



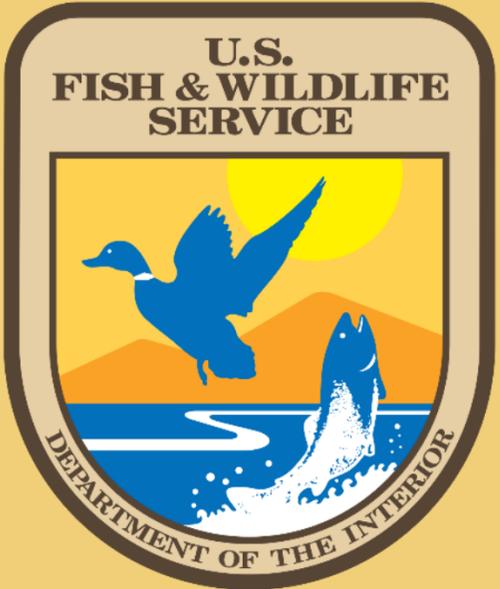
# Headwaters to Coast

Managing By Network Class of 2025 Case Study  
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LAKE  
SUPERIOR  
COLLABORATIVE



# Funding Partners



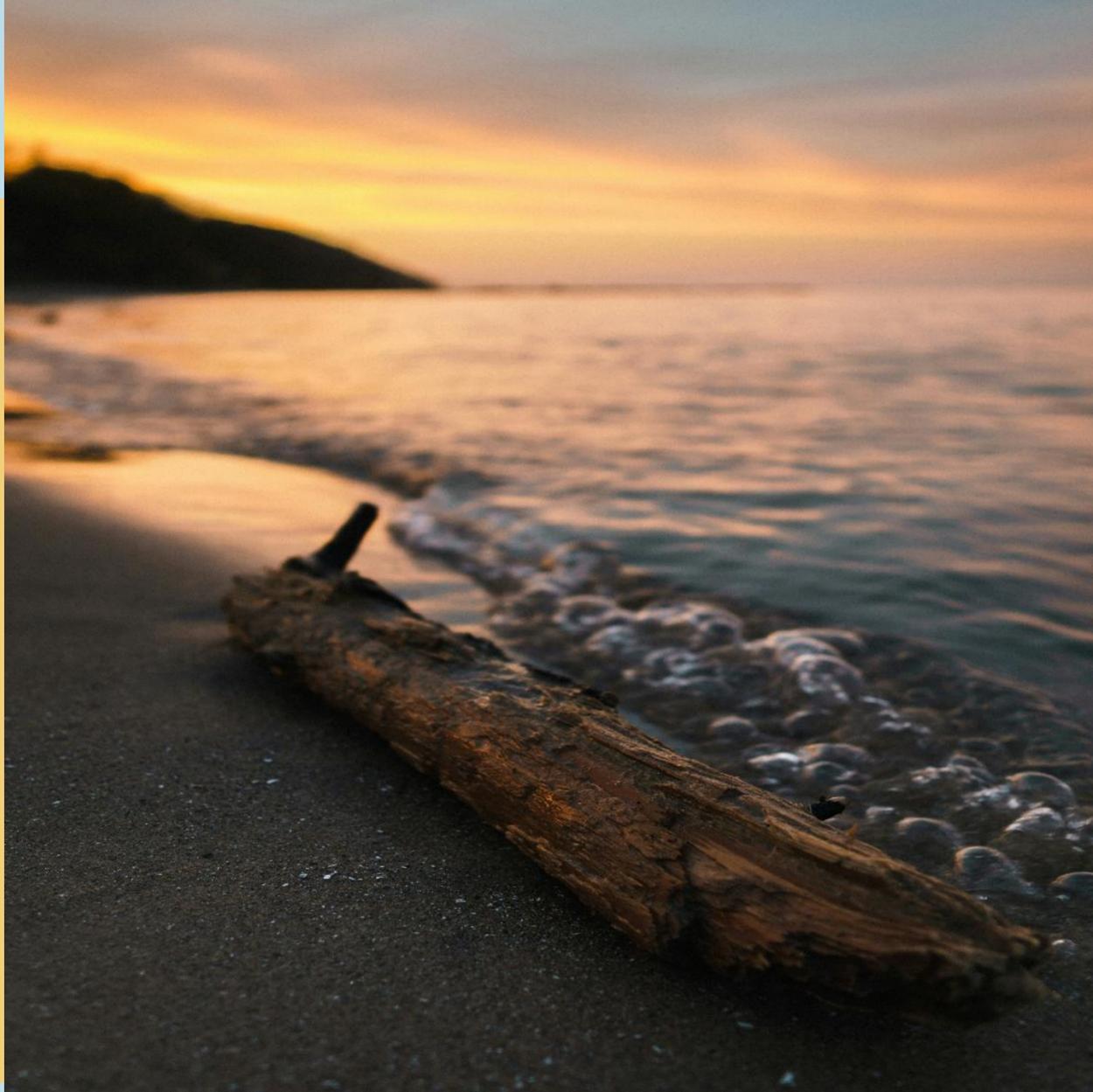
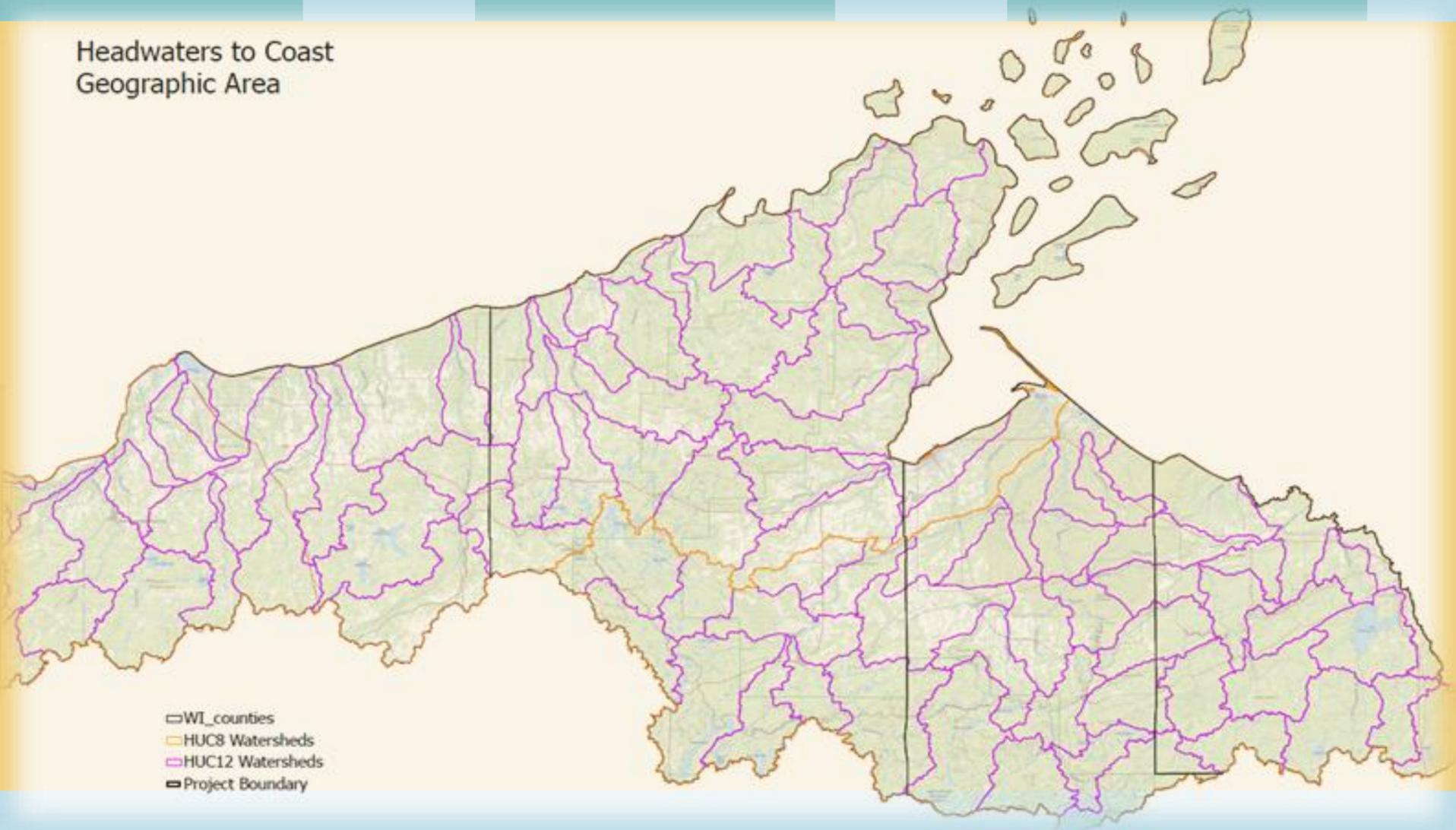
# Partners-at-Large



