Great Lakes Fisheries Leadership Institute

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THE INSTITUTE

Problem

Public sentiment is that a disconnect exists among those that manage the fishery and those that utilize it. Members of the public feel they have little impact on management decisions, and lack the ability to make a difference. Stakeholders are uncertain as to who the appropriate people (e.g., researchers, managers, politicians) are to approach regarding resolution of Great Lakes fisheries issues. In an effort to resolve the disconnect, Sea Grant launched a new program called the Great Lakes Fisheries Leadership Institute (GLFLI).

Purpose

The GLFLI is a new Sea Grant program that was designed to provide emerging fishery leaders with the knowledge and skills to effectively interact with Great Lakes fishery management organizations for the benefit of the fishery and its stakeholders. The GLFLI will operate on a state, lake, and regional level.

Participants

The GLFLI targets new leaders of fisheries-related organizations, those likely to become leaders of their organization within the next few years, and those likely to be serving as advisors to Great Lakes fishery-related institutions (e.g., lake committees). Participants in all levels of the GLFLI will represent a variety of organization types (e.g., non-profit governmental organizations, commercial fishermen, charter captains, sportfishing associations, tribes, outdoor writers), and will be nominated by steering committees composed of individuals that represent partner agencies (e.g., Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Great Lakes Fishery Commission) and those in current Great Lakes fishery-leadership positions.

Operation

Initially, participants will represent their respective organizations at state meetings of the GLFLI. State meetings of the GLFLI will focus on issues at the forefront in the respective state. As many individuals as possible will have the opportunity to attend subsequent lake and regional meetings. These meetings will focus on larger scale issues such as how fisheries-management efforts impact a particular lake or the Great Lakes basin as a whole. Core curriculum for all levels will include information on: aquatic science, aquatic nuisance species, fishery habitat, contaminants, fisheries management, funding and politics, public participation, and leadership.

Deliverables

Each state within the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network is responsible for developing similar curriculum on the eight facets of Great Lakes fisheries mentioned in the previous section. The curriculum or "modules" are being compiled by Sea Grant for use in future lake and regional meetings. Illinois-Indiana contributed to the GLFLI core curriculum by developing the Fisheries Habitat Module, which is essentially a compilation and summary of much of the available information on Great Lakes fisheries habitat. The first draft of the module was reviewed by Great Lakes fisheries experts, and is currently being revised. A PowerPoint® presentation was built that highlights many of the key subject areas in the paper module, as well as many of the issues surrounding Great Lakes fisheries habitat. Additionally, each state was responsible for organizing and conducting a state-level meeting of the GLFLI.

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Background

Illinois and Indiana jointly held a day-long meeting of the GLFLI on July 11, 2003 at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in Porter, Indiana. There were 29 attendees, composed of 21 participants representing sportfishing associations (e.g., Perch America, Inc.), commercial fishing (e.g., Atkinson's Fisheries), charter captains (e.g., Pair a Dice Charters, Inc.), and outdoor writers (e.g., Chicago Sun Times). The majority of the participants were current leaders of their respective organizations. Eight instructors representing state or national agencies (e.g., Illinois Natural History Survey, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Great Lakes Fishery Commission) presented information and led facilitated discussions throughout the day.

Issues of Focus

One of the major concerns expressed by organizational leaders during recruiting of participants was that few individuals, if any, which compose current membership fit the criteria of young and upcoming leaders. Organizations recognize that Great Lakes fishery leadership in Illinois-Indiana is "graying". Thus, they are concerned that the importance of fishery issues will fade in the mix of other socioeconomic issues unless the next generation of leaders is identified, supported, and encouraged to become effective participants in influencing Great Lakes fisheries research and management efforts.

Core Curriculum Presentations

Participants listened to a variety of presentations including: goals and objectives of the GLFLI program; history of the Great Lakes community; current fisheries management framework (e.g., lake and technical committees); fisheries management tools (e.g., stocking, regulations); the role of the outdoor press in Great Lakes fisheries; recreational, charter, and commercial fishery perspectives on issues; and research and management efforts.

Facilitated Discussion

Attendees participated in a facilitated discussion that was aimed at aiding organizations in identifying what difficulties exist in recruiting the next generation of leaders, and how to move towards resolving these difficulties. Meeting participants developed a series of challenges and solutions that should help them recruit new leaders. Examples of the challenges and solutions developed during the facilitated discussion are listed below.

Challenge: What qualities should a member of the next generation of leaders possess?
Solutions: Passion for fish and/or fishing, interest in the fisheries resources, time to participate

Challenge: Where should organizations look for new leaders?
Solutions: Broaden search image to beyond traditional fishing memberships and organizations (e.g., high school students, college students, scouts)

Next Steps

The Illinois Natural History Survey, together with Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, will work closely with fisheries-related organizations to develop action items that will help organizations implement many of the solutions they proposed. Representatives of organizations whom were present at the Illinois-Indiana State Meeting of the GLFLI will be invited to attend the Lake Michigan Meeting of the GLFLI on October 3-5, 2003 in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Discussion of several issues raised at the state meeting will be continued, as well as new discussions initiated that will focus on how the actions by state organizations can impact fisheries throughout the Great Lakes basin.

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