

JANUARY 15, 2017

Final Report to the Governor and the Legislature

As per M.S. 3.3.03, SUBD. 10 and M.S. 129D.17, SUBD.2 (D)

UNSALTED SEAS



Project supported by the
Legacy Amendment's Arts and
Culture Heritage Fund FY 2016

Pursuant to Minnesota Laws, 2015, 1st Special Session, Chapter 2, Article 4, Section 2, Subd 6(j) the Minnesota Legislature provided \$250,000 to Lake Superior Center Authority in the first year (fiscal year 2016) of the FY 16/17 biennium for development, preparation, and construction of an exhibit on the unsalted seas to preserve Minnesota's history and cultural heritage related to fresh water lakes.

THANK YOU.

On behalf of the Lake Superior Center Authority, we are pleased to provide this final report on the project for which we received Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund funding, a project we are calling *Unsalted Seas*.

In entering into the grant agreement, the state entity, Lake Superior Center Authority designated its non-profit, Lake Superior Center d/b/a Great Lakes Aquarium, to serve as its managing agent for the project. After an intense year of gallery preparation and exhibit development, *Unsalted Seas* opened to the visiting public on July 14, 2016. Since its opening, more than 80,000 people have been engaged in exploring large lake natural history, challenges, wildlife and resources.

The centerpiece of the new exhibit is the largest sturgeon touch tank in North America. Adults and children alike have marveled at the diversity of life as they reach into the 9,000 gallon tank to interact with these large, curious fish. Other elements featured in the exhibit include a large tank housing cichlids native to Lake Malawi in Africa, a model of the large lakes research vessel, the R/V Blue Heron, and a life-size bronze sculpture of a Nerpa seal which are native to Lake Baikal in Siberia. The sculpture was created for the exhibit by local Duluth artist, Ann Klefstad.

Developing an understanding and appreciation of large lakes and their important role in the world is important. The large lakes of the world hold more than two-thirds of the freshwater on the planet. They are home to diverse populations of people, plants and wildlife. There are 253 large lakes around the world designated as being a large lake, or lake of more than 500 km² (193 mi²) in size. Global water resources are limited. Access to safe drinking water and aquatic food sources is already a concern for millions of people. These bodies of water will become an increasingly important part of the conversation in coming years.

Telling this important story is center to our mission at Great Lakes Aquarium which is to *inspire people to explore their connection to Lake Superior and the waters of the world*. To strengthen that mission, we intend to have the *Unsalted Seas* exhibit serve as a permanent exhibit in our facility. For security and safety reasons, we are providing a staffing presence in the *Unsalted Seas* gallery throughout our regular hours of operation, which has led us to add six part time positions to our work force.

The public response to *Unsalted Seas* has been extremely positive, driving our overall attendance levels for 2016 to a new fourteen year record. We are most grateful to the members of the Minnesota State Legislature for providing funding for this project from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. A copy of this report and images of the exhibit can be found at: www.glaquarium.org/unsaltedseas.

Sincerely,



Jack LaVoy
Executive Director
Lake Superior dba Great Lakes Aquarium



Elaine Hansen
Chair
Lake Superior Center Authority



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This report outlines the final outcomes achieved with \$250,000 in Arts and Cultural Heritage Funds received “for development, preparation, and construction of an exhibit on the unsalted seas to preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage related to fresh water lakes.”

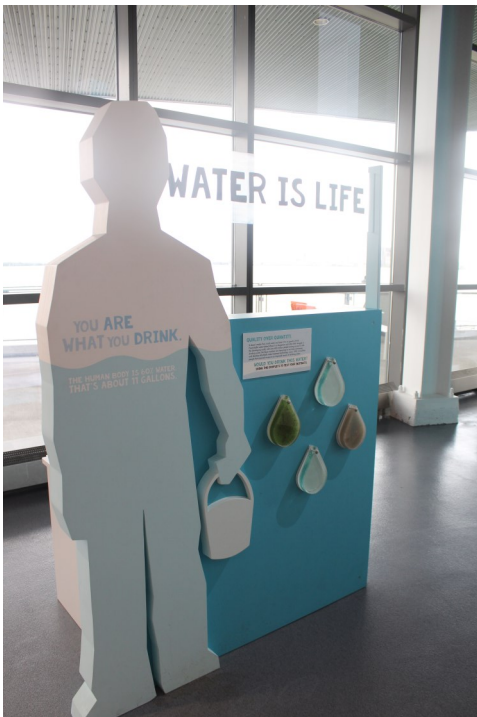
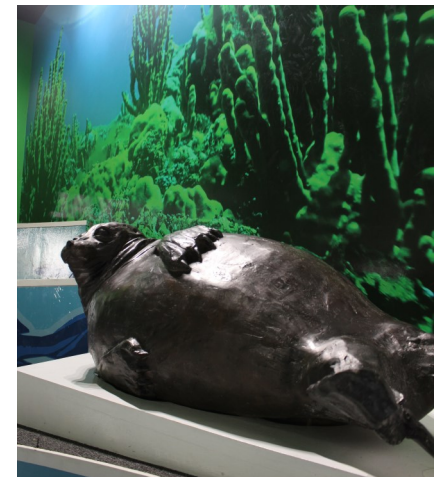