# Who We are



Headwaters to Coast  
Geographic Area



# Where We Work

# ABOUT H2C

Launched in 2022 with GLRI funding, H2C unites partners to create a regional Conservation Blueprint, tackling habitat loss, water quality, extreme weather, and biodiversity. It fosters collaboration for a resilient landscape benefiting ecosystems and communities in Ashland, Bayfield, Douglas, and Iron counties.

## VISION

The communities and ecosystems of Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin are climate resilient and sustained by collaborative conservation partnerships and projects.

## MISSION

Bring people together to prioritize and coordinate conservation projects that meet the ecological, social, and cultural needs of current and future generations in Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin.

## GOAL

To build a watershed-wide conservation blueprint for Wisconsin's Lake Superior Basin that will help prioritize and coordinate projects to meet ecological, social, and cultural needs.



# WHERE WE STARTED



## 2022

- \* Launch, led by USFWS, funded by GLRI
- \* Adopted as a project of the Lake Superior Collaborative (LSC)
- \* A core team was established and has met at least monthly since 2022.



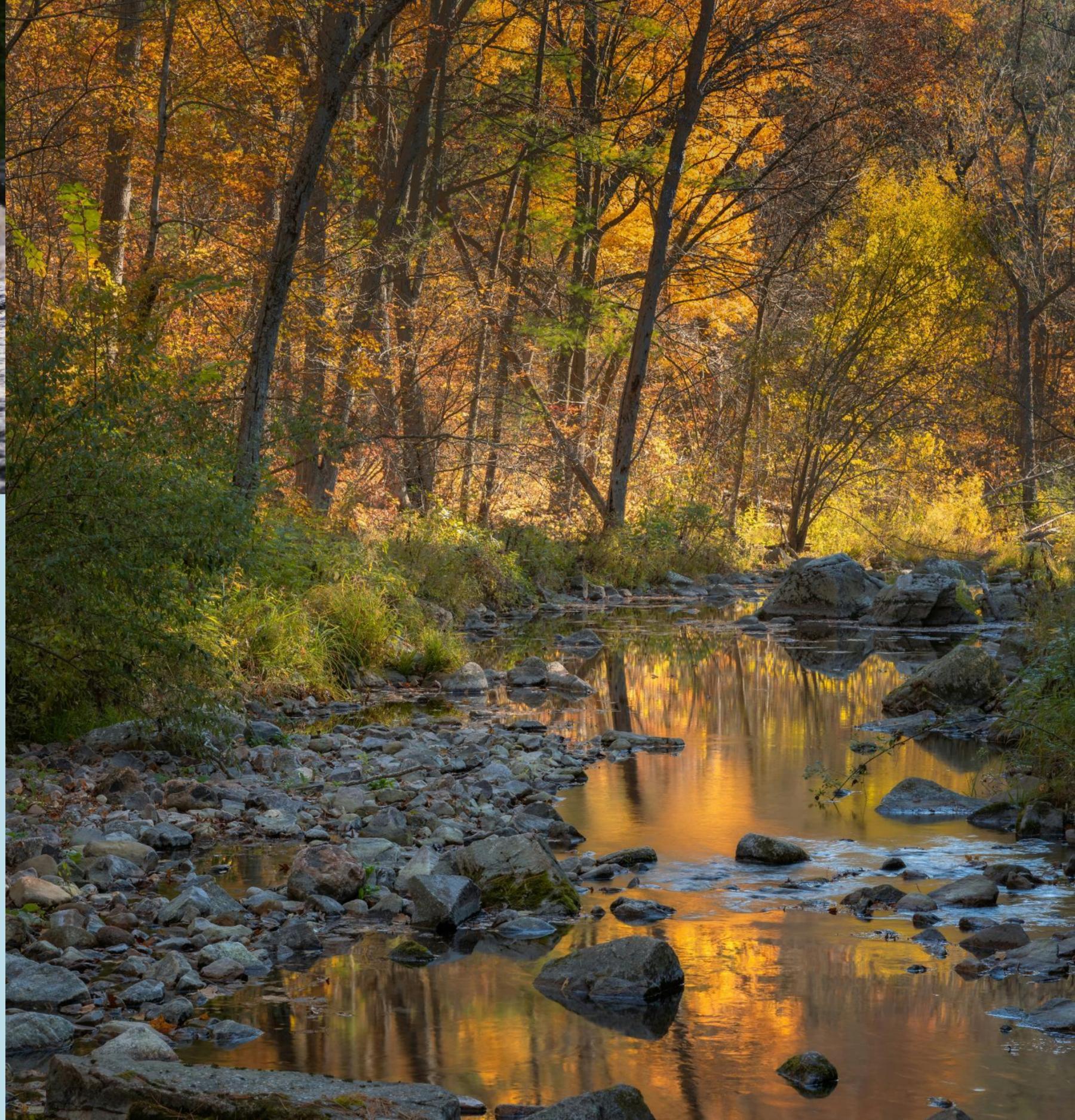
## 2023

- ☀ Six conservation priorities were identified in May and June 2023
- ☀ Foundational documents were created, serving as a reference point for future development
- ☀ Capacity was built with dedicated staff time from USFWS



## 2024

- ☀ Hired a dedicated coordinator (me!) to reconnect partners and lead engagement
- ☀ Rebuilt momentum through meetings, project selection, and vision alignment
- ☀ Re-established ties with the Midwest Conservation Blueprint (USGS)



**Can You Recall a Time  
Where you had to Jump into  
a Partnership Mid-Stream?**

**What Were Some  
Challenges?**



## SYMPOSIUM

At the October 2024 Lake Superior Collaborative Symposium, we hosted a two-hour workshop where participants engaged in open space discussions to refine goal statements and objectives for each conservation priority.



## GOAL & OBJECTIVES

In January 2025, we hosted six ad hoc, drop-in virtual workshops where partners used a whiteboard format to collaboratively refine goal statements and objectives, building on the symposium's work.



## RECONVENE

Participants reconvened as needed to refine goal statements and objectives. Some groups required only one meeting, while others met again using the whiteboard format to further develop goals and objectives.



## STRATEGY SESSIONS

In spring 2025, we hosted a final round of virtual working sessions focused on strategy development. Partners worked through each conservation priority to identify actionable strategies and methods.

