

Panhandle Lake RC&D, Inc.



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GREAT GARDENS IN NORTH IDAHO (GGINI)



Northern Idaho offers some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country. Yet, with all this beauty around them, the general public is not as knowledgeable about their surrounding as they could be. Nina Eckberg, working as a noxious weed supervisor, encountered local residents and school children with questions about the environment that went beyond weed control.

Enter the idea of Great Gardens In North Idaho, or GGINI. In July 2007, Nina first wrote about a botanic garden and butterfly house in a journal, and then started pitching the idea. The butterfly house concept caught on fast, and people started asking where it would be and what would it take to make it happen. To answer these questions, Nina visited and re-visited botanic gardens and butterfly houses around the country. During these visits, she spoke with the managers and directors of these facilities, finding out what worked and didn't work. By 2008, GGINI was taking on a life of its own. Supporters wanted to offer 'seed' money to start the project, suggestions were made on possible locations to build it, but there was no process in place to allow for tax-exempt contributions for the venture.

Having volunteered with the Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council and being on their Executive Board as Treasurer, Nina learned the goals and purpose of RC&D. She brought the idea before the Council as a project proposal and the rest is history!

The Council accepted the GGINI proposal in November 2009, serving as an 'umbrella' 501(c)3 until GGINI gains its own tax-exempt status. This allowed for contributions to be designated to the GGINI project and sent to the Panhandle Lakes RC&D Council for administration. At this time, a quarterly, e-newsletter for GGINI was started to keep interested parties up-to-date on the latest activities.

In 2010, the e-newsletter distribution list grew to 121 contacts, along with another 20 contacts receiving the newsletter by mail. In May, the architectural firm, Architects West/Landmark Landscapes, was contracted to develop a conceptual garden design of the botanic garden and butterfly/insect conservatory as a marketing tool. Next came the drafting of articles of incorporation for a nonprofit and the bylaws for GGINI. In October, GGINI sponsored two grant writing workshops with Bright Star Consultants, utilizing the computer lab at North Idaho College/Work Training Center. The workshops were attended by twenty people, representing, the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Lakeland High School, University of Idaho and nonprofits, such as CASA.

When the first meeting of the GGINI Board of Directors occurred in January 2011, the articles were completed and sent to the Idaho Secretary of State and bylaws were finalized and placed in the GGINI permanent records. The federal tax-exempt status paperwork is being finished and the project is moving forward with the next step being development of a website and "virtual" garden!

Accomplishments

1. Project accepted by PLRC&D Council
2. Contributions of \$3800
3. Articles of incorporation and bylaws developed.
4. Conceptual garden design by architect
5. Two grant writing workshops attended with 20 attendees
6. Four Newsletters and one annual report sent to 141 contacts
7. First Board of Directors meeting
8. Articles of incorporation and bylaws filed.
9. Beginning work on "virtual" garden with website.

