



BESSER
MUSEUM
for Northeast Michigan

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Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan

Greats Lake Fisheries Heritage Exhibit Project

Request for Proposal

June 12, 2017

Schematic design for interior and exterior exhibits

Due: July 18, 2017

Deliver to:

Christine Witulski, Executive Director

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan

491 Johnson St.

Alpena, Michigan 49707

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

June 12, 2017

Project Title: Northeast Michigan's Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Exhibit Project: a project to foster awareness of our heritage, share information and data about Great Lakes ecosystems, and enable better stewardship of Great Lakes aquatic ecosystems.

Introduction

The Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan is soliciting proposals for the design for interpretative and educational exhibits composing the Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Exhibit Project. The two centerpieces of the display are the *Research Vessel Chinook*, built in 1947, and the commercial gillnet fishing vessel *Katherine V*, built in 1928 (<http://www.bessermuseum.org/copy-of-katherine-v>). The two vessels will be displayed outdoors on the grounds of Besser Museum and connected with dock-like boardwalks lined with fishing artifacts, faux fishing village buildings, and other nautical items suggestive of the early- to mid-20th Century. Additional material, including taxidermically prepared representations of Great Lakes fish - native, introduced, and invasive - and native American, pre-Columbian fishing artifacts and depictions of native fishing, will be on display within the Museum building. The display will be organized to represent the fishing of three eras: pre-Columbian, early settlement to mid-20th Century, and modern.

One means of presenting the story of the mid-20th Century and modern periods will be use of video representing a year in the annual cycle of survey activities of the *RV Chinook*, including much on-board footage but also the story of the disruptive effects of invasive species, over-fishing, and more recent efforts to rehabilitate Lake Huron's fisheries and secure a sustainable future for the ecosystem. This footage was shot in the making of the documentary "Lake Invaders, the Fight for Lake Huron" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hums3cL9rlo>) and the producer of the film is a project cooperator. In addition, we will gather and present photos and film of early- to mid-20th century Great Lakes commercial fishing.

The *Katherine V* has been permanently cradled and partially rebuilt to stabilize deteriorating hull (white oak), cabin, and decks so as to render them safe for public tours and to restore the vessel's appearance to that of her fishing days. The "dock" surrounding the *Kathrine V* has been completed and the vessel is housed in a partially enclosed building. Some faux fishing village buildings have been constructed across the dock from the vessel. The original diesel engine is in the process of being restored to running condition and will be displayed along the boardwalk "dock" in the near future.

The *RV Chinook* was operational as recently as July of 2016 and, thus, is in no need for restoration work. The site plan for the vessel display area, the exact final placement and cradle for the *Chinook*, and landscaping have yet to be designed.

This purpose of this RFP is to develop schematic plans for the Besser Museum's Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Exhibit that helps us guide future work and to share with potential funders Besser Museum's vision of the project's future and its deliverables, particularly in terms of educational value and place-based learning opportunities.

Scope of Work

Focal area: The Besser Museum Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Exhibit Project will focus on Great Lakes Stewardship, particularly on sustainable fisheries and related issues, using resources and artifacts principally obtained from Lake Huron and its watershed.

Project need and deliverables: There is a need to define how Besser Museum proposes to design its Fishery Heritage Exhibit so as to use its resources and outside (grant) funding to achieve the mission of fostering knowledge-based stewardship of the Great Lakes and their watersheds.

Planning project Objective: Develop a project plan to guide the use of Museum resources, future gifts, and grant funds so as to propose and eventually install a multi-tiered exhibit with learning tools, and interpretative, inquiry welcoming, layered messaging designed to meet three outcomes:

- Visitors will leave with a better awareness of what constitutes sustainable fisheries and how they have been compromised in the past, based upon the history and science-based management that have shaped today's Great Lakes fish communities and their recreational and commercial fisheries;
- Visitors will gain enhanced knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for them to contribute more effectively to sustainable fisheries;
- Visitors will make choices and contribute leadership to better sustain fisheries in the Great Lakes.

Engaging schools and students as a focal priority, we intend to support science content learning, cross-disciplinary connections, and applied learning through place-based stewardship education projects led by students locally. We will challenge students to apply knowledge and skills learned from the Museum’s exhibits in designing their own stewardship projects as well as in adjusting their behavior and that of their families, friends, and community in more stewardship-oriented ways. This project will coordinate with, and provide professional development support for, educators to connect their students in immersive fisheries learning experiences and Great Lakes stewardship projects.

This exhibit will be a platform for providing concepts and tools (act as launchpad) for the existing Northeast Michigan Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative (NEMIGLSI) network. We will challenge students to use what they have learned and tools (including Great Lakes fishery data) available from the Museum to explore interdisciplinary exercises and projects using math, language, science, and art skills to produce projects that help to change behaviors within the community. We fully intend that students will be engaged as advisors and partners in development of these projects, and expect that student stewardship projects exploring Great Lakes fisheries science and management issues will be on display at the Museum on a rotational basis and accessible to the public through the Museum website.

Adult learners will include both school educators (described above) and general-admission museum visitors. We plan for an immersive, inquiry-based exhibit that can help general-admission visitors better understand Great Lakes fisheries science and management – past, present, and future. Our exhibit incorporates a variety of histories and perspectives of fisheries stakeholders, such as tribal, commercial, and recreational fishers. The goal is that visitors better understand the variety of Great Lakes fisheries research and management agencies and organizations, diversity of user groups, principles of fisheries science (a managed, shared, but not infinite resource), and important issues such as water quality and invasive species facing this resource – again, past, present, and future. In this project, we will seek opportunities to measure change in stewardship behaviors among these learners such as through intended actions as measured in museum exit surveys or short-term stewardship engagement in citizen science projects, conservation projects, and other opportunities that can be monitored in collaboration with our science advisory partners.

