Besides setting goals for what representative community engagement might look like, there are also opportunities to influence the culture of organizing in the Public Advisory Councils by adopting and practicing the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. Finally, as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency administers the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative there is a leadership opportunity to not only implement these recommendations, but to expand upon them as well. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also leads the Interagency Task Force on Environmental Justice and should rely on the expertise within the agency to ensure the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative's impact is equitable and just.

Many of the suggested next steps involve the U.S. Environmental Agency. This centrality is because the culture of the Agency has a significant impact on priorities of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. It is critical that the Agency show leadership in demonstrating the interconnectedness of injustice for people and degradation of nature, with specific attention to people and communities that have been most negatively impacted by pollution, disinvestment, and disenfranchisement. Furthermore, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a framework for these changes because of its leadership of the Environmental Justice Interagency Task Force and administering the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The long-term success of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will be bolstered when all communities see the benefits—both ecological and economic—of these projects. To do this, Environmental Justice ultimately needs to be incorporated into every aspect of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's work—not just the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative.

While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has the ability to lead changes from a position of authority over the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, there are also opportunities for the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition to help the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative make these changes. By responding to the findings that the Request for Applications should emphasize community engagement and Environmental Justice, the Coalition also has an opportunity to connect with long-standing Environmental Justice organizations working in communities of color, Indigenous communities, and low-income communities in the region. These organizations are already working on the needs in their communities and have direct connections with those most impacted by environmental degradation. By working in partnership, the Coalition can be a bridge to potentially new financial resources through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Additionally, the Coalition can elevate the voices of these Environmental Justice leaders to Members of Congress and agency staff, providing new venues for feedback that will strengthen the Initiative. Relatedly, the Coalition should adopt the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing. These principles are often adhered to by Environmental Justice organizations and, by making this change, the Coalition can model the recommendation being made to the Public Advisory Councils. Finally, there is a persistent understanding that the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is just an ecological restoration program that is not concerned with social issues. The Coalition has a unique and powerful role to play in changing this narrative and expanding the Initiative's framing. By conducting message testing, by modeling a race-class message in communications, and by raising social issues in advocacy settings, the Coalition has the opportunity to make the social value of the Great Lakes

Restoration Initiative more explicitly connected to the ecological and economic benefits that are already associated with the program. The Environmental Justice movement has been making these connections for years, so there are plenty of leaders to learn from in this work.

Taking steps towards justice will require work from us all, because systems of oppression are complex and intertwined, and no single person or group controls these structures. Therefore, we all have a role to play, whether we are an interested community member, the head of a federal agency, a well-known community elder, or a part of an advocacy organization. There is not just one right way to show up to make change towards justice. Environmental Justice is a commitment and a practice that centers the voices of those most impacted and works towards a future where all people, regardless of their race or background, have a healthy environment in which to live, work, play, and pray. This report calls out specific suggestions and also encourages readers to explore solutions beyond the ones presented here. This report calls out specific actors who can lead now and also encourages readers to see how they can begin to make changes in their own spheres of influence.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has made progress restoring ecosystems throughout the Great Lakes while providing an economic boost for the region. However, we have more work to do before the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is engaging, benefiting, and responding to the restorative justice needs of *all* communities in our region. The good news is that we can work together to bring Environmental Justice principles into the fabric and outcomes of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The longer we delay, the harder and more expensive this work becomes.

**Appendix A: Funding Breakdown by Focus Area, Place, Agency, and Grant Type
GLRI Data from September 2019 for consideration:**

Focus area

Focus Area	By # of grants given	By \$ of grants given
1. Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern	19%	34%
2. Invasive Species	13%	17%
3. Nonpoint Source Pollution Impacts on Nearshore Health	12%	13%
4. Habitats and Species	40%	22%
5. Foundations for Future Restoration Actions	10%	6%
Multiple Focus Areas	7%	8%

