

## LESSON 4

# SAVING OUR STURGEON

## Activity 2: Time to Act: Community Awareness for Sturgeon

Students will complete a community awareness activity as a stewardship project to highlight their part in lake sturgeon conservation. If time allows, an optional extension provides students two additional mechanisms to participate in stewardship activities.

### Activity Preparation

#### Pre-Reading

In "Saving Our Sturgeon," have students read Chapter 8: Sturgeon Conservation Today, p. 83-97.

#### Files Needed

- What Is Stewardship? (slideshow)
- Time to Act – A Community Awareness Project (handout)

#### Material Needed

- Recording devices
- Whiteboard or other tool to record brainstorming results

### Activity Steps

1. Read this quote from author Rebecca Hogue Wohjan to your students: "Sturgeon were once found in almost all Wisconsin's rivers and big lakes. Who's to say you can't help bring them back to your area?"
2. Ask the students to brainstorm ideas on how to help with conservation for sturgeon. Write ideas on a white board or use whatever means you have in your classroom.
3. Display the "What Is Stewardship" slide.
4. Introduce the concept of "stewardship." According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), stewardship is the "the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being." This can look like many things, but for now we'll focus on three examples of how NOAA defines stewardship:
  - a. **Raising Community Awareness:** increasing a community's knowledge of an issue. In most cases the goal of raising community awareness is inspiring others to take action to address that issue.

#### Objectives

After participating in this activity, students can:

Create an informative written, audio, video, or artistic piece that considers, and is designed to meet, the needs of a selected audience.

#### Wisconsin Academic Standards

##### Assessed

##### English Language Arts

SL.6.4, SL.7.4, SL.8.4, W.6.2, W.6.6, W.7.2, W.7.6, W.8.2, W.8.2.b, W.8.6

##### Covered

##### English Language Arts

W.6.2, W.7.2, W.8.2.

##### Covered

##### Environmental Literacy and Sustainability

ELS.EX2.8.m

##### Assessed

##### Social Studies

SS. Inq4.a.m

##### Covered

##### Social Studies

SS. Inq5.a.m, SS.PS4.a.m

#### Great Lakes Literacy Principles

##### Principle 6

The Great Lakes and humans in their watersheds are inextricably interconnected.

##### Principle 8

The Great Lakes are socially, economically, and environmentally significant to the region, the nation, and the planet.

- b. **Participating in Stewardship Science:** collecting and reporting monitoring data in an ecosystem that can be used to inform management of the natural resource.
  - c. **Taking Civic Action:** doing something that can improve environmental outcomes for many people or organizations at once.
5. Ask the students if any of their ideas from the brainstorming session fit these definitions. Have the students defend their answers.

## Optional Extensions

There are two additional stewardship approaches that students can take.

### Option 1 - Stewardship Science

1. Turn to page 101 for a list of volunteer organizations working on sturgeon conservation.
2. Using their website, write down one way they are practicing stewardship. Which NOAA stewardship activity category do each of the activities fit: community awareness, stewardship science, or civic action? Defend your response.
3. Present what you've learned about the organization to your classmates, using one of the three ways to participate in community awareness (poster/flyer, mini podcast, mini documentary).
4. If possible, get involved with one of the organizations in their stewardship activities.

### Option 2 - Civic Action

Civic action is action that informs public or organizational policy decisions that can improve outcomes for many people or organizations at once. A recent example of this for sturgeon began in 2018. The Center for Biological Diversity petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to list lake sturgeon as a threatened or endangered species. In 2024, the petition was denied.

1. Learn more about the Endangered Species Act by exploring these resources:
  - a. What is the Endangered Species Act? <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/topic/laws-policies/endangered-species-act>
  - b. More detail about how you can help prevent species from going extinct and aid in their recovery: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/recovery-endangered-and-threatened-species#:~:text=Learn%20about%20endangered%20and%20threatened,other%20actions%20to%20protect%20habitat>
2. Learn more about the proposed lake sturgeon designation as a threatened or endangered species:
  - a. Center for Biological Diversity Petition Executive Summary (see pages 3-5): <https://www.biologicaldiversity.org/species/fish/pdfs/Lake-Sturgeon-petition-5-14-18.pdf>
  - b. "Wisconsin's US lawmakers want to exempt state sturgeon from possible endangered designation" – Wisconsin Public Radio. January 23, 2024. <https://www.wpr.org/animals/endangered-species/wisconsin-lawmakers-exempt-state-sturgeon-endangered>
  - c. "Collaborative conservation efforts keep lake sturgeon off the endangered species list" – press release from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. April 22, 2024. <https://www.fws.gov/press-release/2024-04/collaborative-conservation-keeps-lake-sturgeon-endangered-list>

3. Learn how sturgeon are managed in Wisconsin:
  - a. Wisconsin's Sturgeon Management Plan – Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. October 2019. [https://p.widencdn.net/tc3jdk/Sturgeon\\_SturgeonManagementPlan2019](https://p.widencdn.net/tc3jdk/Sturgeon_SturgeonManagementPlan2019)
4. One way you can practice civic action is to write a letter to members of Congress, the state legislature, or a local government official. Your letter can support or oppose a bill or policy that is under consideration. Reflect on what you have learned about lake sturgeon conservation. Draft a letter to "Jane Smith," a fictional senator, laying out why or why not you feel the lake sturgeon should be designated as an endangered species. Consider the following suggestions:
  - a. Clearly state your position on the matter.
  - b. Provide factual information related to your position/perspective on the matter.
  - c. Provide an emotional, cultural, historical, or other reason for your position on the matter.
  - d. Anticipate what other groups' positions might be and attempt to refute those positions.
  - e. Summarize your views and attempt to persuade others to your perspective.
5. Present what you've learned about a sturgeon-focused conservation organization to your classmates or someone you know, using one of the three ways to participate in community awareness (poster/flyer, mini podcast, mini documentary).