

Engage communities and activate local solutions to sustain a healthy Lake Huron Forever.

Lake Huron Forever Pledge

Alcona Community Schools knows that a healthy Lake Huron means a healthy, strong and vibrant future for our community and schools. As a result, we are committed to keeping the protection of Lake Huron at the forefront of our planning, decision making and resource allocation.

Our well-being and economic prosperity are tied to Lake Huron. We understand that access to healthy natural resources like fresh air, clean water and public land improve the health and wellness of our entire community.

We must work together to protect the forests, wetlands and waterways to address threats of pollution and flooding caused by stormwater, proactively plan for the impacts of a changing climate, support native plant restoration and provide corridors for wildlife.

We are committed to understanding the unique connections our staff, students and parents have to our school and community and to incorporating their priorities and concerns into our decision making as we continue to lead natural resources conservation efforts in our region. We pledge to protect Lake Huron forever.

Our Lake Huron Forever Pledge

- We hereby pledge to create, implement and update a Lake Huron Forever School Road Map.
- We promise to serve as an example of how to proactively protect Lake Huron by sharing our work with other Lake Huron communities and schools.
- We will allocate resources to understanding emerging needs and opportunities in order to protect Lake Huron Forever.
- We will commit to and encourage all students, teachers, staff and parents to take their own actions to protect Lake Huron, forever.
- We will give back to Lake Huron by identifying ways to improve efforts to protect land and water resources.
- We will share our pledge with neighboring school and community leaders to generate more conversation and positive action for Lake Huron and Lake Huron communities.

Our Lake Huron Forever School Road Map

Alcona Community Schools has identified several specific issues that are direct threats to the health of the Lake Huron watershed. With the support of the Lake Huron Forever network of partners, the school will work to address these issues with the following goals and action steps.

Issues and Goals

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- **Empowering youth as community leaders:** By involving students in decision-making processes and leadership roles, Alcona Community Schools plans to cultivate their skills, confidence, and sense of responsibility. This empowerment not only enhances their personal growth but also ensures that their voices are heard in creating a more vibrant community. Place-based stewardship education (PBSE) serves as a powerful tool for inspiring students to develop a deep sense of place and connection to their environment and community. By engaging in hands-on projects that address local challenges, students can see the tangible impact of their contributions.
 - **Strengthening relationships with partners and students:** Building strong relationships is crucial for creating a collaborative environment that benefits everyone involved. Collaborative projects and initiatives can bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world applications, ensuring that students feel connected to their community. Alcona schools plans to create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility, motivating students to take an active role in their community.
 - **School as a model of community sustainability:** By integrating sustainability into the curriculum, students can learn about environmental issues and solutions firsthand, fostering a culture of responsibility. Alcona Community Schools aims to lead by example to inspire community members to adopt similar practices, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond the classroom.
- **Coastal restoration:** Coastal restoration is critical for preserving the health of our shorelines and the ecosystems they support as well as local economies and recreational activities. Alcona Community Schools aims to prioritize restoration projects that involve students and community participation in protecting the high quality of our water resources and the health of our harbor, fishery and coastal habitats to allow them to take an active role in their local environment. By focusing on the impacts of invasive species and stormwater while also understanding sustainable food and fishery practices, coordinated management strategies and regular water quality monitoring, these efforts improve resilience against climate change, highlighting the connection between healthy ecosystems and thriving communities.
 - **Harbor health:** Maintaining the health of our harbor is vital for supporting local economies, recreational activities, and ecosystems. Alcona Community Schools aims to prioritize these efforts in the coming years.
 - **Fishery health:** The health of local fisheries is essential for both ecological balance and the livelihoods of those who depend on them. Sustainable fishing practices and effective management strategies are necessary to ensure fish populations remain viable for future generations.
 - **Coastal habitat health:** The health of coastal habitats is jeopardized by issues like invasive species and poor stormwater management practices. Alcona Community Schools aims to combat these challenges by prioritizing management strategies like

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implementing green infrastructure solutions that can improve water quality while supporting native biodiversity, ultimately leading to healthier coastal habitats.

