

For Immediate Release



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Great Lakes Fishery Trust

Great Lakes Fishery Trust Announces River Initiative Assessment

LANSING--The Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT) has funded several fisheries research and angler access projects since it began distributing grants in 1997. The Trust is now interested in targeting efforts that enhance and protect fisheries habitat through development of a strategy that ensures projects contribute measurable habitat improvements for use by Great Lakes fish species. This strategy, called the "River Initiative," will be a model enhancement program focusing on a single watershed. The Muskegon River watershed is the first such river system being considered as the recipient of this targeted GLFT program funding. The strength of the program will rely on the ability of stakeholders in a watershed to cooperate and make maximum use of existing and new funds for the next three to five years. Before committing such targeted funding, the GLFT first will assess the capacity of existing organizations and groups within the Muskegon River watershed to implement such a model program.

The environmental consulting firm of KIESER & ASSOCIATES, based in Kalamazoo, has been retained by the GLFT for this project, the "Muskegon River Initiative Assessment." The firm's task over the next two months is to establish contact with groups and individuals in the Muskegon River watershed to identify the organizational resources, goals, and activities of these groups. The firm also will identify future efforts and ways that these groups could contribute toward successful enhancement of the Muskegon River fishery through the River Initiative. Kieser's primary means of collecting information will be through questionnaires accessible at an independent Internet Web site (www.muskegonriver.org) and subsequent interviews with representatives from various groups. You may contact the firm through this Web site or call Mark Kieser at (616) 344-7117 to obtain a questionnaire.

The Trust hopes to see broad participation in this assessment to ensure that the watershed receives representative consideration for this significant funding opportunity. Any organization, foundation, business, agency, or advocacy group that directly or indirectly contributes to the protection, restoration, and enhancement of the Muskegon River is encouraged to be a part of this assessment by contacting the Web site.

The Great Lakes Fishery Trust is a private foundation established in 1996 to mitigate for damages to the Great Lakes fishery caused by the Ludington Pumped Storage Facility. Since its inception, the GLFT has provided government agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, and universities with more than \$8.6 million in grants to improve the Great Lakes fishery and the public's use and enjoyment of the fishery.

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