

Oscoda youth Adopt-a-Beach to improve their Lake Huron coastline and community

Oscoda Middle School students take their studies to the shores of Lake Huron, adopting a local beach to enhance Great Lakes habitats and their local community.

Posted on **October 14, 2013** by **Brandon Schroeder**, Michigan State University Extension and **Helen-Ann Prince**, Huron Pines AmeriCorps serving the NE MI GLSI

This past September, more than 40 students from [Oscoda Middle School](#) took their studies to the beach. Their trip to Lake Huron, part of an Adopt-a-Beach project, launched this class's yearlong studies and stewardship of local water resources and Great Lakes coastal habitats. Through their learning, this student effort is developing valuable school and community partnerships benefiting their school and learning, Oscoda area communities, and healthy Lake Huron ecosystems.



Coordinated with the [Great Lakes Adopt-a-Beach Program](#), an [Alliance for the Great Lakes](#)-supported program, students adopted a local public beach just south of downtown Oscoda, at [AuSable Shoreline Park](#). Supported by [NOAA B-WET and 4-H2O programs](#), their research project will gather valuable water quality data, monitor water quality, document status of coastal habitats, and generally improve these publicly accessed shorelines of Oscoda.

Working in teams, these [student volunteers set out to study and clean their local beach](#). Some worked to pick up and record each piece of trash collected from the beach. By documenting the most common pieces of trash found on the beach, they hope to educate the public on the issue of Lake Huron litter. Others collected water quality sampling in Lake Huron, near the mouth of the Au Sable River. Students took water samples, pH readings and more. This data will be used to set a baseline for future water quality sampling at [AuSable Shoreline Park](#). Another group, focusing on public awareness, took photographs, videos and interviewed their fellow classmates about the project and its importance. A goal of educating their community about the value in protecting these Great Lakes resources and their outreach effort is linked with local media and posted on their [online project page](#).

During the coming year, these students will be exploring and studying the inland waterways of the [Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed](#). Kicking off their watershed science and studies by exploring the Lake Huron habitats, this Adopt-a-Beach effort involved students in the exploration and enhancement of local coastal habitats of Lake Huron, into which their watershed empties. The project leaves their community's public beach access just a little tidier than before – and their community a little more aware of their student's value and investment toward protecting this Lake

Huron coastline! This project also sets the stage for their broader inland watershed exploration and studies planned throughout the coming school year.

As a community-connected project, this school effort is supported through the [Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative](#), a regional network supporting [place-based education](#)



partnerships. Through this partnership, the school and students are collaborating with a wealth of local partners including [Huron Pines](#), [Michigan Sea Grant](#), [Michigan State University Extension](#), [NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary](#), [Pine River Van Etten Lake \(PRVEL\) Watershed Coalition](#), [Alpena-Montmorency-Alcona/Iosco Math & Science Center](#), and [Oscoda Chamber of Commerce](#) who are all in support of this effort as more than just a beach clean-up.

Preparing for this project, teacher Mike Berenkowski attended the [Lake Huron Place-Based Education Summer Teacher Institute](#). There

he developed his educational plan by which to involve students in this effort. He gained training, connections with resources and partners, and valuable insights and lessons learned from other teachers from area schools who are also engaged in watershed stewardship projects.



Enhancing student learning through [real-world connections with both their natural environment and community, alike](#), this [place-based education](#) project has given Oscoda Middle School students a sense of place and ownership of their local beaches – and their community. Regionally connected as part of a broader Lake Huron community, through the Northeast Michigan GLSI network, students share and compare their findings with other local schools involved in similar Adopt-a-Beach projects, such as Thunder Bay Jr. High in Alpena.

For more information about the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NE MI GLSI)

and place-based, community-based education programming partnerships with Oscoda Schools, visit the [NE MI GLSI website](#) and [Oscoda School's water studies project page](#).

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