



Launching GLIN Labs

The Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN: www.great-lakes.net) will soon add a new component called GLIN “Labs,” a virtual center for research and development of information technology tools to enhance decisionmaking to improve the health of the Great Lakes.

With support from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, launching GLIN Labs is the first step in re-energizing GLIN and fulfilling its long-envisioned potential as the region’s hub for Great Lakes data, maps and information. GLIN Labs will provide a network where beta applications will be designed, incubated, tested and launched, including the platform for GLINv2.0. The vision is that GLIN Labs will allow users – resource managers and technology innovators – to “mash up” multiple sets of data into applications that display information in ways that enable Great Lakes decisionmakers, businesses and consumers to make better choices regarding their behavior and implications for the lakes. The proposed work will also scope out the future path for GLIN and engage Great Lakes resource managers and a broader GLIN user community in this process.

Outcomes of this one-year project will include:

- a network of partners who are re-energized to work with GLIN to develop products and applications in Phase II of the project;
- a series of mini-applications that have been conceived with partners, evaluated and tested, identifying those ready for enhanced development and use by partners and a broader audience;
- a custom-authored computing platform for GLIN v2.0 that will support a network of partners engaged in collaborative computing and which will enable users to begin custom designing their own content, applications and delivery preferences; and
- a go-forward plan, informed by an advisory team, for expanding the network of GLIN partners, growing GLIN Labs, and a build-out plan for GLIN v2.0.

A GLIN Labs Advisory Team is currently being assembled. This group will include experts with experience in Great Lakes resource management, Web2.0 product development, data integration, web marketing, search engine optimization, and business planning. For more information, contact Christine Manninen, communications director, Great Lakes Commission, manninen@glc.org, 734-971-9135.

History of GLIN

In 1991, the Great Lakes region began exploring the use of Internet-based communications to cultivate an ecosystem-based approach to the management of its natural, cultural and economic resources. By mid-1993, a critical mass of agencies and organizations in the Great Lakes region agreed to develop GLIN to facilitate the linking of data, information and professionals in many disciplines, agencies and jurisdictions. The GLIN pilot identified a keen interest in the project, as well as a large potential user community that included researchers, policymakers, industry leaders, and citizens from across the region and around the world. GLIN began as a Gopher server, the Internet technology of choice at the time. As the World Wide Web gained prominence on the Internet, GLIN made the switch in 1994.

In the years since, GLIN usage has grown exponentially. The network currently averages more than 125,000 unique visitors per month. Because of its regional voice and role in serving the Great Lakes states/provinces, the Great Lakes Commission, based in Ann Arbor, Mich., was uniquely suited to lead the GLIN initiative. The Great Lakes Commission continues to manage the project and ensure staffing for GLIN design, funding and day-to-day maintenance.

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