Strategies

- The Besser Museum will conduct a search for a consulting firm that specializes in layered, inquiry-based museum exhibit interpretation and use a recently awarded Great Lakes Fishery Trust planning grant to retain the selected consultant to help us with a conceptual design, the first stage in crafting our exhibit development plan.
- The Museum will establish advisory panels to work interactively with the exhibit-interpretation consultant and Museum staff to assure quality and usefulness of the

deliverables. These panels – Resource Agency, Education, and Student panels – and other partnerships will serve both the project planning and the exhibit development/installation periods.

- The Resource Agency Advisory Panel’s lead role will be in validating technical and historical content of the messages, facilitating in-kind and other contributions from agencies to the display, and coordinating outreach endeavors of the Museum and agencies. They will identify opportunities to align their respective agency education missions with this exhibit, offer partnership roles in which they wish to contribute, and thus help us connect visitors with agency-informed and validated stewardship opportunities (e.g. promoting citizen-science project opportunities).
- The Educator Advisory Panel’s lead role will be in helping to guide exhibit content for suitability to grade levels such that it meets Michigan’s educational priorities and science content standards and the real-world classroom needs of local educators. They will also inform us of opportunities to align with existing fisheries-related curriculum, education partners, and student stewardship project opportunities.
- The Student Advisory panel will be used to encourage and brainstorm student projects, solicit student intern and volunteer assistance, and to add content and examples of student-initiated stewardship initiatives to the Museum’s exhibits. Following the Grand Rapids Public Museum model, these students will leverage this Besser Museum partnership as an extended classroom learning experience; while meaningfully contributing to the development of this project.
- Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Consortium, a statewide network of maritime heritage-invested partners, will also be consulted as advisors, as well as end beneficiaries, in this project. These “Fisheries Heritage Trail” partners will be instrumental in envisioning opportunities in which this project can add value and serve statewide audiences more broadly. For example, we believe the unique ‘history of fisheries science’ elements of this project have much educational value for all of these Fisheries Heritage Trail member museums, as well as libraries, and other partners located across Michigan.

Deliverables: The collaborative effort outlined above will produce a schematic plan that will show how we should link the Besser Museum Fishery Heritage Exhibit display attributes with the story-line, interpretative media messages, lessons, and educational tools we propose to make available for visitors, particularly for educators and K-12 students. The plan will spell out what Museum artifacts need to be displayed and projects (e.g. interactive interpretative designs, curricular support) that need to be completed for the exhibit to meet our objectives and deliver proposed outcomes. The advisor panels will help identify how this project is filling needed educational gaps both locally and statewide; will help design stewardship engagement

strategies, such as with NEMIGLSI youth, and ways with which to track stewardship impacts (museum exit surveys, student-led projects, etc.). The planning process will help in defining networking opportunities with the Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Trail museums, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and State Underwater Preserve, with the NEMIGLSI network, Sea Grant, and other entities and programs. A revised budget for the overall project proposal, including installation phase (available on request), will be produced based upon the findings of the planning process and expertise of our consultant. Specifications will be delivered that will be used to solicit bids from exhibit design specialists for the construction/installation phase of this project should funding become available.

Project budget

The total budget for this preliminary planning project is \$10,000, the amount awarded by the Great Lakes Fishery Trust. At this time, \$9,000 of this is available for this contract. The balance, or a portion thereof, may prove to be available later in the contract period, but we are seeking at this time proposals for the best use of the presently available \$9,000.

Selection Process

An exhibit consultant will be selected using a three-step process:

Step 1: Potentially interested parties will be identified by Museum staff;

Step 2: Up to 4 exhibit consultants will be invited to submit resumes and credentials and other arguments for why they should be selected for this project. In particular, we would like to hear from candidate companies how they would make best use of our available (\$9,000) funds in serving our project's interpretative objective.

Step 3. Museum staff and display committees will select from among the candidates and ask the selected company to submit a final proposal and enter into a contract for services with Besser Museum.

RFP response submittal requirements

In addition to a proposal for how the exhibit consultant would use the available \$9,000 to design a schematic layout of display attributes and interpretative messaging so as to best meet our project objective, we ask for one copy of each of the following:

- Letter expressing interest in this project, general background to the company, and company location;
- Company qualifications;
- Qualifications and resumes for key staff that would be engaged in this project;

- Representative projects that display the company's past work of the nature that the Besser Fishery Heritage Exhibit Project will entail (web addresses describing past projects are acceptable);
- References that you suggest we contact regarding your firm's past work (names, phone numbers, addresses, e-mail address).

The responding companies are welcome to contact the Besser Museum Executive Director for further information regarding the Great Lakes Fishery Heritage Exhibit Project's attribute resources, strategic plan, or other questions.

Selection criteria

- Consultant qualifications for museum interpretative and educational design;
- Suggestions for best use of our limited budget to meet the project's objective;
- Our review of other projects resembling Besser's the consultant has completed;
- Recommendations of other museum and display directors/staff;

Final Proposal and Negotiation of Contract

Following reviews of RFP responses, the selected Museum Exhibit Consultant will be asked to submit a final proposal outlining the Consultant's understanding of the project scope, performance schedule, and requested reimbursement schedule. The Exhibit Consultant and Museum Director will then negotiate final terms and conditions of the contract.