Place-based

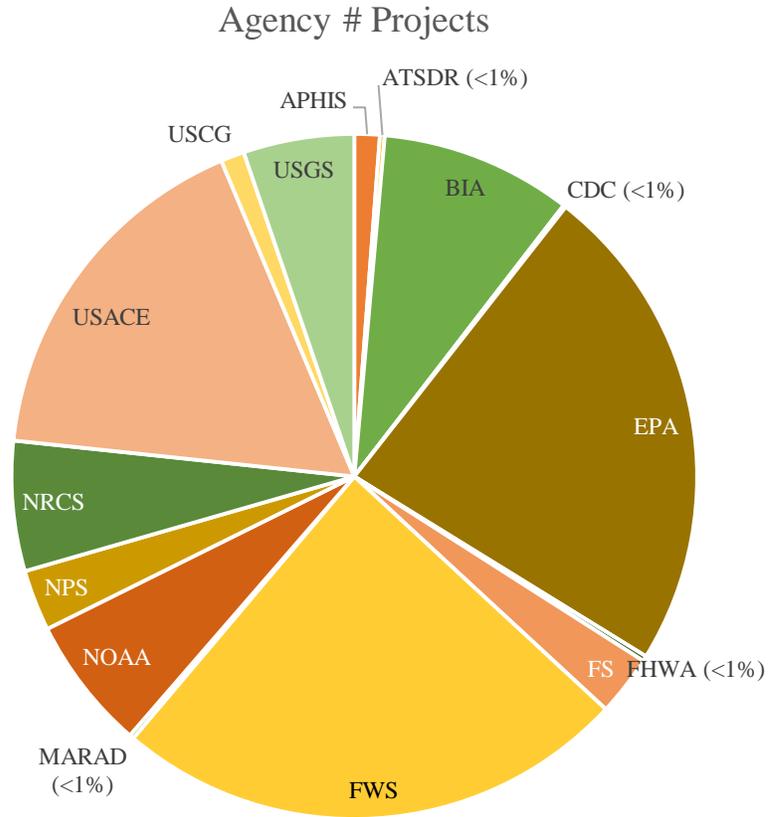
Place	By # of grants given	By \$ of grants given
Illinois	5%	7%
Indiana	4%	5%
Michigan	20%	23%
Minnesota	4%	3%
Multiple	26%	26%
New York	10%	8%
Ohio	8%	9%
Pennsylvania	1%	0.5%
Tribal (32 different areas)	12%	3%
Wisconsin	10%	15%

Overall types of GLRI funding show there is a difference when looking at the number of grants and amount of grants as a percentage of overall GLRI funding.

Grant Types	GLRI # of grants	GLRI \$ of grants
To Agency	54%	56%
To Tribal Government	12%	3%
To Local Government	18%	27%
To Nonprofit/Business	10%	8%
To Schools	6%	6%

Federal Agencies
Administering Grants
(BOLD – top 5 number of grants, ITALIC – top 5 funding grants)

- Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (1%)
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (<1%)
- **Bureau of Indian Affairs (9%)**
- Centers for Disease Control (<1%)
- ***Environmental Protection Agency (23%)***
- Federal Highway Administration (<1%)
- Forest Service (3%)
- ***Fish and Wildlife Service (24%)***
- Maritime Administration (<1%)
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (6%)**
- National Parks Service (3%)
- *Natural Resources Conservation Service (6%)*
- ***U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (17%)***
- U.S. Coast Guard (1%)
- *U.S. Geological Survey (5%)*



Appendix B: Questions Asked of Case Study Interviewees

- How was the contract or grant RFP worded? How are the perspectives of community members valued at this stage? Was there a commitment in the RFP or agreement to fund community engagement?
- What did the agency do to engage community members? How is the agency measuring the benefit of this project to the community?
- How are grants scored? How is engagement of MBE/WBE's valued?
- What community engagement did you end up doing, if any? How have you assessed the benefits of the project to the community? Were there any unexpected outcomes in this project—good or bad? Who do your employees represent—the community, demographically?
- Is community engagement around the project on-going, now that funding has concluded? How did you set out to measure success? If you were doing this again, would you do anything differently?

As appropriate, these are additional questions to consider:

- If there was an interagency agreement or contract agreement, what was in it? How are projects prioritized?
- If you engaged the community that would be impacted by the project prior to applying for funds, how was that done?
- If funding stayed at an agency, how was that determined?
- If the grant that was awarded differs from the RFP language, in what ways does it differ?
- If you received any matching funding, from where and for what?
- If there were any community engagements required as part of the grant, what did that look like?
- For AOC projects specifically: how were the public advisory councils (or other name) engaged as part of your project? How are the PACs structured—how do they work and who runs them?

