

GLIN Advisory Board Minutes

December 9, 1998

University of Chicago, Gleacher Center; Chicago, Illinois

Introduction/Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m. by Julie Wagemakers, program manager for Communications and Information Management at the Great Lakes Commission.

The following people were in attendance:

Larry Alber, NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Suzanne Cape, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
Steve Curcio, Pennsylvania Sea Grant
Michael Donahue, Great Lakes Commission
Stuart Eddy, Great Lakes Commission
Marc Gaden, Great Lakes Fishery Commission
Roger Gauthier, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-Detroit
Kendra Gunter, Council of Great Lakes Governors
Lynn Herche, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory
Douglas Jester, Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources
Kurt Kowalski, U.S. Geological Survey
Christine Manninen, Great Lakes Commission
Kevin McGunagle, International Joint Commission
Derek Moy, Great Lakes Commission
Pranas Pranckevicius, U.S. EPA Great Lakes National Program Office
John Rupert, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources
Julie Wagemakers, Great Lakes Commission
Stephen Wittman, Wisconsin Sea Grant

GLIN Accomplishments, Initiatives and Plans for the Future

J. Wagemakers and Michael Donahue, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission, welcomed board members to Chicago and gave brief overviews of the most recent GLIN Board meeting, March 31-April 1 in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Christine Manninen, project manager for GLIN at the Great Lakes Commission, gave an overview of GLIN activities and accomplishments over the last eight months. It was a rebuilding year for GLIN, in the wake of several staff changes at the Commission and a server move from CICNet to Merit Network, Inc. This move provided an opportunity to do some much-needed "housekeeping," deleting defunct email accounts and listservs, etc. A new MOA to house the GLIN servers for 1999 has been drafted and is currently under review by Merit.

Verity search engine

An interface is being developed and tested between GLIN and the Verity search software, running on the U.S. EPA server. Once established, Verity searches on GLIN will enable the user to customize his/her search (i.e., specific servers can be searched for a desired keyword or topic).

This search option will not obligate GLIN partners to add keywords or other metadata to their web pages. GLIN partners will be consulted prior to being added to the GLIN search page.

GLIN usage statistics

WebTrends or MarketWave will be purchased by Merit Network in 1999 and be used on GLIN. The new improved stats software will replace the Analog stats program currently in use. An update on usage:

November 1998 GLIN hits: 360,000

Pages with most hits (does not include the GLIN home page and the search page which always rank 1 and 2 respectively).

- 1) Great Lakes, <http://www.great-lakes.net/places/watsheds/grlakes.html>
- 2) Zebra Mussels in the Great Lakes, <http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/exotic/zebra.html>
- 3) Travel, Tourism and Recreation, <http://www.great-lakes.net/tourism/tourism.html>
- 4) Environment of the Great Lakes Region, <http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/envt.html>
- 5) Lake Superior, <http://www.great-lakes.net/places/watsheds/lsuper.html>
- 6) Great Lakes Ecosystem, <http://www.great-lakes.net/ecosystem/ecosys.html>
- 7) Exotic Species in the Great Lakes Region, <http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/exotic/exotic.html>
- 8) Weather and Climate, <http://www.great-lakes.net/envt/weather/weather.html>
- 9) Pollution, <http://www.great-lakes.net/pollution/pollut.html>
- 10) Index of Topics, <http://www.great-lakes.net/navigate/glinindex.html>

Other popular destinations that consistently rank high: Areas of Concern, Site of the Month, Jobs, Economy, Education, Hydrology (dependent on current state of water levels).

GLIN Listservs

There are currently about 65 active e-mail lists (down from 110 in 1997). The lists that were deleted were either defunct or moved to partners' servers (the 5-6 IJC listservs, for example, are now housed on IJC's own server). The largest listservs, all with more than 400 subscribers, are glin-announce, enviro-mich and p2tech.

The spamming problem on glin-announce and several of the other GLIN listservs (point of debate at the 4/98 board meeting) has been stopped. Most GLIN listservs are now moderated by the list managers to prevent nonsubscribers from posting freely. This solution will be satisfactory as long as the amount of traffic on these listservs remains low (2-3 postings/day, on average).

GLIN Outreach

C. Manninen traveled to South America in May as part of an Organization of American States-funded mission to promote development of a distributed information network for the Upper Paraguay River Basin (shared by Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia). This trip contributed to inclusion of GLIN in a proposal to the Global Environment Facility. Manninen also participated in a "Water on the Web" workshop in October at Florida Atlantic University. This afforded GLIN staff the opportunity to exchange ideas with water web site managers from North and South America and the Baltic region. Outcomes included a WaterWeb Ring, which will link a select

group of water web sites from around the world; and inclusion of a GLIN paper in the March 1999 issue of the Journal of the International Water Resources Association, which will focus on “The Use of the Internet in Sustainable Water Resources Management.” To round out the year, GLIN was featured at the “Out of the Fog” workshop in November at the New England Aquarium. This opportunity furthered the use of GLIN as a national and global model, in this case for a proposed network for the Gulf of Maine.