# WHERE WE ARE GOING



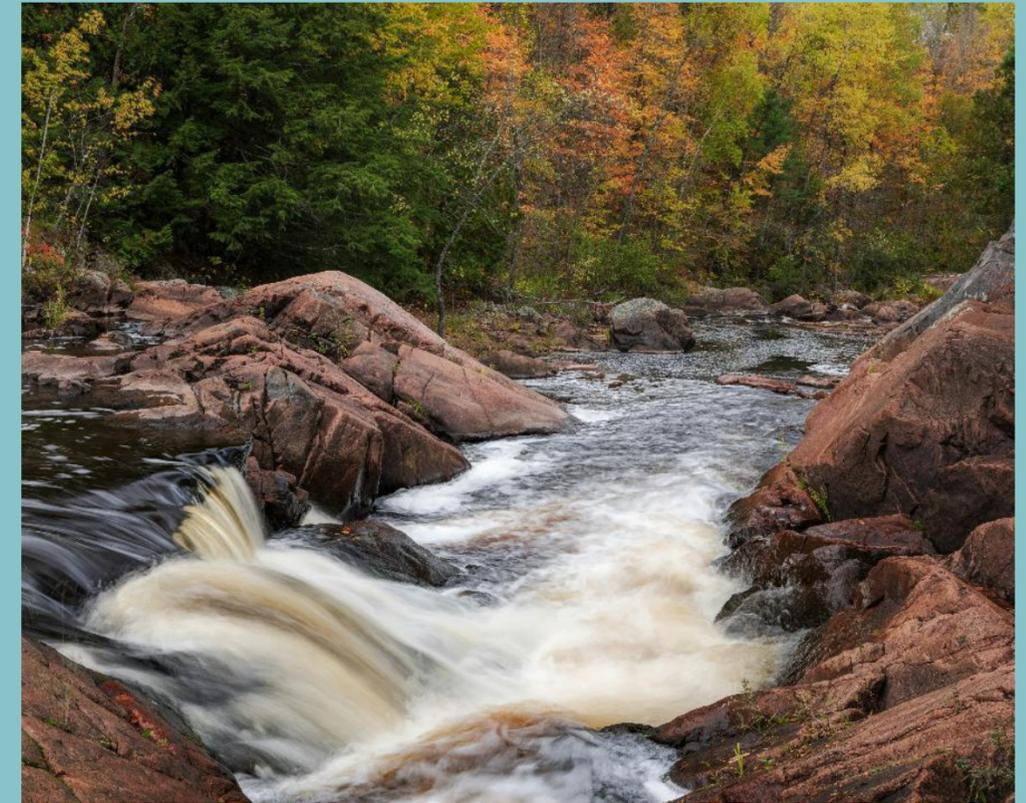
## Now

- \* Finalize clear goals and objectives for each conservation priority
- \* Identify tangible strategies to achieve each objective
- \* Implement strategies as on-the-ground projects with actionable steps



## Near-Term

- ☀ Fund and implement multiple comprehensive and collaborative projects
- ☀ Identify and prioritize the most impactful strategies and actions
- ☀ Define key “vital signs” of success to measure progress



## Long-Term

- \* Project Pitch Party to collaboratively develop projects and secure funding
- \* Transform our current and past efforts into the H2C Conservation Blueprint
- \* Develop mapping tools to track conservation progress, identify gaps, and improve decision-making

# LSC PITCH PARTY

A platform for partners to share early-stage project ideas, strengthen alignment with Headwaters to Coast (H2C) priorities, and access collaborative feedback. Its goals are to maximize alignment, spark collaboration, minimize missed opportunities, and maintain a transparent, consistent pipeline for project development. Project ideas are refined through real-time feedback, peer learning, and shared visibility—turning ideas into on-the-ground impact.

## **Submit + Share Ideas**

Partners submit project pitches via a shared form—brief, early-stage concepts welcome

## **Live Pitch + Feedback**

Ideas are pitched in real time using a virtual format. Attendees—including peers, steering team members, and funders—provide constructive feedback via *Mentimeter*.