Additional questions, outside of the case studies. To answer these questions, I will reach out to the Great Lakes National Program Office, case study grant recipients, coalition members, and folks at Freshwater Future (who have years of experience helping organizations build capacity to compete for GLRI grants).

- Besides the coalition, what does the public engagement with the federal appropriations process around GLRI look like? Who is organizing this work and which constituencies are telling the story of GLRI?
- What barriers exist to organizations applying for GLRI dollars in the first place? What barriers exist for community members to engage, even when projects actively seek engagement?
- How can what we've learned translate into advice for Action Plan IV community engagement and input?
- The Interagency Task Force is charged with “advancing collaboration among [various federal agencies] ...and with the Great Lakes States, local communities, tribes, regional bodies, and other interests in the Great Lakes region regarding policies, strategies, plans, programs, projects, activities, and priorities for the Great Lakes system.” How are local communities included in collaboration currently? How should they be?

Appendix C: Descriptions of Case Studies and Nearby Demographics

Overview

These 11 case studies were selected from completed projects funded by the U.S. EPA, the Fish and Wildlife Service, or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, granted in 2016 and 2017. From there, projects were selected to represent a range of states, tribal governments, focus areas, and grant types as defined in our parameter document.

<u>Granting Agency</u>	<u>Focus Areas</u>	<u>Grant Types</u>
U.S. EPA - 4	Toxic Substances - 2	To Agency – 5
U.S. Army Corps - 3	Invasive Species -2	To Tribal Government – 3
U.S. FWS - 4	Nonpoint Pollution -2	To Local Government – 2
	Habitat Restoration – 4	To Nonprofit – 1
	Future Restoration - 1	

Detailed Case Study Descriptions

Location | Granting Agency Funds | Grantee | Focus Area

Lake Superior Coastal Wetland Protection: Kakagon Sloughs Land Acquisition

Ashland Co., Wis. | U.S. EPA \$318,800 | Bad River Band Lake Superior Chippewa | Habitat Restoration

This project will purchase 260 acres within the Kakagon and Bad River Sloughs complex in northern Wisconsin along the Lake Superior coastline. This land purchase and return of land to tribal protection and management will significantly reduce fragmentation of this globally important and recognized coastal wetland. The recipient will protect into perpetuity 260 acres of coastal habitat including 210 acres of wetlands.

Data from U.S. Census, Ashland Co., Wis.

Rural

Persons in poverty – 15.1%

White – 82.2%

African-American – 0.5%

Indigenous – 11.5%

Asian – 0.5%

Multiracial – 3.5%

Hispanic/Latinx – 3%

Fond du Lac Sustainable Fish and Wildlife Program

Cloquet, Minn. | U.S. EPA \$44,074 | Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa | Future Restoration

The Fond du Lac Ceded Territories Fisheries Biologist and Natural Resources Program will conduct the following five projects: 1) Conduct fisheries assessments to evaluate walleye spawning success and recruitment in 19 lakes within the Lake Superior Basin, 2) Mapping of the St. Louis River habitat, 3) Surveying adult spawning population of lake sturgeon in the lower St. Louis River, Area of Concern (AOC), 4) Working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, sampling the lower St. Louis River AOC for invasive species, and 5) Participation in the annual moose survey in Northeast Minnesota.

Data from U.S. Census, Cloquet, Minn.

Rural

Persons in poverty – 14%

White – 82.2%
African-American – 1.3%
Indigenous – 9.9%
Asian – 0.8%
Multiracial – 4.1%
Hispanic/Latinx – 2.4%

Sustainable Shoreline Green Infrastructure Implementation

Waukegan, Ill. | U.S. EPA \$375,000 | City of Waukegan | Nonpoint Pollution

The City of Waukegan, Illinois, will construct vegetated drainage systems (bioswales) at the parking lot adjacent to Waukegan Beach to filter and reduce the flow of stormwater. The bioswales will reduce beach closures and 1.1 million gallons of untreated stormwater (and associated sediments, nutrients, and pathogens) from discharging into Lake Michigan annually.

