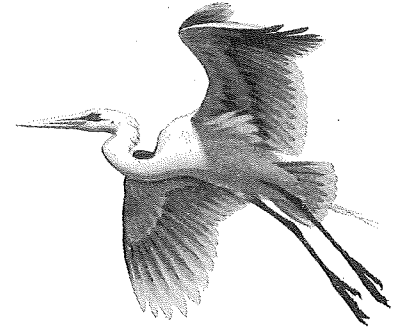


National Audubon Society

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL OFFICE

692 North High Street, Suite 208 / Columbus, Ohio 43215-1548
614 / 224-3303



TO: The Board of Directors of Great Lakes United
FROM: Steve Sedam, Great Lakes Regional Vice President,
The National Audubon Society
DATE: June 11, 1992
RE: A pending foundation proposal from the National Audubon Society on the
conservation of biological diversity in the Great Lakes basin

As a result of a conference call today between Dick Kubiak, Camilla Smith and myself, you are being sent a copy of the following proposal from Audubon's Great Lakes Regional Office for a Great Lakes Biodiversity Protection Project for discussion at the June GLU Board retreat.

This project was designed to elevate the attention given basinwide to habitat and biodiversity protection needs of the region. It is the intent of this project to enhance existing biodiversity efforts already underway through the basin such as those by the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy, the Center for the Great Lakes, the Michigan Audubon Society, Partners in Flight, and others.

As is true with most proposals, much of the nitty gritty about implementing the project (e.g. what specifically is involved in local cosponsorship of the field hearings, the best ways of addressing the "wise use"/resource abuse movement, etc.) won't be finalized until the funding is in the bank.

Should this project be funded, Audubon would be very interested in working closely with Great Lakes United throughout the life of the project. I appreciate your consideration and support of this proposal.

Should you have any questions, please be sure to give me a call at (614) 224-3303.

p.s. While this proposed project has been shared with a few others, I ask that this information not circulate outside of the Great Lakes United Board of Directors at this point in time.

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AUDUBON'S PROPOSED GREAT LAKES BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION PROJECT

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

JUSTIFICATION OF NEED

There are scores of areas within the Great Lakes basin that are of regional and even global significance, either as remnants of a diminishing biological community or as habitat for threatened and endangered plants and animals.

While valuable research to identify areas of high ecological value in the region is currently underway by The Nature Conservancy and government agencies, broad public understanding of the importance of maintaining a diversity of biological resources and government and community-based attention to biodiversity conservation is not keeping pace with the loss of these irreplaceable resources. Though there are noted successes, an erosion of attention by policy makers and implementing institutions flowing in part from the lack of a focussed expression of broad public interest has contributed to a significant decline in quality habitat as well as in the populations of many wildlife species in the region. A look at the federal Endangered Species Act demonstrates this.

Currently, over 600 U.S. species are on the federal endangered and threatened species list. Another 300 plants and animals on the endangered list do not yet have recovery plans. More than 3,800 species, plants and animals, awaiting legal protection as candidate species are in jeopardy but have not yet been officially placed on the federal endangered species list. In the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin there are a total of 336 candidate species, 111 plants and 225 animals.

In contrast, this fiscal year the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is budgeted to officially list as a threatened or endangered species only 65 species from the candidate list. The result is a net gain of 135 more candidate species nationwide with little chance of receiving any attention.

These numbers may be alarmingly low. In its 1991 annual report, the President's Council on Environmental Quality states that more than 9,000 plants and animals in the U.S. may be at risk. Throughout the U.S. and the world, both the absolute number and the rate of extinctions are rising, due largely to the destruction of natural habitats. Over the last several years 34 species in the U.S. have become extinct while awaiting official designation.

State support for non-game and endangered species programs has suffered dramatically. State legislatures have taken significant amounts of funding from meager state programs in recent years. The natural heritage program was defunded in Michigan and in Ohio, the legislature forced 80% of the tax check-off funds used to support the natural areas program to cover administrative costs rather than land acquisition. In Indiana, serious legislative attempts to phase out the major source of revenue for the state's non-game program were thwarted only at the last moment.

federal program neglects, the ability of private efforts by businesses and non-profit organizations to conserve natural resources, key biodiversity areas of basinwide significance, scientific findings, implications of current policy on biodiversity of the region, and programs that simultaneously foster economic growth and biodiversity conservation.