EXHIBIT COMPONENTS

The exhibit includes live animal displays, hands-on interactive activities, videos, sculptures, interpretive panels with vivid graphics and interpreters.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



This exhibit was designed to engage the public with large lakes from around the world. This aligns with the Great Lakes Aquarium mission to “inspire people to explore their connection with Lake Superior and waters of the world”. *Unsalted Seas* tells the story of large lakes through the lens of biodiversity, climate change impacts, freshwater resources and scientific exploration. These themes, exhibit content and interactive elements support the public’s increased understanding of the following concepts:

- Global large lakes play an important role in the lives of people and wildlife.
- Water is necessary for life.
- Access to fresh water varies globally.
- The sustainable use of fresh water is key to the future of human civilization on Earth.
- Large lakes are evolutionary hotspots and display a range of biodiversity that varies with lake age and location.
- Large lakes record and display the effects of past and modern climate change.
- Much remains to be learned about large lakes.
- The Laurentian Great Lakes are globally significant.
- The Twin Ports of Duluth and Superior are home to unique organizations that investigate questions related to and educate about large lakes.

EVALUATION MEASURES AND RESULTS

The exhibit benchmarks (see opposite page) were completed as projected in the proposed timeline. Anecdotal evidence suggests increased visitor awareness of biodiversity in large lakes, particularly related to global sturgeon populations. Common conversations with staff also involve the definition and features of large lakes, water resource challenges globally, challenges facing large lakes, and the comparative salinity of a lake, salt lake and the ocean.

TIMELINE AND BENCHMARKS

TIME PERIOD

PROJECT PHASE OR ACTIVITY

July 1, 2015 — Dec. 31, 2015

Gallery preparation and architectural plans drawn; Development of content and interactive displays; Sourcing graphics; Collaboration with partners; Sourcing animals; Tank fabrication.

Dec. 7, 2015—March 31, 2016

Existing structures removed from gallery; Architectural elements installed; HVAC/Electrical work completed; Development of content and interactive displays; Marketing and public relations.

Jan. 1, 2016—March 31, 2016

Development of content and interactive displays; Marketing and public relations; Gallery finishes in process; Interactive fabrication in process; Tank installation and theming; Life support completed.

April 1, 2016—July 13, 2016

Acclimation of live animals; Installation of interactives and theming; Production and installation of graphic displays; Marketing and public relations efforts.

July 14, 2016

Exhibit open to the public



BUDGET AND FUNDING

Lake Superior Center dba Great Lakes Aquarium received an allocation of \$250,000 from the Legacy Amendment's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund for fiscal year 2016. Matching funds from the Great Lakes Aquarium operational budget, the City of Duluth's Tourism Tax Surplus Fund, private foundations, and individuals supplied the remainder of the project's funding.

Direct Expenses: \$718,110 | **Administrative Expenses:** \$0

BUDGET CATEGORY	FUNDS	SOURCE
Supplies	\$161,878.16	\$45,000 (Legacy); \$2,443.76 (City of Duluth); \$114,434.40 (Match)
Contracted Services	\$436,232.24	\$200,000 (Legacy); \$197,556.24 (City of Duluth); \$38,676 (Match)
Staff Time	\$120,000	LSC dba GLA
TOTAL	\$718,110	

\$245,000

\$153,110

\$320,000

LEGACY FUNDS (\$250,000 APPROPRIATION)

LSC DBA GLA

MATCHING FUNDS

\$200,000—City of Duluth—Tourism Tax Surplus Fund

\$50,000—Donald M. Weezner Foundation

\$20,000—Lloyd K. Johnson Foundation

\$25,000—Lillian Goldfine

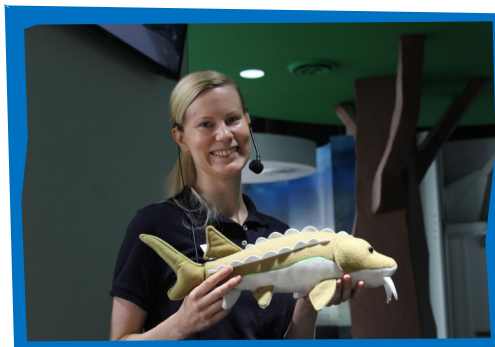
\$16,000—John and Mary Anderson

\$9,000—Essentia Health Foundation

FTE

Great Lakes Aquarium staff contributing to the project were supported entirely by GLA operating funds. They contributed an estimated 7,500 hours toward completing the project. Over the timeframe outlined above and with an average billable rate of \$16/hour, this provided \$120,000 or the equivalent of 3.5 FTE in-kind match.

