

## News

### Local partnership seeks part of \$475 million in Great Lakes Funding



Grant Herman, director of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Ashland, leads a recent discussion with members of the Chequamegon Bay Area Partnership. Bob Gross-Northland College/Submitted Photo

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The Chequamegon Bay Area Partnership, an organization of 12 local government, educational, conservation and restoration groups, is preparing to apply for a large Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant. The funding would be used to target significant problems in the bay area watersheds such as removing invasive species, reducing sources of non-point source pollution, and cleaning up contaminated sediment and significant erosion. Projects will also address effective monitoring and citizen education surrounding these regional issues. The grant will focus in part on the unique natural resources of the area and how preserving those resources is one of the key elements of a watershed wide restoration initiative.

"We're all working towards the same goals — healthy watersheds alongside of healthy communities," said Michele Wheeler, executive director of the Bad River Watershed Association. "This partnership ensures that our efforts complement each other to achieve those goals."

President Obama's 2010 budget provides \$475 million for an EPA-led, interagency Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). If the budget is approved a request for proposals will be issued sometime later this fall. According to the EPA's Web site, "This initiative will use outcome-oriented performance goals and measures to target the most significant problems and track progress in addressing them. EPA and its federal partners will coordinate state, tribal, local, and industry actions to protect, maintain, and restore the chemical, biological, and physical integrity of the Great Lakes."

The Chequamegon Bay Area Partnership is laying the framework for a large GLRI grant proposal. The

partnership represents Ashland County, Bad River Watershed Association, Bayfield County, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, City of Ashland, Iron County, Northwoods Cooperative Weed Management Area, Northland College and its Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Wisconsin Extension-Basin Education, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The partnership continues to add new members.

"Bayfield, Ashland and Iron counties have a long history of cooperation in land conservation," said Mark Abeles-Allison, Bayfield County administrator. "For over a decade our departments have worked as one, serving the northern tier counties in Wisconsin. We share an important commonality, hundreds of miles of Lake Superior coastline, and the health of the watershed depends on not just one, but all of our communities."

"The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is providing the impetus to strengthen a coalition of like-minded agencies and organizations in the Chequamegon Bay area," said Tom Fratt, county conservationist for the Ashland County Land and Water Conservation Department. "With a strong partnership in place we will be better positioned to address ecosystem challenges, even if we are not successful in obtaining funding through this specific grant."

Northland College will lead the grant-writing process with input from the various partners. If the proposal is approved, the partnership should start receiving funds to begin projects in 2010.

"Northland College is well positioned to sponsor a grant application of this size and complexity for our partners in the Chequamegon Bay area," said Marc Barbeau, vice president of institutional advancement at Northland College. "The Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute's ability to manage a grant award among multiple partners made it the natural coordinator for this group of diverse partners."