

GRAND Learning Network

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



What is my sense of place?

Is your special place the river where you caught your first fish? Is it your grandma's old dock? Is it the woods behind the house where you grew up? Is it a favorite outdoor place locally that you visit today?

Having a sense of place means we feel connected to that place. A place can be a special spot or location (the edge of a woodland behind my house or school), a general area (the Looking Glass River), a local ecoregion (the middle Grand River watershed), or a larger bioregion such as the Great Lakes watershed!

We might also seek our sense of place through the special social and cultural features of where we live! Sometimes, the natural assets of a place contribute to the cultural assets of that place (and vice versa). For example, the Grand River is now the focus of community renewal – in Lansing, the River Walk grows to connect people along the watershed; cultural assets like theatres, sports venues, parks, and the farmers' market are found along the River. Riverside green spaces today connect the rural, suburban and urban communities along the watershed. Historically, the Grand River and high spots along the riverbanks provided travel routes for native peoples and the earliest settlers.

When we have a strong sense of place, we are attached to that place in many ways. We are attached through the knowledge that we depend on our surrounding places for our livelihood, our recreation and fun (such as fishing, boating, walking), our food. The vitality of our place is important for the way we live. Another way we are attached is through our identity with the place. Do we have a sense of pride for the uniqueness of where we live? Do we seek our own identity through where we live?

Sense of place quotes:

“The angler forgets most of the fish he catches, but he does not forget the streams and lakes in which they were caught.”

Charles K. Fox

“It is not the fish we catch that counts, for they can be had with mere silver. It is the break of the waves, the joyous rush of the brook, and the contemplation of the eternal rush of the stream.”

Herbert Hoover

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