



# Shipwreck Alley Class Deepens Learning

Alpena High School 'Shipwreck Alley' students bring local Lake Huron fisheries history to life through the collecting of regional fisherman's oral histories.

Great Lakes science and maritime history studies come alive when Alpena High School 'Shipwreck Alley' students work with their community to gather stories and interpret history of local Lake Huron fisheries.

## One-of-a-Kind Class

Mapping shipwrecks with marine archeologists, researching Great Lakes fisheries of past and present, and building underwater remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to explore what lies below Great Lakes waters are just another day at school for students enrolled in *Shipwreck Alley*. This new course offered at Alpena High School, *Shipwreck Alley: Shipwrecks, Science, and the Marine Sanctuary*, engages students in local, hands-on, Great Lakes science and history.

## Many Partners Make it Work

While designing the course, instructor John Caplis sought content guidance from the staff at the NOAA Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and secured start-up funding from the Besser

*"I have found that students are most excited about learning when it is interesting or it matters to them. Hopefully these projects will inspire my students to explore careers in science, or some field they haven't considered before."*

*-John Caplis  
Shipwreck Alley Teacher, AHS*



Foundation to launch his vision for this project. Kicking off in 2012, the class has since been growing in student numbers. The class utilizes the extensive Great Lakes maritime research collections housed at the Alpena County George N. Fletcher Public Library.

Receiving additional support through the Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative and the NOAA Great Lakes Bay -Watershed Education Training (B-WET) program, this place-based education program provides a great example of how humans and history can be woven together through environmental watershed studies.

## New Projects, New Opportunities

The class is now collaborating with the Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan, Michigan Sea Grant and Michigan State University Extension to collect oral histories (stories and experiences) as told by

commercial fishermen who worked on the waters of northern Lake Huron near the town of Alpena. According to Caplis, they hope to preserve these stories and learn more about the lives of these men and the health and history of the Great Lakes fishery of years past. Enrolled students also gain a better understanding of environmental, social, and technology changes affecting Great Lakes ecology and management, history and current condition through this class.

## Interpreting Fisheries Heritage

Documenting the commercial-fisheries history specific to northern Lake Huron, students will help create an interpretive exhibit for the *Katherine V.* - a historic commercial fishing vessel that operated out of Rogers City and is now housed at the Besser Museum in Alpena. Though the *Katherine V.* is not a shipwreck but a retired tug, students are capturing a record of local history, raising awareness about the value of our Great Lakes, and will be working with the museum to develop the public exhibit. The students' goal is to bring Great



## Project Partners



Lakes history and the late fishing tug back to life through stories of fishing past; and in doing so, seek to encourage a lifetime stewardship, among their community and the Lake Huron fishery of today.

### Contributing to the Community

When students apply lessons learned from experts, students find themselves equipped to take on real-world projects like the *Katherine V*, which is a valuable contribution to the mission and work of the Besser Museum. Students bring to light the value of the Lake Huron fishery, which remains as valuable today as it has been through history. Above all, the work of the students in their community - whether studying and mapping shipwrecks or interviewing commercial fisherman - is generating great interest, awareness, educational opportunities and pride

**Katherine V – Alpena, MI**



*“I’ve learned alot. I didn’t realize how many shipwrecks were in Lake Huron, in shipwreck alley.”*

*“I feel like Alpena is a much cooler place than you think it would be because of the shipwrecks.”*

-Alpena High School Shipwreck Alley Students

among their community.

### Place Based Education in Action

The Alpena High School class reflects a great example of place-based education in practice: students are contributing to their community by enhancing maritime heritage studies and environmental stewardship of northeast Michigan through their education. Through this project, students are learning

about science, history, writing, technology, and more during these hands-on, multi-disciplinary learning experiences. Enthusiastic youth are not only learning in school and contributing to their communities, but also exploring firsthand the wealth of careers (working directly with Great Lakes resource professionals) connected with Great Lakes science.

### 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?

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