

# 2024 Great Lakes Conference

## Request for Proposals for Breakout Sessions and Field Trips

*hosted by the*  
Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition

**Deadline for submissions: May 1, 2024**

### **Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition**

The Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition (HOW Coalition, or the Coalition) consists of over 185 environmental groups, conservation associations, outdoor recreation organizations, zoos, aquariums and museums representing millions of people whose common goal is to restore and protect the Great Lakes.

### **2024 Great Lakes Conference Request for Proposals**

The HOW Coalition invites you to submit a proposal for breakout sessions or field trips for the Coalition's 2024 Great Lakes Conference. **This year's conference will be hosted September 26-27, 2024, in Chicago, Illinois.** All speakers must register for the conference; need-based scholarships are available.

The HOW Coalition seeks applications from individuals and local, Tribal, state, regional, and national organizations working on issues of relevance to Great Lakes restoration. The Coalition is dedicated to using the conference platform to highlight all voices of the Great Lakes region and strives to be inclusive of the entire Great Lakes community. Projects of all sizes and locations within the region are encouraged.

We strongly encourage the following projects and applicants to apply –

- Those representing culturally and racially diverse communities
- Groups or individuals representing or supporting work in work in communities most impacted by pollution and environmental harm throughout the Great Lakes region
- Urban and rural projects
- Sessions and panels that include multiple, diverse perspectives and speakers. **Only applications with all speakers confirmed with be considered.**

Contact Sophee Langerman ([LangermanS@nwf.org](mailto:LangermanS@nwf.org)) or Laura Rubin ([RubinL@nwf.org](mailto:RubinL@nwf.org)) with any questions.

### **Field Trips**

The Great Lakes Conference will address many of the critical issues and challenges facing the Great Lakes. The HOW Coalition typically schedules local/regional field trips for conference

participants that compliment conference issues, allow participants to see first-hand the important work being done by Coalition members and partners, and allow participants to experience the culture and unique identity of the conference host city and surrounding areas.

The HOW Coalition is seeking creative proposals for field trips that feature on-site visits to restoration sites, businesses or communities benefiting from restoration investment, or cultural landmarks or areas that provide context for attendees on the local, social, cultural, and ecological landscape. Field trips should include experts able to talk about sites and provide context. Proposals that highlight work in economically disadvantaged areas are encouraged.

### **Field Trip Submission Information and General Instructions**

- Submissions must be received no later than **May 1, 2024**.
- Conference field trips cannot be used to market products or services.
- Preference will be given to field trips that utilize public transportation and/or walking, biking, or scooter usage. If not feasible, the Coalition will provide one (1) bus for transportation, to and from field trip location(s). Any alternative transportation or other needs must be included in the application and coordinated between field trip organizers and HOW Coalition staff.
- **Field trips are 3 hours maximum in length, including travel time.** Travel time must not exceed 45 minutes each way, or over half the total field trip time. **Field trips will be held in the afternoon of Thursday, September 26.**

[Apply to host a field trip](#)

### **Breakout Sessions**

Breakout sessions at the conference will provide valuable insights, unique stories, and practical hands-on training relevant to Great Lakes advocacy and restoration. This year's conference will feature topics from across the Great Lakes region with a special focus on local issues from the Chicagoland area.

We encourage innovative, non-traditional, and creative approaches to building engaging sessions! Interactivity, participant engagement, and time for discussion and questions is highly encouraged. **Breakout sessions should be designed to fit a one-hour time slot.** Each session may include **up to three presenters, plus one moderator (optional)**. The HOW Coalition has a limited number of need-based scholarships available for presenters (contact Sophee Langerman, [langermans@nwf.org](mailto:langermans@nwf.org) for more information).

Breakout sessions should be one hour long and can be formatted in a variety of ways including, but not limited to:

- Presentation
- Workshop
- Working/input session

- Training
- Panel presentation/discussion
- Simulation

### **Breakout Session Categories**

Below is a broad list of categories for potential presentations. **These categories are shared as a starting point and are not exhaustive.** We encourage folks with material specific to Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana to submit proposals. Additional relevant sessions outside of these categories are welcome and encouraged. We encourage you to [check out last conference's agenda](#) for a complete list 2023 sessions, which illustrates the breadth of topics covered.

### **Great Lakes Policy Issues**

What are you doing to advance Great Lakes or water policy in your community? If you or your organization is advancing critical policy issues that impact the lakes, this is an opportunity to share and strategize on these important efforts.

### **Innovative & Compelling Great Lakes Restoration Stories and Case Studies**

Presentations in this issue area will delve into inspiring, unique and successful projects from which others can learn innovative and creative strategies for protecting and restoring the Great Lakes and the communities that rely on them. This category may include stories of federal Great Lakes program implementation, including under the Justice40 Initiative.

### **Addressing Environmental Injustices**

Low-income, Black, Latino, and Indigenous communities are disproportionately impacted by pollution. Presentations in this category will highlight stories, issues, challenges, and threats to communities facing environmental injustices or stories of successful environmental justice initiatives, programs, campaigns and innovation in the face of challenges or threats.

### **Grassroots Action + Community Engagement**

Presentations under this category should include stories of successful campaigns that utilized creative approaches to achieve definable victories in protecting the Great Lakes and local communities. This category also includes stories of exemplary community outreach and engagement, including GLRI and Areas of Concern program implementation at the community level.

### **Great Lakes Science Research and Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

Presentations under this category should include new or updated research and/or share traditional ecological knowledge to educate and inform conference participants about the Great Lakes ecosystem and the people who live in this region.

### **Emerging Issues**

Presentations in this category will include emerging problems in the Great Lakes. These issues might examine new invasive species or forms of pollution, but could also delve into policy,

community issues, financing structures, or emerging science (social, political, natural, behavioral).

### **Skills, Training, and Organizational Development**

Presentations in this area should provide hands on training on a specific topic that will build capacity or provide technical assistance to participants. This might include examples of technical assistance best practices, grant application tips, equity and justice training, and nonprofit administration, among many other topics.

### **[Apply to lead a breakout session](#)**

Questions? Contact Sophee Langerman at [LangermanS@nwf.org](mailto:LangermanS@nwf.org) or Laura Rubin at [RubinL@nwf.org](mailto:RubinL@nwf.org).