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Northland College's Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation Receives \$500,000 to Continue North Fish Creek Sediment Reduction Project

Ashland, Wis., October 5, 2023 – The Northland College Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation has been awarded \$500,000 of new funding to support the third phase of its Sediment Reduction Project on North Fish Creek—the largest source of sediment flowing into Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay.

A grant of nearly \$300,000 was recently awarded from the Great Lakes Commission's Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program. This is in addition to \$200,000 of new funding received from the US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program this summer.

Focusing on freshwater science, water issues, and conservation, the Burke Center has successfully coordinated three bluff stabilization projects along North Fish Creek since 2018 under the umbrella of its Phase 1 and 2 projects. The upcoming Phase 3 project builds upon these achievements, forming a crucial part of a long-term, multi-partner effort to improve fish habitat and mitigate excessive sedimentation in North Fish Creek, which is currently the largest source of sediment flowing into Chequamegon Bay.

"Projects like these not only enhance water quality and fish habitat, but also safeguard the pristine beauty of Chequamegon Bay by preventing excess sediment from entering its waters," said Matt Hudson, the Burke Center's associate director—Great Lakes. "Moreover, they help build resilience into our natural systems, acting as a buffer against the challenges posed by our changing climate."

Among the proposed restoration sites for Phase 3, two areas are particularly significant, as they represent some of the largest eroding bluffs and sediment contributors along Fish Creek. Both sites were severely damaged during the 2018 Father's Day storm, which caused widespread damage throughout northwestern Wisconsin. Restoration efforts will protect approximately 2,200 feet of stream channel on state-owned public lands. These targeted projects are estimated to save 4,300 tons of sediment from eroding into the stream on an annual basis.

Phase 3 of the North Fish Creek Sediment Reduction Project is expected to start in October 2023. A video offering a glimpse into the work accomplished during the first two phases can be found at northland.edu/fish-creek-phase-three.

Since 2010, the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service has provided funding for the Great Lakes Commission's Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient

Reduction Program under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). In that time, the GLRI has provided more than \$3.7 billion to fund more than 7,500 projects across the Great Lakes region which protect freshwater resources by restoring wetlands, preventing the spread of invasive species, and reducing sediment and nutrients. The Great Lakes Commission awarded a total of \$1.55 million to nine projects in this round of funding.

“We are immensely grateful for the continued funding support, which underscores the long-term commitment to preserving the health of Fish Creek and Lake Superior,” Matt Hudson shared.

The Burke Center is excited to embark on the next phase of this vital project. By reducing sedimentation and improving fish habitat, the Center’s work not only benefits the environment, but also ensures a sustainable future for generations to come.

The Northland College Mary Griggs Burke Center for Freshwater Innovation focuses on scientific research, communication, and thought leadership on water issues in the Great Lakes region and beyond. Aiming to increase water literacy, the center houses a robust student research program and conducts research studies and public outreach. The Burke Center also offers a professional lab and many other services for external partners.

Northland College is a private environmental liberal arts college located just blocks away from Lake Superior in Ashland, Wisconsin. Founded in 1892, the College adopted a bold new mission and made history in 1974 as the first college in the country to fully integrate an environmental focus with its liberal arts curriculum. Today, Northland College is a powerful and intimate learning community of about five hundred students from across the United States and beyond.

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