

STRATEGIES OF THE COASTAL ASSEMBLY

The Coastal Assembly pursues strategies to improve collaboration, establish basin-wide conservation goals, track progress, and adjust actions on a regular basis.

The five main strategies are described below:

BUILD A REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

Identify and bring together agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), university staff, and resources to participate in a working group.

- **Create a working group representing various coastal wetland constituencies** The Great Lakes Coastal Assembly is a diverse assemblage of federal and state agencies, tribal governments, and private interests working together to conserve and restore lands and waters in the critically important coastal zones of the Great Lakes.
- **Build trust and partnership in a clear governance structure.** The GLCA has adopted a charter and draws on a technical team comprising coastal wetland experts from around the basin. The GLCA also engages assistance from contractors and committees as needed.
- **Connect with other coastal partnership efforts within the region.** The GLCA has assembled a cross-agency team to match up the many differing priorities, plans, guidelines and resources of all. Through these efforts, plans and priorities can be aligned, resulting in economies of scale and synergy of results.
- **Pilot a coastal wetlands program encompassing Saginaw Bay to western Lake Erie, eventually expanding on this to engage with wetlands stakeholders basin-wide.** The GLCA is implementing Landscape Conservation Design - a collaborative effort among stakeholders in this region to strategically identify locations for implementing effective coastal wetland conservation projects. We will expand this approach to other areas, including possibly Green Bay, and ultimately across the Great Lakes basin.

ESTABLISH SHARED COASTAL WETLANDS VISION AND GOALS

Integrate priorities from GLCA members and existing plans to create high-level goals, metrics, and strategies for coastal wetlands.

- **Support group processes to identify coastal wetland goals that incorporate regional planning and agency priorities.** GLCA members compiled priorities and goals from agency plans and other sources, including [Biodiversity Conservation Strategies](#), to develop high-level goals for coastal wetlands and the services they provide.
- **Develop and conduct a collaborative goal setting process.** The GLCA has held workshops in 2016 and 2017 in three locations throughout the Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie coastal region, engaging stakeholders in refining goals and identifying metrics.
- **Develop metrics with measurable targets.** The GLCA is working with stakeholders to refine a set of robust ecological and socioeconomic metrics for assessing the status of coastal

wetlands and the progress towards conservation goals. These metrics address biodiversity and species composition as well as services provided by coastal wetlands including recreation and protection from damaging waves.

- **Identify strategic locations for implementing protection, restoration, and enhancement projects.** The Landscape Conservation Design process now under way for Saginaw Bay through Western Lake Erie will produce maps of ideal locations for project implementation to reach shared goals.

DEVELOP A COASTAL WETLAND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Align regional knowledge and capacity with shared goals to create change.

- **Develop a plan to implement the right practices in the right places.** The pilot Landscape Conservation Design for Saginaw Bay through Western Lake Erie will identify priority areas for coastal wetland projects. Data and decision support tools compiled by the GLCA and partners will inform the kinds of actions necessary to achieve goals in those priority areas. The GLCA is also seeking input from partners in identifying opportunities for future coastal wetland conservation; you can provide this input through the [Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Restoration Opportunities Geoform](#).
- **Develop and pursue a plan to fill science and knowledge gaps.** Throughout the Landscape Conservation Design process and through sharing information among coastal wetland restoration projects, the GLCA and partners will identify gaps in knowledge and data and engage universities and agency scientists in filling those gaps.
- **Establish and promote best management practices for coastal wetland conservation.** Agencies and organizations in the GLCA are committed to coordinating in pursuit of filling science gaps and implementing conservation activities. Blue Accounting will enhance this coordination by enabling more effective sharing of data, knowledge, and information.
- **Design decision tools and programs that help coordinate management activities and align and direct funding to priority sites.** The GLCA is engaging funders of restoration, including the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and others, to support projects that can demonstrate contributions towards achievement of shared goals. The Landscape Conservation Design for Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie – and others to follow – will provide a roadmap for funders. Decision support tools including the [Coastal Wetland Decision Support Tool](#) and the [Great Lakes Coastal Wetland Restoration Assessment](#) are already recognized by funders for this purpose.

COMMUNICATE THE VISION AND NEED FOR PROTECTING COASTAL WETLANDS

Serve as a resource for decision-makers, resource managers and coastal stakeholders.

- **Create information materials on coastal wetlands for key audiences.** Members of the GLCA and partners develop and update resources such as the [Michigan Natural Features Inventory's natural community abstract](#), a [fact sheet produced by Michigan Sea Grant](#) and the greater detail provided by [Between Land and Lake](#), produced by Michigan's Coastal Zone Management Program.

- **Develop an information delivery strategy.** Working with Blue Accounting, the GLCA will identify representatives of key audiences and work with each of them to assess their information needs and identify the most effective means of communicating all aspects of coastal wetland conservation. They will establish a meaningful cycle for providing updates and identify desired formats for communication to audiences such as Great Lakes leaders and funders, resource managers, scientists and science funders, and high-level decision makers.
- **Deliver information through a variety of means such as personal outreach, websites, and workshops.** The GLCA has conducted three workshops in the Saginaw Bay to Western Lake Erie coastal region in 2016 and 2017, including one in [Saginaw, Michigan](#). Information on tools and analyses completed by GLCA members and partners include online tools supporting coastal wetland [conservation](#) or [restoration](#) decisions, and supporting [coastal conservation for ecological and socio-economic objectives](#).
- **Support hands-on learning opportunities for stakeholders.** Members of the GLCA have hosted [webinars](#) and conducted hands-on learning during the latest stakeholder workshop.
- **Promote best management practices.** Partners of the GLCA provide information on management and restoration practices, including the [Phragmites Collaborative](#), and The Nature Conservancy describes a coastal wetland restoration project at the Erie Marsh Preserve [in this video](#).

TRACK PROGRESS AND MAKE NEEDED ADJUSTMENTS

Assessing metrics and evaluating progress helps inform the effectiveness of planning and strategies. Strategies may be changed if needed or new ideas added as opportunities arise.

- **Track progress against high-level goals using consistent metrics.** The GLCA and partners are developing shared, high-level goals for coastal wetland conservation, and a set of consistent metrics that will be regularly monitored and aggregated to enable assessment of progress towards goals. These metrics will account for both ecological properties – such as biological integrity and connectivity – and socio-economic values including recreation and water purification.
- **Evaluate collaboration of the GLCA.** Periodically, the GLCA will evaluate its membership to the degree to which it represents the geographic distribution and varying perspectives of coastal conservation stakeholders and its capacity for meeting coastal conservation needs. The GLCA will assess the effectiveness of strategies and decision support tools and its approach to communicating its vision and strategies for coastal conservation.
- **Adjust management strategies, communication processes and governance as necessary.** The two evaluation processes described above will enable the GLCA to adjust strategies that need improvement, strengthen its membership, and guide investments towards the most effective strategies and places.
- **Celebrate successes.** As with all collaboratives, the GLCA will recognize and celebrate effective projects and partnerships and the attainment of shared goals.

TYPE

[Best Practice](#)

ISSUE

[Coastal Wetlands](#)

GEOGRAPHY

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[Lake Huron](#)

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