## **Track + Connect**

Projects are added to a centralized tracker, enabling follow-up, resource matching, and long-term visibility for future funding.



**What Would You Pitch?**



# Barrens & Brook Trout

## **Barrens Restoration Raised Questions**

The Northwest Sands team had a barrens restoration project proposed near *Muskeg Creek*—a Class II trout stream and designated brook trout reserve. While the project supported rare habitats, it raised important questions about how upland restoration might affect nearby cold-water streams.

## **Monitoring for Impact**

Because this idea was shared widely through the Pitch Party, the Aquatic Connectivity team developed a complementary proposal focused on monitoring water temperatures in *Muskeg Creek* before and after restoration.

## **Combining Restoration Efforts**

Instead of stopping at monitoring, the two project teams collaborated. Woody material from the barrens site is now being repurposed to enhance stream habitat in *Muskeg Creek*—connecting upland and aquatic restoration for greater impact.



# BOGO Culverts

## **Standard Culvert Replacement**

An initial proposal to replace a failing culvert—a standard conservation project in the basin—was pitched. But because of the Pitch Party format, multiple partners were in the room to hear the idea, provide feedback, and begin collaborating on how to scale up the effort.

## **Shared Effort**

When partners realized the Forest Service could support engineering and Ashland County could manage construction, the idea expanded. By aligning resources, they created a plan to replace four fish passage barriers across the basin—leveraging efficiencies in design, permitting, and contracting.

## **Four Crossings, One Coordinated Effort**

The final project bundles four culvert replacements into one coordinated effort—reconnecting 13+ miles of stream, restoring wetland and coldwater habitat, and reducing the risk of road washouts during major storm events. It's a win for wildlife, water, and our partners.



# Restoration Success Trail

## **A Pitch for a Trail**

The Fish Creek watershed has seen over two decades of restoration—from bluff stabilization and fish habitat work to upland “slow the flow” projects and invasive species removal. The Burke Center initially pitched a “Restoration Trail” to highlight this history, but while the trail alone didn’t qualify for H2C funding, partners came together to expand the vision and align it with shared priorities.