Current GLIN Staffing at the Great Lakes Commission

Julie Wagemakers, Program Manager, Communications and Information Management

Christine Manninen, Project Manager (GLIN Webmaster)

Lara Slee, Program Specialist

Derek Moy, Program Specialist (GIS)

Stuart Eddy, Program Specialist (GIS)

Morgan Anderson, Program Specialist—Starting Jan. 4, 1999

Other items

Comments and suggestions from board members are encouraged as the GLIN project team begins a redesign initiative in 1999.

Discussion followed. D. Jester suggested adding a “personalization” feature to GLIN. One idea would be to offer a voluntary sign up for individuals to select to receive updates on a particular Great Lakes issue/area of interest. Periodic email messages could then be sent to these people re: what GLIN has to offer re: their topical request. This feature is often used on commercial sites (e.g., Amazon.com, etc).

L. Herche suggested highlighting the list of GLIN listservs up front on the home page so more people would take advantage of these opportunities and join.

D. Jester noted that GLIN could better utilize its “ecosystem approach” in web design and functionality. He suggested taking a specific issue (e.g., water quantity) and tracing the different aspects of it: diversions, hydrology, etc.

There was consensus for making GLIN more dynamic. P. Pranckevicius said why not offer a Site of the Week or Site of the Day (in lieu of the Site of the Month feature). Other ideas: include a corner on the home page for breaking news (similar to a newspaper front page), or have different photos pop up each time the GLIN page is reloaded (helps to keep the look fresh).

Having HTML-enabled email messages helps to bring hits to GLIN.

P. Pranckevicius suggested that it might be beneficial to conduct a market analysis of GLIN by a neutral third party. This would help to identify web user needs and wants. A lot can be told from examining GLIN usage statistics. Who do we currently reach? What are the greatest strengths of GLIN? The GLIN profile can then be offered to potential funders and/or advertisers to help solicit support for the network. If GLIN represents a core group that a funder wants to target, a partnership is more likely.

Copies of the 1999 Carol A. Ratza Memorial Scholarship application were distributed. Board

members were encouraged to post the application and/or share it with interested colleagues. The application is online at <http://www.glc.org/announce/98/scholar99.html>

J. Wagemakers gave a brief overview of some current GLIN initiatives:

Funded

Great Lakes GIS Online Workshop, which will follow the GLIN Board meeting, Dec. 9-10, 1998, at the Gleacher Center in Chicago; and ***BEACHES***, an online beach advisory system to promote consistency in water quality monitoring among jurisdictions. Collaborators include U.S. EPA and a regional team comprised of public health and water quality experts from the Great Lakes states and Ontario.

Proposals Pending

Global Applications for the Great Lakes Information Network. Emulating GLIN, this proposal deals with development of a hydrological information system for the Upper Paraguay River Basin, shared by Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay. Collaborators include the Organization of American States, basin management teams from the region, the European Union, World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme. Potential funder: Global Environment Facility.

Virtual Immersion in Scientific Inquiry for Teachers (VISIT). An online collaboratory for teachers to engage in professional development by participating in scientific investigations. Collaborators include Eastern Michigan University's Center for Environmental Information Technology Applications, U.S. EPA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey-Great Lakes Science Center, NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory. Potential funder: National Science Foundation.

Cyber City-Schools. An innovative project that will link K-12 students in the Great Lakes region to existing online educational resources (i.e., GLIN), organized within a geography curriculum framework. Collaborators include the Wayne County (Detroit-area) Regional Educational Service Agency, Great Lakes Commission, the University of Kansas, University of Michigan-Dearborn, Chicago Public Schools, and school districts in the cities of Chicago, Ill.; Erie, Pa.; Duluth, Minn.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Niagara Falls, N.Y.; River Rouge, Mich.; Toledo, Ohio; and Gary, Ind. Potential funder: U.S. Department of Education.

Transboundary Waters Information System. Establishment of a global Internet-based electronic and institutional network to facilitate access to data and information related to the state of global waters. Collaborators include the Stockholm International Water Institute and UNEP-GRID-Arendal, in conjunction with the Great Lakes Commission. Potential donors/partners: GWP, Stockholm Vatten, World Bank, UNEP, NAFTA, U.S. EPA, Environment Canada.

