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Grass River Natural Area Receives Interpretive Project Grant from the National Association for Interpretation - Region 4

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Region 4 recently announced its Interpretive Project Grant Award Winners, and is pleased to report Grass River Natural Area is among the 2014 recipients.

The Interpretive Project Grants (IPG) program is designed to provide a source of funding for small projects by Association members within the Great Lakes region including Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Ontario. Projects may include exhibitry, signage, programs, or other ideas that enhance visitors' interpretive experience. Applications are submitted annually, and reviewed by the IPG Committee consisting of members of NAI Region 4 who guide the grant process and make recommendations to the Region 4 Board of Directors.

Grass River Natural Area's project – *Wetland Curriculum Nature Lab: The Interpretation of Nature Education* – will bring new equipment and an interpretive display to introduce this valuable educational program to Grass River Center visitors. According to grant applicant James Dake, Education Director, "the lab will not only serve as a functioning classroom for students during our Wetland Curriculum programs, but also as a hands-on and visual exhibition to interpret the mission of our education program."

IPG funds from NAI Region 4 will add financial support for the project, helping acquire some new research equipment such as aquatic nets, mini stereo microscopes, soil samplers and insect collection jars.

"It is always interesting and enlightening for the Committee to see all of the wonderful projects underway in Region 4 - we have very passionate and creative members in our region," said Jennifer McDowell, Chair of the Interpretive Project Grants Committee. "Congratulations to the Grass River Center on educating visitors on their mission to 'increase knowledge, appreciation and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment.' The new quality research equipment planned in this project will engage visitors about the importance of the Grass River's wetland habitats through real hands-on learning."

Applicants receiving funding this year along with Grass River Natural Area include West Bloomfield Parks & Recreation (MI) and Michigan State University's Kellogg Bird Sanctuary (MI).

The National Association for Interpretation (NAI) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit professional organization dedicated to advancing the profession of heritage interpretation, currently serving about 5,000 members in the United States, Canada, and over thirty other nations. Individual members include those who work at parks, museums, nature centers, zoos, botanical gardens, aquariums, historical and cultural sites, commercial tour companies, and theme parks. Commercial and institutional members include those who provide services to the heritage interpretation industry.

The Association is divided into ten geographical regions to help members network with others who work near them through periodical newsletters and activities. Region 4, the Great Lakes Region, includes Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario.

NAI's Mission is to inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession.
