

Approved by the Great Lakes Commission

**Preparation of a Background Paper Regarding the
U.S. Clean Water Act and the Great Lakes**

October 2, 2007

Tremendous strides have been made in Great Lakes water quality as a result of the United States' Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972, also known as the Clean Water Act. However, serious water pollution problems persist after 35 years since the creation of the Act.

The recent decision by Indiana to approve a Clean Water Act pollution control permit to a BP refinery sparked controversy with Illinois residents and officials who rely on Lake Michigan as their drinking water source. The BP permit raised many issues that have prompted robust discussion in the public and among this organization's commissioners. Public understanding of the Clean Water Act and its provisions is limited, and it is our view that preparation of a brief background paper about some aspects of the Act, such as antidegradation, would raise awareness and stimulate further discussion.

To that end, Great Lakes Commission staff is asked to work with the Board of Directors to further refine the details for a background paper that would report on select aspects of the Clean Water Act, the Great Lakes Water Quality Initiative and the findings of a recent request from Senator Durbin requesting that EPA provide information on the levels, sources and amounts of pollution discharged into the Great Lakes.

Staff should refine the outlines of this background paper with the Board of Directors in October, and summarize its findings in an interim report to the Board of Directors by February 1, 2008, with a final report presented at the March 2008 Semiannual meeting.

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