New Initiatives Proposed

Great Lakes Education Workshop
Travel, Tourism and Recreation Workshop
TEACH Great Lakes (Joyce Foundation)
Case Studies, Best Practices in Watershed Management
Maritime Development

Great Lakes Circle Tour, expanded web site, new brochure/map
Sustaining donor concept
Online database of Great Lakes funding sources

Discussion followed on the concept of sustaining donors for GLIN. The preliminary definition of a sustaining donor is “a public or private sector agency, organization, association or company that financially supports the Great Lakes Information Network through a grant, contract or donation, recognizing GLIN’s inherent value to the Great Lakes region.”

J. Wagemakers explained that the sustaining donor concept was successfully used at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Wagemaker’s previous employer, based in Winnipeg).

S. Wittman, representing the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network, thought a one-time Sea Grant donation was a possibility but sustained contributions were doubtful given other priorities. He questioned whether in lieu of/in addition to soliciting donations, could a greater contribution be made by the Great Lakes states to support GLIN? M. Donahue noted that this is a possibility although, through annual state dues paid to the Great Lakes Commission, there is already a large amount of state support for GLIN. D. Jester said in his office (Michigan DNR) the barriers to this are mainly administrative. He noted that it would be easier to justify if an MOA was drafted and all the states were involved. With a legislative vehicle (i.e., an MOA), he thinks a sustained contribution to GLIN is feasible. A draft MOA will be prepared by the GLIN Project Team and circulated to the GLIN Board for review.

As another option to provide sustainable support for GLIN, P. Pranckevicius suggested selling advertising space. To avoid cheapening the network, perhaps only offer advertising to nonprofits or government organizations...not commercial. If banners were on each GLIN topical page, different agencies/organizations could choose the pages/sections on GLIN that they would like to sponsor. For example, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission would be interested in sponsoring the fishery sections on GLIN.

K. McGunagle questioned what a GLIN sponsor would get out of buying sponsorship. M. Gaden stressed that the main benefit would be outreach and advertising...another avenue for reaching a target audience w/ a message. M. Donahue emphasized that the sustaining donor concept is one of many options being discussed. Several funding options will be pursued. S. Curcio noted that he preferred the terms “sponsorship” or “sponsor” rather than “donor.” It was also proposed that the language “on a one-time or sustaining basis” be included in the definition.

D. Jester brought up the Great Lakes Fishery Trust as another possible funding partnership perhaps involving the Great Lakes Commission, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Michigan DNR and others.

L. Herche said he recalled a goal of the 1996 GLIN Conference in Lansing, Mich., was to broaden the audience for GLIN. Was this ever accomplished? M. Donahue noted that over the last two years there has been significant involvement of the economic development and tourism communities (in addition to the traditional environmental community) in GLIN development so

this goal is being met.

New Business

The following items were approved, with minor grammatical changes:

- Responsibilities of the GLIN project team at the Great Lakes Commission
- GLIN Advisory Board: Roles and Responsibilities
- GLIN Partner Guidelines
- GLIN 1999 Work Plan
- Definitions of GLIN Sustaining Donor, GLIN Sister Site, GLIN Site of the Month

Discussion followed. The term “sponsorship” or “sponsor” were offered as alternatives to “sustaining donor.” K. McGunagle commented that he felt the Site of the Month language was appropriate as is. D. Jester agreed saying there’s enough activity on partners’ sites to enhance the “New on GLIN” section. Initiating Site of the Week or Day would unnecessarily increase GLIN maintenance. P. Prankevicius asked for a more explicit description of Sister Sites and how to become one. This revised language will be drafted by the GLIN project team at the Great Lakes Commission.

L. Herche asked if there should be an escape clause in the GLIN Partner Guidelines. Is some sort of disclaimer language needed (i.e., GLIN partners are designated at the discretion of the GLIN Advisory Board and the GLIN project team at the Great Lakes Commission)? As an alternative, it was suggested that the phrase “that agrees” be changed to “that is invited to” [work with the GLIN project team...]. Another option would be to include the phrase “expresses a mutual interest in working together.”

S. Wittman made a motion to approve the 1999 GLIN workplan and supporting documents, seconded by D. Jester. S. Curcio noted that no further comment was needed. The motion passed unanimously.

A discussion on GLIN copyright followed. P. Prankevicius questioned whether the GLIN logo is copyrighted because, if so, GLIN partners would be in violation of the copyright language (as written). Action on this item was tabled until further information could be obtained from the Great Lakes Commission legal counsel.

It was agreed that at least one in-person meeting of the GLIN Advisory Board should be held each year. For 1999, the GLIN project team was instructed to explore the use of webcasting or MS-Net Meeting software, which allows real-time meetings to be held via the Internet.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Manninen
Project Manager
Great Lakes Commission