

# Expanding Conservation Through Legal Excellence: The GLRC's Robust Legal Team

For over four decades, the Great Lakes Regional Center has partnered with legal experts, students, and interns to amplify our conservation impact. Our unique legal team—comprised of a year-round law clinic, summer legal interns, and dedicated undergraduates—boosts NWF's capacity to protect wildlife, advance environmental justice, and support affiliates and partners.

Now, more than ever, legal strategies are a tool we're happy to have in our toolkit as we continue to be nimble in our approach to protecting the Great Lakes. We hope you enjoy learning more about our work!

## Balancing Climate & Conservation

Renewable on public lands and ensuring it is the least harmful to wildlife habitat: this is one of the scenarios that our legal team thoughtfully approaches. This year, we're analyzing laws and policies in all six Great Lakes states to improve transparency, Tribal consultation, and the balance between climate solutions and conservation.



## Who's Involved?

- Academic Year: 1–2 University of Michigan Law students (continuing into summer).
- Summer: NWF legal interns (separate from the clinic).
- Year-Round: Undergraduates and fellows supporting affiliates, EJ partners, and small nonprofits lacking legal resources.

## Why It Matters

Many environmental groups lack in-house legal teams. NWF's program fills that gap, ensuring science, policy, and equity are backed by strong legal strategy. From local governments to national coalitions, we're here to defend wildlife and communities.

## A Legacy of Legal Support for Conservation



Over 40 years of partnership

With a 42-year-old agreement between the University of Michigan Law School (the longest-standing partnership of its kind!), we train about 25 students annually while delivering critical legal firepower to the conservation movement.

## How Our Legal Team Works - We provide two key modes of support:

### 1. Policy Advocacy & Regulatory Strategy

- Helping NWF and allies navigate complex legal landscapes to shape stronger environmental policies.
  - Example: Partnering with wildlife biologists to protect pollinators. Are insects already covered under state laws? Should agencies enforce existing rules, or do statutes need reform? We untangle these questions to guide advocacy.

### 2. Strategic Litigation

- Challenging harmful decisions, like our ongoing ballast water work with ELPC, fighting exemptions for existing Lakers that threaten the Great Lakes.



Summer 2024 legal team (UM undergrads, UM clinic students, and NWF legal interns) plus a few GLRC folks. Enjoying a guided hike of the Nichols Arboretum.

Contact:

Oday Salim, Staff Attorney  
SalimO@nwf.org