

Great Lakes Patch Program

Living in this specific council means that you get the opportunity to live near the Great Lakes of Michigan. While completing this patch program, you will engage in fun activities that allow you to learn more and gain a new perspective for these bodies of water!

Steps:

1. Expose yourself to the Great lakes
2. Discuss with experts in the field
3. Investigate the intricacies of the Great Lakes
4. Learn about how the Great Lakes affect you personally
5. Advocate for the Great Lakes and their environment

STEP 1: EXPOSE YOURSELF TO THE GREAT LAKES

Whether you have spent your whole life in Michigan or just moved to the area, the Great Lakes are an important part of Michigan culture. Use this step to either familiarize yourself with the Lakes or revisit your favorite activities.

Choices—do one:

Go to the beach. The beach is an amazing place to visit the Great Lakes and introduce yourself to them. While there, make a sandcastle, or write your name in the sand. Convince a friend or parent to play with a volleyball. Walk into the water and splash around. Find seashells—but make sure to leave them behind!

OR

Visit a lighthouse. Lighthouses were and still are incredibly important to the Great Lakes. They helped guide those out in the waters towards land. As you visit the lighthouse, imagine what it would be like to be out in the water, searching for that light, and how important it would be to you. Draw a picture of the lighthouse and share with family or friends.

OR

Take a boat ride. It does not matter what kind of boat this is--a ferry, a kayak, a speedboat—any kind is fine. As long as you look at the water around you. What does it look like? Is it more blue or green? Are the waters choppy or smooth?



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STEP 2: DISCUSS WITH EXPERTS IN THE FIELD

Since there are so many different aspects of the Great Lakes, that means there are several people who have jobs relating to the lakes in some way or another. Talk with these experts and get their experiences with the Lakes. Ask them what their favorite part of their job is and what the Lakes mean to them.

Speak with someone who works on the water. Whether this is a lifeguard or someone who captains a boat, talk to them about what it is like to work on the water. Ask them about how they first started working there and what motivates them to stay at their job. Ask if they find it different from working other jobs away from the Lakes.

OR

Speak with someone who deals with nature. Some examples would be a naturalist or a meteorologist. Ask them how the Great Lakes affect their work and in what ways. How do the Lakes affect weather or how nature has changed over time?

OR

Speak with someone who is inspired by the Lakes. This could be an author or artist of some sort. Ask them why the Great Lakes have inspired them so much. What was it that first drew them in?

STEP 3: INVESTIGATE THE INTRICACIES OF THE GREAT LAKES

Now that you have had an introduction to the Lakes, it is time to dig a little deeper. The Great Lakes have a rich history that changes day by day. Take this opportunity to let your research skills shine--get your Sherlock hats on, because it is time to investigate!

Take a look at the Great Lakes history. As all places, the Great Lakes have an abundant history with all sorts of unique stories. Look up the history of the Great Lakes and investigate. How were the Great Lakes formed? Who lived in this area hundreds of years ago? What sort of activities did they do? What were the Great Lakes famous for?

OR



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Identify wildlife unique to this area. Since the Great Lakes have such a diverse environment, there are lots of wildlife in this area that other states do not have. What kind of wildlife is specific to this area? Have they always been here, or are they invasive species? Have you ever seen any of these animals in the wild?

OR

Research how the Great Lakes affects weather. If you spoke with a meteorologist earlier, this question would be perfect to research. Does the temperature change the closer you get to a Lake? Do the Great Lakes make winters or summers worse? What kind of weather patterns are common near a lake?

STEP 4: LEARN ABOUT HOW THE GREAT LAKES AFFECT YOU PERSONALLY

Since you live so close to the Lakes, they can affect you on a daily basis, whether you know it or not. Even if you do not live directly by one, the entire state is famous for the Great Lakes. Use this step to see how the Great Lakes affect you personally.

Research how pollution affects the Great Lakes. No matter what, pollution affects every single person in the world. Bodies of water are especially susceptible to pollution--are the Great Lakes also victim to pollution? What areas seem to have it the worst? What types of pollution are they?

OR

Investigate how much money Michigan makes from tourism. Every year, people come up to the Great Lakes for vacation. Research how much revenue (that is how much money is made) Michigan makes per year off tourism. Where do people tend to go? What areas get the most visitation?

OR

Look up how many recreational programs there are for the Great Lakes. Since the Lakes are so important to Michigan, countless programs involve the Great Lakes. Look up some of these and see if you are interested in any! During your research, find out how those programs are funded. Is it by the government? Private areas?



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STEP 5: ADVOCATE FOR THE GREAT LAKES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT

Now that you have visited the Lakes, investigated them, and learned so much more about how they relate to your life, it is time to create change. What can you do to raise awareness for the Great Lakes? Although they are pretty and fun, it is important that people know about issues that affect the area.

Organize a water cleanup. Gather some friends and family devote yourselves to a few hours of cleaning up trash, and litter from the Lake themselves or the areas around them. This helps the wildlife there and benefits those who want to enjoy the atmosphere without having to see trash.

OR

Celebrate Great Lakes Awareness Day. Great Lakes Awareness Day is the Monday of the first full week in May. During this day, do whatever you can to raise awareness. See if there are any events nearby you. Make social media posts. Make pamphlets. Make sure you help others understand that the Great Lakes need to be preserved.

OR

Create a petition for the Great Lakes. Whether the petition is to help protect wildlife or annual cleanups for pollution, create one. Get people to sign it and discuss why your issue is important. When you get enough signatures, talk to your local congress representative and present the petition to them.

After you have completed a step in each of the five areas, you can purchase your Michigan Great Lakes Patch at any GSSEM Council Shop or Trading Post starting in late August 2019.