Data from U.S. Census, Waukegan, Ill.

Urban

Persons in poverty – 17.8%

White – 19.8%
African-American – 17.3%
Indigenous – 0.4%
Asian – 5.1%
Multiracial – 3.6%
Hispanic/Latinx – 55.4%

Great Lakes Legacy Act Grand Calumet River Area of Concern Stateline Remedial Action

Hammond, Ind. | U.S. EPA \$990,180 | U.S. EPA | Toxic Substances

The Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) West Branch of the Grand Calumet River (WBGCR) Reaches 6 & 7 Stateline Remedial Action and Habitat Restoration Project within the Grand Calumet River AOC in Hammond, IN. The overall project objectives is [sic] to remediate contaminated sediments in a 0.4 mile stretch of the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Hohman Avenue and the Indiana/Illinois Stateline (designated as Reaches 6 and 7), which will facilitate removing beneficial use impairments (BUIs) and delisting the Grand Calumet Area of Concern.

Data from U.S. Census, Hammond, Ind.

Urban

Persons in poverty – 22.2%

White – 39.3%
African-American – 21.4%
Indigenous – 0.3%
Asian – 1.3%
Multiracial – 3.9%
Hispanic/Latinx – 36.6%

Implementation of Tribal ANS Plan

Baraga Co., Mich. | U.S. FWS \$99,958 | Keweenaw Bay Indian Community | Invasive Species

Tribe will implement priority Great Lakes actions identified in Aquatic Nuisance Species Plan to prevent new introductions and control existing aquatic nuisance species.

Data from U.S. Census, Baraga Co., Mich.

Rural

Persons in poverty – 16.7%

White – 72.3%

African-American – 7.9%

Indigenous – 14.2%

Asian – 0.3%

Multiracial – 4.5%

Hispanic/Latinx – 1.6%

Lake Huron Lake Trout and Lake Sturgeon Restoration Activities

Michigan | U.S. FWS \$381,821 | Department of Interior | Habitat Restoration

In support of lake trout restoration efforts on Lake Huron, Alpena FWCO staff will conduct lake trout spawning surveys at two spawning reefs, juvenile surveys in two northern Lake Huron management units, and perform lake trout stock-assessment modeling analysis, and data analysis to evaluate progress in meeting goals of lake trout rehabilitation efforts, and participated in interagency collaborative efforts to guide the restoration program in Lake Huron. Using GLRI funds: Lake sturgeon surveys will be conducted in Lake Huron and the Huron-Erie Corridor. Adult lake sturgeon assessments will be conducted in the Huron-Erie Corridor. This data is used to obtain population information. Juvenile lake sturgeon surveys will be conducted in Lake Huron and Lake Erie. The Alpena FWCO manages the Great Lakes Sturgeon Tagging Database and works with commercial fishermen tagging sturgeon in Lakes Huron and Erie. Management plans are being developed.

Data from U.S. Census, Mich. Counties on Lakes Huron and Erie

Majority Rural

Persons in poverty – 17.7%, range 11-22%

White – 65.5%

African-American – 24.5%

Indigenous – 0.5%

Asian – 3.1%

Multiracial – 2.4%

Hispanic/Latinx – 4.69%

Great Lakes Remedial Action Plan - St. Louis River Area of Concern

Duluth, Minn. | U.S. Army Corps \$94,800 | Department of Defense | Toxic Substances

Slip 3 involves providing design and technical support to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for the capping of contaminated sediments. The goal of the project is the removal of Beneficial Use Impairments and ultimately the delisting of St. Louis River as an Area of Concern. FY17 funds were used to complete the design and finish the project.

Data from U.S. Census, Duluth, Minn.

