

FACT SHEET

Mission: GOMI's mission is "to teach, move and inspire young people, in partnership with adults, to lead in stewardship of the Gulf of Maine and its watershed."

Organization: A 501(c) (3) GOMI is organized into three distinct initiatives: Community Based Initiatives (CBI), Teacher Training Initiatives (TTI), and Community Communications Initiative (CCI).

CBI: CBI Summer Workshop is a weeklong residential immersion in environmental science, civic engagement and community action principles. Teams are recruited from throughout the watershed, an area of immense natural and economic importance stretching from the tip of Cape Cod, Massachusetts to the southwestern tip of Nova Scotia, Canada. The adult team leader commits to sustaining one group of five youth in GOMI for a two-year period. Each year the Workshop rotates to a new state or provincial jurisdiction. The hosting venue organizes theme projects of local interest. Usually numbering five to six these projects include themes, such as water quality, habitat restoration, invasive species, global warming, among a number of others. Theme team leaders, local volunteers who are experts in related fields and well versed in GOMI methods, bring the youth into the field to study the problem and hypothesize remedies. In the closing days these remedies are presented by the youth to a panel of local experts. Participants also learn principles of civic engagement. On closing day, CBI teams report on their home project plans for the upcoming academic year. GOMI's focus and experiential approach brings to the young learners a package of cognitive and social skills that arm them with the confidence and the capacity to carry out a successful local project. Every GOMI youth participant must learn and exercise a set of skills that prepares her or him to better function as a community steward. These include:

- Scientific inquiry with an emphasis on understanding natural systems
- Public speaking
- Effectively presenting scientific findings
- Working as part of a team
- Assessing the strengths of self and others
- Application of science to solve community problems specific to the

environment

- Understanding how the political system works and how to influence it
- Making the connection from the local to the bioregional

Mastering these skills leads to a sense of efficacy and the ability to act. These are precisely the qualities required of tomorrow's community stewards. Bringing the CBI teams together this way once a year maximizes learning opportunities, promotes a Gulf-wide network and allows youth to experience and understand collaboration.

Back home, core CBI teams lead the local projects developed during the summer and expand their impact by recruiting new members. Based on past experience, it is expected that the first year a team will involve approximately 200 or more members of their community and by the end of the second year 2,000. CBI teams returning to the summer Workshop for the second summer take on leadership roles in small group activities while mentoring new participants.

Current projects include:

Newburyport, MA/Parker River National Wildlife Refuge, gaining community support and participation in the monitoring and removal of invasive plant species (pepperweed) from an important local salt marsh

Chelsea, MA, transforming a degraded urban salt marsh into a local wildlife sanctuary and leading a successful lobbying effort to require schools bus drivers to shut off their bus engines while waiting for children outside the schools

Great Bay National Wildlife Refuge, NH, TBA

Noble High School/Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, York County, ME, gaining community support and participation in the monitoring and removal of invasive plant species (knotweed) from the banks of Mousem River

Sackville, New Brunswick, monitoring migratory waterfowl for incidences of bird flu and reporting findings to government officials

Bear River, Nova Scotia restoring and monitoring local eel runs

Barrington, Nova Scotia involving community members in the restoration of nesting habitat for the piping plover, Barrington River

adopt-a-stream, and other local projects

Yarmouth, Nova Scotia study of the Broad Brook watershed under the adopt-a-stream program

Digby Neck/Islands, Nova Scotia work on Northeast Cove and its watershed under adopt-a-stream, Discovery Centre trails and information gathering

All the projects include research, action, awareness building and advocacy. Participants learn that building public awareness takes time and can be frustrating, but that perseverance pays. These are all valuable lessons that will serve them well as adult citizen/stewards. Importantly, GOMI gives young people the skills they need to influence their communities in a positive way. Researchers have repeatedly found these skills to be important predictors of future success.

TTI: Tufts University Department of Education and GOMI in partnership with the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Foundation have embarked on an innovative teacher training initiative. The first class of five Tufts fellows, selected from the MAT program, will join the Tufts/GOMI team this summer. The challenge for this initiative, as identified by growing numbers of educators, researchers and activists, is preparing our youth to meet the looming environmental and social consequences of generations of poor stewardship practices. To do so requires new methods and approaches to teaching. These approaches are place-based and include civic-engagement in solving local problems. At the summer Workshop the Fellows will help develop techniques for employing these methods along with GOMI youth.

CCI: GOMI Currents, our quarterly newsletter, is the present flag bearer of this effort. Future plans include annual conferences, print and electronic publications including a journal and teaching aids.