



# Two schools, Two parks, One purpose

Students from different schools engage in similar projects as they visit, research and write about local threatened and endangered species within Thompson’s Harbor State Park and Negwegon State Park.

During the school year, when at Thompson’s Harbor State Park or Negwegon State Park, you are likely to meet teachers and students exploring. While Rogers City students visit Thompson’s Harbor and Alcona students visit Negwegon, both are trading their textbooks for hiking shoes and contributing to the stewardship of the amazing natural resources of these public lands.

## Endangered Species, Here?

Supported by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Sea Grant and other community partners through the NE MI GLSI, these elementary and middle school students trek the shoreline and trails of Thompson’s Harbor and Negwegon State Parks, looking for the rare, threatened and endangered plants and animals there with the purpose of writing a report and sharing what they have learned with others.

## Rogers City Middle School

Learning alongside resource experts and Friends of Thompson’s Harbor State Park volunteers, Rogers City students experience



*“What I liked about doing the project was that you got to explore a new animal, figure out what it does, find out a little bit more about it and learn how to protect it.”*

-Brady Hill, 7th Grade  
Rogers City Middle School

educational booklets featuring the places, plants, and animals they mapped out to be most interesting and exciting during their visit, citing places they hope others will wish to experience also.

## Alcona Middle School

Two counties to the south, another group of middle school students from Alcona Community Schools are similarly launching into a study of coastal habitats and rare species found locally within Negwegon State Park. Negwegon State Park is known for its sizeable and undisturbed dune and swale habitats abutting the Lake Huron coastline. These students are setting



the park first hand (some for the first time) through multiple field trips to explore the park. They explore coastal dunes, limestone cobble shores, wetland marshes, and coastal fens - the diversity of coastal habitats for which Thompson’s Harbor State Park is known. Reflecting on the field trips, these students work to research and develop their projects and reports. The completed research booklets include photos, status and ecological information about the threatened or endangered species they studied. Elementary students are also involved by developing



## Project Partners



off to explore the park in partnership with agency and university resource experts and Friends of Negwegon State Park. In compliment to the work being done by youth in Rogers City, these Alcona students will be researching and writing about these natural areas that characterize the ecological richness of Alcona County and Northeast Michigan.

### Blended Learning

As part of a blended learning experience, students learned about the ecological and community values of the local natural resources, and then selected a rare species found in Presque Isle and Alcona Counties to research and write their report. Among the many species found in the county, students highlighted the federally protected Dwarf Lake Iris, Pitcher’s Thistle, Hine’s Emerald Dragonfly and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake.



Students applied their science and writing skills to compile their research findings into a report for each species. To make these resources available to a wider audience, some of the student booklets will find a home in each of the park’s two cabins.

*“It was such a positive experience for my science class. The educational benefits were phenomenal! They learned much in the course of the day, and because they were actually out in the field, they will retain their lessons.”*

*-Holly Wirgau, Teacher  
Rogers City Middle School*

### Expanding on the Experience

Through this student project, protecting biodiversity and growing coastal tourism come together in a creative and sustainable way. Northeast Michigan communities value and recognize that these amazing and rare coastal resources can also, if protected, serve as an economic development opportunity through tourism. Ecotourism offers an opportunity to attract visitors with an interest in experiencing, but also protecting, these natural areas.

### What is Place-Based Education?

Place-Based Education (PBE) or Community Based Education (CBE) utilizes the local, natural and built environments as a context for learning and in doing so brings students into closer contact with their communities. This method is proven to develop knowledgeable and active stewards of the environment. When schools and communities work together, everybody wins!

#### Why:

This education strategy protects Great Lakes ecosystems, strengthens Northeast Michigan communities and provides critical support to schools as they strive to serve the academic and developmental needs of their students.

#### How:

Teachers and students are supported through project mini grants, connection to resource partnerships, and high-quality Professional Development that provides essential tools and techniques for fostering a collaborative culture of place-based learning within and among schools and their communities.

### Supporting Community Development and Resource Stewardship Priorities through education:

Since 2006, numerous local and regional partners have engaged in Great Lakes education, networking and planning efforts across Michigan’s “sunrise side.” These efforts mobilized a network of school and community partners committed to identifying needs and developing strategies for enhancing coastal access, education, and sustainable resource management. Empowered through funding support from the Great Lakes Fishery Trust (GLFT), this collaboration now comprises the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative, one of nine regional hubs through which GLFT furthers the principals and practices of place and community-based education as the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative.

#### You are invited:

If you care about Northeast Michigan and want to make a difference for the future of our region, please contact NEMI GLSI to find out how you can get involved.

Phone: 989.356.8805 x41 or [daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov](mailto:daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov)

*Northeast Michigan GLSI network programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.*

How can I participate in the NE Michigan GLSI Network?



*Many partners are currently exploring community- or place-based education development opportunities within the NE Michigan region. For more information, visit us on the web: [www.nemiglsi.org](http://www.nemiglsi.org)*

Who Can I Contact?

Daniel Moffatt, NE MI GLSI Coordinator, [daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov](mailto:daniel.moffatt@noaa.gov)  
 Brandon Schroeder, Michigan Sea Grant, [schroe45@msu.edu](mailto:schroe45@msu.edu)  
 Tracy D’ Augustino, AMA/Iosco, [ptmkk5@gmail.com](mailto:ptmkk5@gmail.com)  
 Lori Pearson, COP ESD, [pearsonl@copesp.org](mailto:pearsonl@copesp.org)

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