

5 Ways

to be a Great Lakes Steward

Did you know? The Great Lakes hold 20 percent of the entire world's fresh water. That makes them globally important! Here are five ways you can show your love for the Great Lakes so we can enjoy them for generations:

1. Become Great Lakes literate – This means understanding how the Great Lakes influence you and how you influence the Great Lakes. Think about the ways the Great Lakes affect your community and how your daily actions could affect the Great Lakes. Understanding how all water is connected helps people make responsible decisions about our shared water resources.

- Imagine you are a fish swimming in your local river or lake. What would you see? Would it be different if you swam to Isle Royale? Or to the Chicago river? Write about a day in the life of a fish from the Great Lakes watershed.



2. Connect with nature - Experience a connection to nature in your local community. Visit a lake, river, park, or natural area with your family or class. People who experience nature are more likely to appreciate and take care of it.

- At the park, see how many plants and animals you can identify. Draw a picture of something you don't recognize and look it up to learn about it.

3. Make wise choices outdoors - What we do on the land affects the Great Lakes. Choose to plant native plants in your yard, don't release aquarium fish into the wild, and properly dispose of trash. We all have a duty to act responsibly to protect our waters.

- Grow a houseplant to clean the air inside your home or outside on your porch. Contaminants floating in the air are knocked down into lakes and rivers when it rains. Plants can help keep our air and water clean.



4. Be a part of the solution – Take action! Take steps to protect our air, land, and water. Reduce energy and water use to reduce impacts on the environment.

- If you don't already, start recycling. If you do, look for ways to reduce your plastic use. Bring reusable bags to the store, or try making your own out of an old t-shirt with these quick no-sew directions!

<http://www.instructables.com/id/No-Sew-10-Minute-T-Shirt-Tote/?ALLSTEPS>

5. Get involved in your community to protect and restore natural places – People care most about the places where they live and the destinations that they love. There are many programs like Adopt-a-Beach (<https://greatlakes.org/get-involved/adopt-a-beach/>) that provide volunteer opportunities and can also be fun. If there aren't any near you, organize an Earth Day cleanup of your favorite park or trail with friends, family, or your class.

- All water in Michigan eventually flows to the ocean. Make a map of the journey that a drop of water might take from your kitchen sink to the ocean.