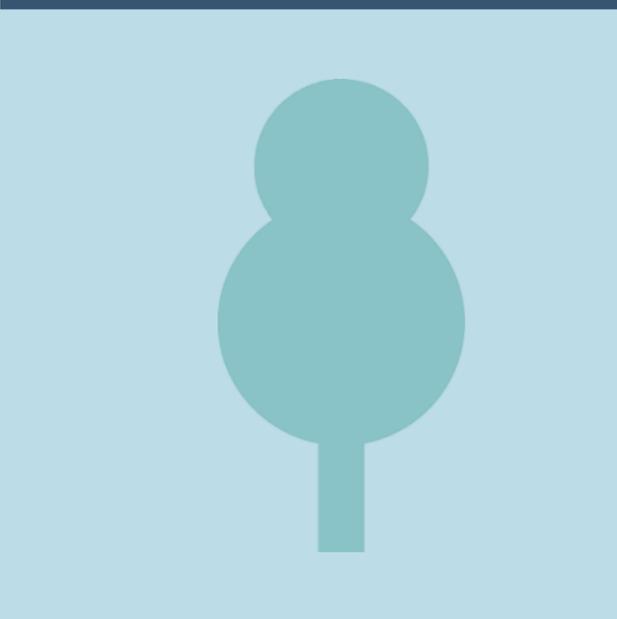
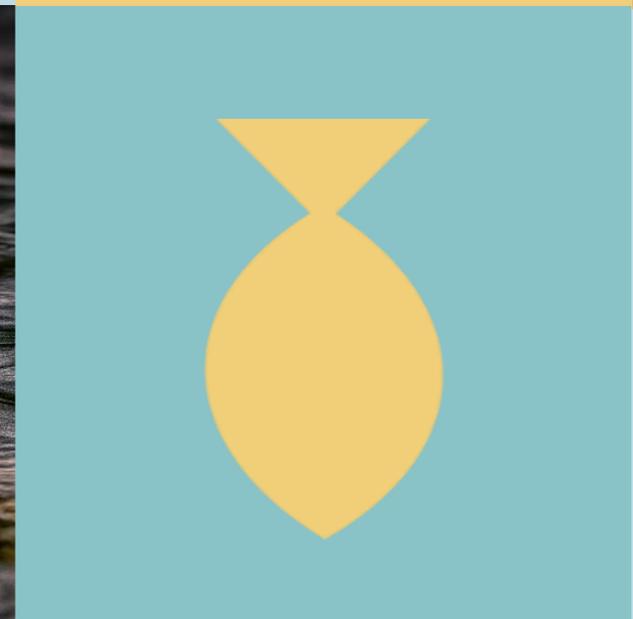
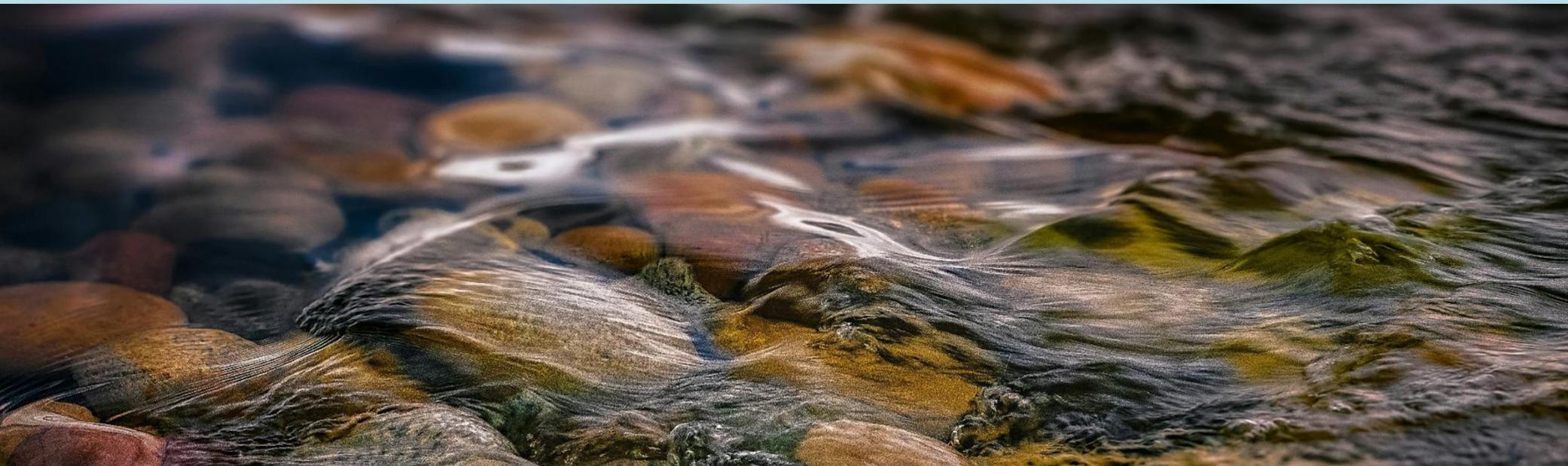
## **Adding Habitat Restoration**

To meet H2C goals, the team added restoration work in the Fish Creek Sloughs — removing invasive cattails and re-seeding with manoomin (wild rice). This expanded a project already underway by Superior Rivers Watershed Association and added 10 acres of new restoration.

## **Linking Conservation to Community**

The expanded scope also supported the City of Ashland’s effort to update signage in Prentice Park—revamping wayfinding and adding long-overdue Indigenous history to the narrative. What began as a single idea became a broader, deeper community win.

# Lessons Learned & What's On the Horizon





**QUESTIONS?**

**CONTACT**

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