



Ensuring the Healthy Future of Our Waters

Strategic Plan 2012-2013

History

Freshwater Future, then named the Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund, was created in 1996 by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council as an innovative program to help local communities across the Great Lakes region protect their local lakes, rivers and wetlands. With the understanding that citizens' success could be greatly improved with just small amounts of funding, connections to others doing similar work and access to technical expertise, the program was created to meet these needs. Having benefitted from eleven years of incubation under the wing of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, Freshwater Future became a separate 501(c)(3) organization in 2006.

This change allowed Freshwater Future the flexibility to diversify its funding sources, expand programs and build an entrepreneurial staff to help ensure its long-term sustainability. Since 2006,

Freshwater Future's budget has tripled, funds given in grants programs have quadrupled, a paid consulting program has been initiated, policy work has blossomed and the staff has grown from two to six. These transitions have been guided by learning from our clients, supporters and partners, always targeted at providing the best possible support to strengthen the environmental movement and thereby improve the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Vision

We envision:

- A strong and effective environmental community working to protect and restore the Great Lakes and its many waters by involving residents in civic decision-making. This community will be coordinated among citizens, community groups, state/provincial, regional and national groups in a way that creates synergy for the protection and restoration of our Great Lakes region; and
- A healthy Great Lakes ecosystem that supports the economic well-being of the people of the region, provides a sustainable supply of clean drinking water, a sustainable fishery that provides fish that are healthy to eat and clean beaches where it is safe to swim.



Storm The Prelude © Robert de Jonge



Glowing Rocks, Lake Superior – Brenda Jones

Mission

The mission of Freshwater Future is to ensure the healthy future of our waters in the Great Lakes region.

We do this by:

- Building effective Great Lakes advocates and environmental organizations;
- Ensuring policies are in place and enforced to safeguard our waters;
- Bringing together the local efforts of many to create a stronger voice for our waters; and
- Staying abreast of threats to our waters, not waiting for disaster to happen before taking action.



Values

Freshwater Future sees itself as a collaborative and entrepreneurial organization that seeks opinions and partnerships from diverse communities and collaborators, values citizen knowledge and abilities and understands the importance of our natural environment for current and future generations.

Theory of Change

Freshwater Future believes by encouraging the following key activities, we will build an effective environmental movement in the Great Lakes region and thereby protect and restore the water-based resources of the Great Lakes region:

- Building the capacity of groups at all levels will allow each group to focus most effectively on its mission, and collectively those missions will protect our Great Lakes resources.
- Providing personalized services helps groups to fortify their strengths and gain success.
- Taking responsible risks to do the right thing for the region, rather than following secure funding, ensures critical work is accomplished and that we remain committed to our mission.
- Effective citizen engagement at all levels improves the health of our communities and the region because citizens closest to the issues have the knowledge and ability to make a difference.
- Connecting environmental efforts at the local, state/provincial, regional and national levels, most effectively protects and restores the waters of the Great Lakes region by sharing strategies, motivation and expertise.
- Celebrating milestones of success is critical in maintaining motivation toward big wins.





Dune Grass and Lake Michigan – Steven Huyser-Honig

Overall Strategic Direction(s) for 2 years

- Continue to provide and refine our consulting services, grants programs and regional policy coordination to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of organizations working to protect and restore the waters in the Great Lakes region.
- Grow our sponsorship services to provide additional tools that will help make organizations more effective and efficient and more focused on their individual missions.



Lake Michigan Icebergs – Cathy Haverdink

- Increase the visibility of Freshwater Future with citizen advocates, environmental organizations, decision-makers and funders. With an expanded set of services and partners, it is important to communicate what Freshwater Future is now and how it fills its niche.
- Increase activities on the Canadian side of the Great Lakes region. As we grow, it becomes more important to be able to raise funds in Canada in order to provide a deeper level of services, including prioritizing a Canadian staff member.



NASA Goddard Photo

- Maintain our ability to react to new issues and needs in the region quickly. By maintaining our entrepreneurial approach, we will retain the nimbleness necessary to fill gaps as they appear and provide innovative solutions that develop synergy with other groups.
- Continue to build the diversity of the communities and groups we work with as well as the diversity of our staff and board in order to reflect the needs and strengths of all in the region.
- Work that lends itself to a sustainable Freshwater Future.



November Gale – Steven Huyser-Honig

Programmatic Goals

GOAL 1: Policy and Regional Coordination

Create a regional voice for the Great Lakes by launching regional campaigns that sharpen policy work of groups and connect them in meaningful ways on and around the campaigns.

GOAL 2: Grants

Create change by providing funding assistance to passionate citizen and community efforts that advocate for strong environmental laws, the enforcement of environmental regulations, and implement innovative restoration and protection projects.

GOAL 3: Consulting Support

Create an environmental sector in the Great Lakes region that is well equipped, and working to ensure policies are in place and implemented that protect and restore our natural resources by providing consulting services to individuals, groups and coalitions.

GOAL 4: Administrative and Sponsorship Services

Build the effectiveness of unincorporated or non 501(c)(3) groups and help them meet their missions by developing and implementing a set of sponsorship services that allow groups to conduct nonprofit activities without having to become incorporated and increase their infrastructure.

Organizational Infrastructure Goals

GOAL 5: Fundraising

Increase revenue diversity to grow organizational sustainability by continuing to use innovative approaches and partnerships to maintain steady revenue for work toward the mission.

GOAL 6: People/Human Resources

Recruit and retain excellent board and staff members who support the mission and values of Freshwater Future and who can lead change among environmental organizations.

GOAL 7: Marketing/Visibility

Develop new marketing tools including social media and other electronic media to help people understand our current work and its importance to them.

GOAL 8: Administrative Capacity and Efficiency

Provide the most effective administrative capacities possible in order to provide effective leveraging of funds and other resources to help our constituents protect and restore the Great Lakes ecosystem.

Pictured Rocks – James Marvin Phelps



Background Image: Pyramid Pt © Robert de Jonge