Audubon's Science Division and Population Department will conduct demographic analysis and scientific assessments to forecast the effect of the region's growing population on biological resources in the basin. These findings will be presented at one or more of the citizen field hearings.

A panel consisting of local environmental leaders, scientists, economists, agency program managers, media representatives, community leaders, elected officials, Audubon sanctuary managers, and others, would receive the testimony and ask questions of the presentors.

Where possible, field trips to areas representing outstanding biodiversity of the region will be held for panel members and the media and if feasible, the public. However, due caution will be exercised throughout the project to discourage over-visitation of sensitive biodiversity areas.

Highlights of the information presented at the citizen field hearings will be compiled in a report. The report will summarize the findings and recommendations for the conservation of critical ecological communities in the region. Distribution of the report will be regionwide to local, regional, national, and international organizations and decisionmakers and to the public.

The citizen field hearings will:

- 1) be the official kick-off event for the project,
- 2) give this project and other biodiversity conservation projects in the region greater visibility,
- 3) reinforce the regional context of the issue,
- 4) inform key government decisionmakers at the local, state, and regional level, key private organizations, and the public about the threats to and the importance of constructive responses to conserve the biodiversity of the region,
- 5) motivate participants to respond individually and collectively to the biodiversity protection needs of the region,
- 6) foster a commitment from participants to create a more unified voice for the conservation of biodiversity in the Great Lakes, and
- 7) be used as the foundation for the development of subsequent stages of the project such as the handbook and the biodiversity network.

The citizen field hearings themselves will serve as educational forums for the audience in attendance at the hearing as well as for the public through the media and for decisionmakers through the report and recommendations culled from the series of hearings.

Local, community-based organizations and local governments would be requested to be cosponsors of the hearings in their area. Regional organizations would also be invited to be

described in the handbook will include zoning ordinances, land trusts, development plans, tax breaks, easements, changing management activities, public education and working within existing programs of a similar nature already underway.

The handbook will also contain state biodiversity profiles, summaries of the status of biological diversity in each state. The handbooks will be available for general distribution for a reasonable fee.

Training workshops: Training workshops will be held in six states on how to use the protection and monitoring tools described in the handbook. Workshop attendees will receive complimentary copies of the handbook as well as instruction on how to begin or improve biodiversity protection initiatives in their community and state. In an effort to broaden exposure of and participation in other ongoing efforts, the workshops will also expose attendees to existing local, state and regional biodiversity protection projects.

Year Three Model state biodiversity protection law: Working with key activists from Audubon and other groups in the region, a model state biodiversity protection law will be developed and distributed region wide. The intent is to have state biodiversity programs bolster and complement regional and federal biodiversity protection measures.

Educational activities that demonstrate the need for enactment of the model state biodiversity protection law will be conducted in each state of the region. We fully recognize that foundation funds can be used for research and education and not for direct lobbying. These educational activities will include briefings in each state capital in the region for key legislators, the media, conservation groups and others that explains the need for and the components of the model biodiversity law.

Follow-up support: Technical support through the network will be provided to biodiversity conservation and/or monitoring projects in the region, the handbook would continued to be promoted and used, and information would be distributed to the media throughout the duration of the project.

EVALUATION

The measurable outcomes that will serve as the basis for evaluation of the project include: a) 350 people attending the citizen field hearings, b) evaluation forms distributed to those at the citizen hearings, c) at least 120 persons in the regional biodiversity network to share biodiversity protection expertise, d) the distribution and use of 100 media kits and 300 handbooks, e) the number of biodiversity conservation initiatives instituted as a result of the project, f) participation in the training workshops and, g) the number of states introducing and/or adopting the model biodiversity protection law applicable to every state in the region.

PROJECT BUDGET

The first year of the project budget is \$70,000 which provides funds for an additional full time staff person in Audubon's Great Lakes Regional Office to assist in conducting the project.