Urban

Persons in poverty – 20.3%

White – 88.4%

African-American – 2.7%

Indigenous – 1.9%

Asian – 1.7%

Multiracial – 3.4%
Hispanic/Latinx – 2.3%

Aquatic Plant Control Times Beach Demonstration

Buffalo, N.Y. | U.S. Army Corps \$14,935 | Department of Defense | Invasive Species

Times Beach is a dredged material disposal facility located on the shore of Buffalo Harbor in Buffalo, NY and adjacent to the Niagara River Area of Concern. This project is demonstrating new and improved management strategies against invasive aquatic plants, including Phragmites. The project will restore 31 acres of wetland habitat adjacent to the Area of Concern. The FY 2017 GLRI funds were used for two chemical treatment plans, implementation of the restoration plan, and development of a transition plan to transfer the project (upon project closure estimated to occur in calendar year 2017) to Erie County, NY, the non-federal customer.

Data from U.S. Census, Buffalo, N.Y.

Urban

Persons in poverty – 30.9%

White – 44%

African-American – 37.1%

Indigenous – 0.4%

Asian – 5.2%

Multiracial – 3.8%

Hispanic/Latinx – 11.3%

Expanding the Protection and Restoration of Hach-Otis Sanctuary and State Nature Preserve

Willoughby, Ohio | U.S. FWS \$203,905 | Western Reserve Land Conservancy | Habitat Restoration

Permanently protect 80 acres of riparian and upland forest habitat along the Chagrin River, a Lake Erie tributary in northeastern Ohio. Project will preserve high-quality stream habitat for numerous native species including brook trout and lake sturgeon.

Data from U.S. Census, Willoughby, Ohio

Urban

Persons in poverty – 8.2%

White – 89.8%

African-American – 5.9%

Indigenous – 0.2%

Asian – 1.9%

Multiracial – 1.4%

Hispanic/Latinx – 1%

Improving Aquatic Connectivity in the Genesee River Watershed

Potter Co., Pa. | U.S. FWS \$99,477 | Potter County Conservation District | Habitat Restoration

Replace a culvert to improve aquatic habitat connectivity and significantly reduce sediment input to a headwater tributary of the Genesee River. Project will reopen 10 stream miles and stabilize 2.5 miles of an adjacent road to improve passage and instream habitat for brook trout and other aquatic organisms.

Data from U.S. Census, Potter Co., Pa.

Rural

Persons in poverty – 16.5%

White – 96.5%

African-American – 0.7%

Indigenous – 0.4%

Asian – 0.4%

Multiracial – 0.9%

Hispanic/Latinx – 1.4%

Underwood Creek, Wauwatosa

Wauwatosa, Wis. | U.S. Army Corps \$1,124,900 | Department of Defense | Nonpoint Pollution

The project is the reach of the River between the confluence at Menomonee River and the Canadian Pacific Railroad bridge in the City of Wauwatosa. The project involved the removal of 4400' of concrete lining in the river channel with restoration of habitat and fish passage to help eliminate one or more beneficial use impairments in the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern. FY17 funds were used for supervising and administering construction.

Data from U.S. Census, Wauwatosa, Wis.

Urban

Persons in poverty – 7.1%

White – 84.7%

African-American – 4.8%

Indigenous – 0.3%

Asian – 4.4%

Multiracial – 2.8%

Hispanic/Latinx – 3.5%

Appendix D: Excerpts from U.S. EPA Great Lakes National Program Office, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. 2016 Request for Applications

Application would fund:

- Great Lakes Taxonomy and Barcodes to Support Early Detection Monitoring (EPA-R5-GL2016-TAG)
- Invasive Species Control (EPA-R5-GL2016-ISC)
- Foundations for Invasive Species Collaborations (EPA-R5-GL2016-FFC)
- Phosphorus Risk Reduction Pilots in Western Lake Erie Agricultural Watersheds (EPA-R5-GL2016-PRR)
- Agricultural Watershed Management Implementation (EPA-R5-GL2016-AWM)
- Urban Watershed Management Implementation (EPA-R5-GL2016-UWM)
- Agricultural Incentive Program Effectiveness (EPA-R5-GL2016-AIP)

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All projects will be evaluated as described in Section V which also highlights factors that may result in more favorable evaluations, including:

- immediacy and timeliness of project implementation (“**shovel ready**”);
- a clear, rather than a weak, connection to protection and restoration of the **Great Lakes themselves**;
- consideration of the project’s resilience to **climate change**, including any vulnerabilities of the desired results to climate change impacts and/or the integration of climate change adaptation measures into their project to minimize those vulnerabilities;
- use of a **civilian conservation corps model** for project implementation;
- use of **experiential learning opportunities** for grades six through twelve; and
- Funding Opportunity-specific elements as described in Funding Opportunity descriptions in Section I.