- o **Water quality monitoring:** Regular water quality monitoring is crucial for ensuring the health of our waterways and the communities that rely on them. Student involvement in monitoring activities not only fosters a sense of responsibility but also provides valuable data that can inform decisions.
- **Food systems:** By promoting local agriculture, we can ensure access to fresh, nutritious food while supporting local systems. Education about sustainable practices in food production and consumption can foster a culture of health and environmental stewardship. Alcona Community Schools' collaborative efforts to create networks among local producers, consumers, and students can further enhance food security and promote the importance of a connected food system.
- **Opportunities for increased funding:** Identifying and pursuing opportunities for increased funding is vital for maintaining and enhancing our watershed's health. By demonstrating the value of investing in our natural resources, Alcona Community Schools can attract additional support and foster a culture of environmental stewardship. Collaborative efforts to leverage funding will empower the community to take proactive steps in safeguarding our water resources.

Action Steps

1. Creation of an action plan to step out the long term success of programs that allows for best management practices, curriculum integration and reporting on lessons learned.
2. Expand use of the school's 43-acre school forest and nature trails to provide every student, across curriculums, with access to outdoor learning experiences.
3. Continue maintenance of the Harrisville Harbor rain garden and continue learning around nature-based solutions to stormwater management. Look for other places to install rain gardens including on the school property.
4. Continue to and expand efforts to involve students in school forest management decisions and implementation like invasive species removal projects and biodiversity monitoring efforts.
5. Support and expand wetland and vernal pool studies at places like Negwegon State Park.
6. Expand engagements for students in schoolyard and local food systems through programs like FFA and agriscience. Utilize infrastructure such as the 2 hoop houses, garden club, poultry program and food corps partnership to evolve and grow current efforts.
7. Expand place-based stewardship education and 3 P learning across curriculums and provide support to teachers through partners like NEMIGLSI.
8. Support student connection to local fisheries through programs like the research at Lost Lake Woods Club.
9. Build out a 3 year PBSE plan with partners which would proactively identify next steps, which partners need to be involved, and allow partners to plan accordingly to meet those needs.

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- Continue to build connections between projects and organizations. Plan is reviewed and updated such that there is always a 3 year plan.
10. Utilize old hatchery building to connect students and advance goals - potential to reestablish fish hatchery or student research station.
 11. Ensure school is an umbrella 'gathering place' for county/community-wide pledge conversation and commitment through community connected learning and storytelling.
 12. Write a Northeast Michigan Green Stormwater Infrastructure teaching guide.
 13. Use pledge as a way to connect with and inspire community leaders to take action by getting involved in community projects and making sure there are student voices. Connecting students and community members more directly to conservation decision making on Hubbard Lake Nature Preserve is an early opportunity.
 14. Alcona Community Schools will work with Huron Pines to finalize and tailor a messaging and communications guidance toolkit specific to the school district. The toolkit will include press release templates, social media posts, Lake Huron Forever messaging and logos and guidance for incorporating Lake Huron Forever messaging into curriculum and events. Stakeholders will participate in a workshop for toolkit overview and understanding led by Huron Pines.
 15. With assistance from Lake Huron Forever partners, Alcona Community Schools will install visual representation(s) highlighting the pledge to become a Lake Huron Forever School. This could include a sign and window decals.
 16. Alcona Community Schools will consider and discuss opportunities to raise or allocate funding for Lake Huron Forever programming and projects including considering these goals for grant fund applications.
 17. School leaders will explore opportunities to incorporate the Lake Huron Forever pledge and nature-based solutions into future opportunities and plans.
 18. Alcona Community Schools will review the Lake Huron Forever Road Map on a quarterly basis. The Road Map will be revised and added to on an annual basis.

Signature

Date

