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**NEW COLLABORATIVE REPORT CALLS FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF  
GREAT LAKES FISHERIES AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICE VALUES**

**(June 30, 2021) LANSING, MI.**—A group of leading Great Lakes institutions from Canada and the United States released a report today focused on improving efforts to measure, map and communicate the myriad of benefits and values associated with Great Lakes fisheries and ecosystem services the five lakes provide. The report, based on a spring workshop, highlights major gaps in data and knowledge that severely limit our understanding of these social, cultural, and economic benefits and the need for interdisciplinary collaboration to address these gaps.

“We often talk about how Great Lakes commercial and recreational fisheries contribute more than \$7 billion to the regional economy annually, said Bob Lambe, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission. “This is certainly a big number, however, it’s really just the tip of the iceberg when you consider the broader value of the ecosystem services provided by healthy Great Lakes habitats that help maintain water quality, protect the shoreline, minimize flooding and so many other factors that influence the quality of life of those who live around and depend on the lakes for economic, sociocultural and recreational benefits.”

**The full workshop report is online at <https://www.greatlakesvaluation.stratos-sts.com/>**

During the workshop, participants heard from experts from across North America in the fields of economics, social science, ecosystem service valuation, conservation, commercial and recreational fishing, Indigenous rights, and public policy. From these discussions three themes emerged around more holistic valuation, stronger coordination, and more effective communication to decision makers. More specifically, these were:

- Multiple knowledge systems and use of non-market valuation techniques (that capture Indigenous, cultural, recreational, and other social values) are needed to gain a holistic understanding of the full range of values and impacts experienced by stakeholders and communities.
- A community of practice is needed to coordinate and undertake meaningful and comprehensive research, share data, and develop communication strategies to ensure that socio-economic data demonstrating the full value of the Great Lakes are gathered and provided to relevant decision-makers throughout the Great Lakes basin.
- The story of the value of the Great Lakes needs to be told. To catalyze action and responsible management, it is essential that the valuation of the Great Lakes is communicated to policymakers and decision-makers in all levels of governments in an accessible, meaningful, and integrated way.

“Results from this workshop stress the need for both research to increase our understanding of the complex relations between people’s quality of life or the vibrance of, coastal communities, and the ecological health of the Great Lakes as well as expanding the set of metrics and indicators we routinely examine to assess status and trends in the health of this vast ecosystem” said Scott Sowa, the Juli Plant Grainger, Great Lakes Director for The Nature Conservancy. “It’s not enough to track status and trends in ecological health, we must also take steps to more routinely track trends in the most relevant socioeconomic indicators to reveal patterns and provide decision makers with a more complete picture of the circumstances and tradeoffs surrounding the complex decisions they face.”

During breakout groups, workshop experts and participants developed and prioritized several recommendations. The top three were:

- Develop standard methods for socioeconomic valuation to promote consistency, comparability, and credibility of research efforts;
- Develop a “Great Lakes Valuation” community of practice to help prioritize research needs, build support and foster interdisciplinary collaboration; and
- Develop relationships and mechanisms to integrate western science and Indigenous ecological knowledge into valuation studies and assessments.

Workshop organizers included the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, The Nature Conservancy, Michigan Sea Grant, the International Joint Commission, University of Guelph, Michigan Tech University and The Council of Great Lakes Region. These organizers are acting on the recommendations by seeking individuals interested in becoming part of the core team focused on establishing the new community of practice that will work to prioritize and advance the other recommendations generated by the expert workshop. If you have any questions on the workshop, report, or community of practice please contact Bob Lambe ([blambe@glfc.org](mailto:blambe@glfc.org)) or Scott Sowa ([ssowa@tnc.org](mailto:ssowa@tnc.org)).