EPA is also particularly interested in projects that promote environmental justice by helping to address disproportionate environmental impacts on communities (see Section V.A.4) and/or those where the applicant will engage and work with community-based organizations (as defined in this RFA) and other appropriate parties to address the concerns of local communities. (See Section V.A.4.)

Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs):

EPA recognizes that it is important to engage all available minds to address the environmental challenges the nation faces. At the same time, EPA seeks to expand the environmental conversation by including members of communities which may have not previously participated in such dialogues to participate in EPA programs. For this reason, EPA strongly encourages all eligible applicants identified in Section III, including minority serving institutions, to apply under this opportunity. For purposes of this solicitation, the following are considered MSIs:

1. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061). A list of these schools can be found at White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities;
2. Tribal Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059(c)). A list of these schools can be found at American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities;

3. Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). There is no list of HSIs. HSIs are institutions of higher education that, at the time of application submittal, have an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25% Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application for this grant; and

4. Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(a)(2)). There is no list of AANAPISIs. AANAPISIs are institutions of higher education that, at the time of application submittal, have an enrollment of undergraduate students that is not less than 10 % students who are Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander.

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The term “**community-based organization**” means a non-governmental organization that has demonstrated effectiveness as a representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that helps members of that community or segment obtain environmental, educational, or other social services. A community-based organization must be a nonprofit or not for profit corporation in good standing under state or tribal law with authority to enter into binding legal agreements. Such organizations may include, for example, those representing communities with environmental justice concerns (environmental justice concerns generally relate to issues that have resulted in some communities being more adversely, disproportionately, and/or historically impacted by environmental issues and problems than other communities because of location, poverty, income levels, etc.) The community-based organization need not be tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code but may use documentation of tax-exempt status to demonstrate that it is a nonprofit. Nonprofit organizations exempt from taxation under section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying are not eligible to receive grants or subgrants under this RFA. (See Section V.A.4.)

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G. Negotiating Fair Share Objectives/Goals and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE)

Annual Reporting: The requirements of 40 C.F.R. § 33 apply to all assistance agreements awarded under this RFA (see: <http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov> - Participation by disadvantaged business enterprises in United States Environmental Protection Agency Programs). Applicants who do not already have negotiated DBE goals in place will be required to negotiate DBE fair share objectives/goals with the Region 5 DBE Coordinator. The recipient will be required to submit proposed DBE objectives/goals based on an availability analysis, or disparity study, of qualified DBE in their relevant geographic buying market for construction, services, supplies and equipment. In addition, recipients will be required to submit annual DBE Reports to the DBE Coordinator.

Whenever procuring construction, equipment, services and supplies under an EPA financial assistance agreement, the recipient of GLRI funds must undertake good faith efforts to, and ensure that subrecipients, loan recipients, and prime contractors undertake good faith efforts to:

- (1) Ensure that DBEs are made aware of contracting opportunities to the fullest extent practicable through outreach and recruitment activities. For tribal, state and local government recipients, this will include placing DBEs on solicitation lists and soliciting them whenever they are potential sources.
- (2) Make information on forthcoming opportunities available to DBEs and arrange time frames for contracts and establish delivery schedules, where the requirements permit, in a way that encourages and facilitates participation by DBEs in the competitive process. This

includes, whenever possible, posting solicitations for bids or proposals for a minimum of 30 calendar days before the bid or proposal closing date.

(3) Consider in the contracting process whether firms competing for large contracts could subcontract with DBEs. For tribal, state and local government recipients, this will include dividing total requirements when economically feasible into smaller tasks or quantities to permit maximum participation by DBEs in the competitive process.

(4) Encourage contracting with a consortium of DBEs when a contract is too large for one of these firms to handle individually.

(5) Use the services and assistance of the SBA and the Minority Business Development Agency of the Department of Commerce.

(6) If the prime contractor awards subcontracts, require the prime contractor to take the steps in paragraphs (1) through (5) of this section.

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