Upon opening this new exhibit, Great Lakes Aquarium hired 6 PTE staff to provide security and interpretation at the *Unsalted Seas* sturgeon touch tank. This has been both a necessary and beneficial addition to the visitor experience at the Aquarium. Annually, the collective salary for these staff is \$40,000. These are new positions that are now available in Duluth.



MEDIA COVERAGE

Local and regional media outlets and publications were engaged throughout the exhibit design and fabrication process. The arrival of new animals, the work of fabricators and the exhibit's story were frequently featured on TV, in print and online. Aquarium staff also engaged the community in the process through in-person presentations at the Aquarium and throughout the region at various civic club meetings. The following list provides examples of the related media coverage.

2015

Wednesday, July 15: Great Lakes Aquarium celebrates new found stability, Duluth News Tribune
Monday, December 7: Aquarium seeks city aid for new exhibit, Duluth News Tribune

2016

Wednesday, June 15: Aquarium pushes to open new summer exhibit; Duluth News-Tribune, front page
Thursday, June 16: New touch tank sturgeon arrive from Florida; WDIO TV
Monday, June 20: Nature Matters on *Unsalted Seas* focus on biodiversity; KBJR TV
Monday, June 27: Nature Matters focus on sturgeon, KBJR TV
Wednesday, July 6: New fish enter exhibit tank at the Great Lakes Aquarium, KBJR TV, FOX21
Tuesday, July 12: Sturgeon transfer to touch tank in *Unsalted Seas*, WDIO TV
Thursday, July 14: Aquarium cuts ribbon on *Unsalted Seas*, WDIO TV, KBJR TV, KDAL radio
Friday, July 15: *Unsalted Seas* opens at Great Lakes Aquarium, Duluth News-Tribune
August/Sept Edition: New Large Lakes Exhibit Opens at Aquarium, Lake Superior Magazine
Monday, August 1: Along the shore—*Unsalted Seas* in Duluth, Northern Wilds Magazine

PUBLICATIONS, CAMPAIGNS, AND EVENTS

Unsalted Seas marketing campaign purchased/secured:

- Lake Superior Magazine
- Canal Park Times
- North Shore Scenic Railroad supplement in DNT
- Lamar Billboard purchase on I-35 N (south of Thompson Hill)
- Duluth News-Tribune Skybox purchase week of July 15
- Minnesota Group Guide ad (for bus/tour promoters)
- My Summer with 95.7 radio promotion
- Facebook Co-op ad buy with Visit Duluth
- City Pages—Minneapolis
- Media USA Skywalk billboard
- Info touch (Media USA) Hotel Interactives
- International Association of Great Lakes Research Conference Advertisement
- Facebook Ads—July 2016

Grand opening of *Unsalted Seas*, Thursday, July 14

RECENT VISITOR COMMENTS ABOUT UNSALTED SEAS

"Loved it. My daughter (2) loved the sturgeon petting tank and my son (9) enjoyed all the different tanks of fish and the shark feeding. I love that it's non-profit and all the money made goes back to the animals."

"Awesome, awesome, awesome! So many beautiful and educational exhibits! Was bummed the wave machine was under construction but still had tons of fun none-the-less! Snowflake [sturgeon] in the touch tank was my absolute favorite."

"Visited the Great Lakes Aquarium today!!! Such a fun experience!!! All the programs I attended were extremely educational and well presented...all the employees were friendly and very kind to answer all my questions...especially about the Sturgeon Exhibit!!! If one needs self care or stress relief...go pet a precious sturgeon...for me it was an exceptional time with a species who are friendly and adorable!!!"

"Fascinating. Great, engaging staff. An awesome way to learn about Lake Superior and Minnesota's fishes. The sturgeon touch tank is cool. Who knew fish liked petting? Well, they do!"

"The new sturgeon touch tank is really cool!"

"I was pleasantly surprised with my visit. I come from living in Hawai'i and San Diego and wasn't expecting to be very impressed with the Aquarium, but I was humbled walking out of there. A great trip for the whole family."

SOURCE: GREAT LAKES AQUARIUM FACEBOOK PAGE AND GOOGLE REVIEW PAGE

CONTACT INFORMATION

353 Harbor Drive

Duluth, MN 55802

www.glaquarium.org

Project manager:

Jack LaVoy, Executive Director

218-740-2028; jlavoy@glaquarium.org

Exhibit team leaders:

Jay Walker, Operations Manager

218-740-2011; jwalker@glaquarium.org

Sarah Erickson, Education Director

218-740-2007; serickson@glaquarium.org

Finance and grant manager:

Bill Alworth, Director of Administrative Services

218-740-2001; balworth@glaquarium.org

SELECT PROJECT PARTNERS

Large Lakes Observatory, University of Minnesota Duluth

Sturgeon AquaFarms, Bascom, Florida, USA

World Wildlife Foundation—LIFE PROGRAMME

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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