

GLBET Islands Committee FY 2003 Action Plan



Prioritization System for Great Lakes Islands:

A flexfund grant was submitted for FY 2003 to fund a project entitled "Development of a Ranking System for Great Lakes Islands." The project has been funded at a level of \$32,890. This money will be coming from five or more funds (R-3 Coastal Program, R-3 Non-game Birds, R-3 Joint Venture, R-3 Challenge Costshare, and one or more funds in Region 5 (TBD)). TNC- Great Lakes will likely be the contractor for the project and has agreed to provide a match of \$15,000.

The project idea evolved using input gathered at the GLBET Island Workshop in Chicago last December and a conference call. The objective of the project is to create a simple, dynamic, and transferable method for prioritizing island groups and associated coastal areas. Management activities that this system would facilitate include justifying permit decisions for COE projects; consulting with other agencies on federally listed species; decision-making for refuge acquisition or conservation easements; developing preliminary project proposals for adding to existing NWR purchase boundaries; identifying data gaps related to the USFWS's trust resources in island and coastal areas; and focusing educational campaigns that promote island conservation. This project will be completed over the course of the next year with ongoing input from involved field stations.

Communications Plan:

At the December Islands subcommittee meeting, team members interested in public outreach met and discussed how best to spread the word about the significance of the Great Lakes islands. They identified a strategy to develop a communications plan, using the following steps:

- 1) Research the tools to create public awareness
- 2) Write an Action Plan to outline the work and to serve as a tool for evaluating results
- 3) Execute the Plan by conveying the message using many different outreach tools
- 4) Evaluate the success of the plan

The communications group hopes to achieve widespread support of this initiative, and would like the team, the islands subcommittee, and other interested stakeholders to be integrated into the planning process so that we can take advantage of this opportunity to lead the way in islands conservation. If this initiative is deemed to have high priority among our outreach needs, work on the communications plan will begin in earnest. It is anticipated that the communications plan can be completed by the end of this fiscal year, and that implementation of the plan can begin soon afterwards.

Decision Support System for Great Lakes Islands:

Efforts to develop a basin-wide Decision Support System for Great Lakes islands will continue throughout this fiscal year. The GIS/DSS Committee has lead on this joint project. See GIS/DSS Action Plan for details.

Presentation at Society for Conservation Biology Annual Meeting:

A presentation entitled “Tools and Partnerships for the Conservation of Great Lakes Islands” has been accepted for the upcoming Society for Conservation Biology annual meeting this summer in Duluth, Minnesota. The presentation will outline the challenges to island conservation, the importance of partnerships to success, and the products that are currently being developed by the GLBET island committee and its partners. The presentation will conclude by inviting the participation of other agencies, non-profits, and tribes in our efforts. The presentation is co-authored by Leslie TeWinkel, Karen Vigmostad, Rich Greenwood, and Megan Seymour.

Framework for the Binational Long-term Conservation of the Great Lakes Islands:

A binational group, led by Karen Vigmostad of the Northeast Midwest Institute, has submitted a grant application to the Great Lakes National Program Office for a \$400,000 grant over 2 years to complete a multi-faceted project with the following products:

- 1) A State of the Islands Report that will identify conservation targets, priority islands, indicators of island health, best management practices, current and future needs, and gaps in protection. This report will be a tool to reach Great Lakes policy and decision makers to inform them about the islands, their importance, and what resources we need to adequately protect the islands.
- 2) A guide for private landowners on how to best manage and conserve island property, specifically shorelines, and the plant and animal species that inhabit it.
- 3) A similar guide for public land managers that identifies successful island management strategies.
- 4) A list of feasible pilot projects that could utilize the island conservation guides to successfully conserve and manage specifically identified island properties. This project will utilize some of the current achievements of the islands subcommittee, including the GIS/DSS basin-wide mapping project, and the recently funded islands ranking system project.

Accepted proposals will be announced this summer, with grants awarded October 2004. If our application is successful, work would begin on the project in October 2004, and would continue through September 2006.

Article in Northeast-Midwest Economic Review:

Karen Vigmostad is writing an article for the widely distributed Northeast-Midwest Economic Review. This article will describe coastal habitat issues including island conservation in the context of a larger scale ecosystem restoration plan for the Great Lakes.