

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE GREAT LAKES COMMISSION

A statement of vision, mission, goals, objectives and strategic actions to guide the work of the Great Lakes Commission through the year 2005



Our vision is a Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system that offers a prosperous economy, a healthy environment and a high quality of life for its citizens by applying sustainable development principles in the use, management and protection of water, land and other natural resources

The Great Lakes Commission is a binational public agency dedicated to the use, management and protection of the water, land and other natural resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system. In partnership with the eight Great Lakes states and provinces of Ontario and Québec, the Commission applies sustainable development principles in addressing issues of resource management, environmental protection, transportation and sustainable development. The Commission provides accurate and objective information on public policy issues; an effective forum for developing and coordinating public policy; and a unified, systemwide voice to advocate member interests

Administration

GOAL: To enhance the Commission's leadership role in regional coordination, policy development and advocacy through efficient, cost-effective and responsive service to its members and the larger Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community.

Objective: A strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing the organization's regional leadership role.

Strategic Actions:

- Develop, adopt, implement and periodically update a strategic plan consisting of vision and mission statements, goals, objectives and strategic actions.
- Establish internal and external evaluation procedures to measure organizational performance and progress and make necessary adjustments.
- Prepare and regularly update a detailed work plan to guide program and project-specific staff activity.

Objective: An organizational infrastructure that promotes the active involvement of member states, Associate Member provinces, Observer agencies and other Great Lakes-St. Lawrence partners in Commission programs and projects.

Strategic Actions:

- Encourage strong representation from every member jurisdiction in all Commission functions.
- Develop the full potential of the Associate Member program by exploring and pursuing opportunities for state/provincial cooperation and collaboration.
- Establish and support regional task forces, advisory/steering committees and other groups, as needed, to secure input from a diverse array of interests in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community.
- Develop the full potential of the Observer program by exploring and pursuing opportunities for member/Observer cooperation and collaboration.
- Enhance the binational focus of the Commission by exploring and pursuing opportunities to support the efforts of other public agencies with a systemwide focus.

Objective: A long-term, reliable funding base to provide the organizational growth and stability required to meet current and emerging priorities.

Strategic Actions:

- Establish member dues at a level commensurate with organizational priorities and needs.
- Seek federal legislative authorization and line item funding for relevant programs and projects.
- Achieve long-term, reliable funding from multiple sources including member dues; federal, state, and provincial grants and appropriations; foundation grants; private sector grants and contracts; donations; and meeting/publication receipts.
- Capitalize and manage an endowment that provides a flexible source of funds to address Commission priorities.
- Design and implement an investment strategy that maximizes interest income with minimal risk to principal.
- Maintain flexibility in budgeting and staffing arrangements to accommodate fluctuations in financial status without compromising member services.
- Incorporate program development and fund-raising responsibilities into all relevant staff assignments.
- Identify and pursue program development opportunities, including collaborative ventures with like-minded organizations, based on the Commission's mandate and priorities.

Objective: A staff of competent professionals with the skills required to address the Commission's mandate and all associated program and project requirements, based on the Commission's mandate and priorities.

Strategic Actions:

- Pursue a team-oriented approach to all programs and projects to bring a diversity of relevant backgrounds and expertise to bear on priority issues.
- Assign staff responsibilities to ensure an appropriate balance between baseline coordination, policy development, advocacy and other project-specific activities.
- Establish and maintain creative staffing arrangements (e.g., fellowships, internships, interagency agreements) that provide benefits to both the Commission and the larger Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community.
- Maintain updated Commission-approved personnel policies that clarify employee roles, responsibilities and working arrangements.
- Promote staff retention through a competitive compensation and benefits program, opportunities for promotion and training, and challenging responsibilities that respond to both organizational goals and employee interests.

Resource Management and Environmental Quality

GOAL: To promote the informed use, management and protection of the water, land, air and related natural resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Objective: Interjurisdictional coordination and consistency in the development and implementation of laws, programs and policies addressing resource management and environmental protection issues.

Strategic Actions:

- Provide a forum by which member jurisdictions can jointly identify and address resource management and environmental needs in a consistent and coordinated manner.
- Assist members in meeting their respective commitments under systemwide agreements, programs and policies.
- Initiate or otherwise support programs and projects that feature a multijurisdictional ecosystem approach to resource management and environmental protection issues.
- Provide leadership in the development of multijurisdictional treaties, compacts, agreements or other mechanisms that emphasize a systemwide approach to resource management and environmental protection.
- Participate in cooperative agreements with federal, state, provincial and regional agencies working on resource management and environmental protection projects.

Objective: The provision of scientific, technical and policy advice to member jurisdictions and the larger Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community on issues of common interest.

Strategic Actions:

- Collect, analyze and interpret baseline data and information on natural resources and environmental conditions for use by Great Lakes-St. Lawrence researchers, managers and policymakers.
- Conduct scientific and policy studies yielding application-oriented findings and recommendations.
- Establish and maintain procedures for multijurisdictional deliberation and decisionmaking on issues of water quantity and quality, land use, air quality, and related matters.
- Promote science-based decisionmaking through strong, federally funded research programs; better linkages between the science, policy and management communities; the application of research results; and periodic assessment of research needs.

Objective: The informed use, management and protection of the water resources of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin through state and provincial leadership.

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain and enhance a regional water use database to provide policymakers and managers with accurate and comprehensive data and information on water withdrawals, diversions and consumptive uses in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.
- Promote the development and operation of a water resources decision support system that provides a scientifically sound and legally defensible mechanism for water quantity management decisions with state and provincial leadership.

Objective: The improvement and protection of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence water quality through programs and projects that address multiple pollutant sources and pathways.

Strategic Actions:

- Improve water quality and encourage responsible land-use practices by administering demonstration and technical assistance grants and initiating information/education activities that address soil erosion and sedimentation.
- Protect the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system from oil and hazardous materials spills by supporting prevention and response planning initiatives.
- Advance cleanup efforts in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system by providing technical, communication and coordination support to the Areas of Concern and Lakewide Management Plan programs.

Objective: Healthy aquatic ecosystems where new introductions of nonindigenous aquatic nuisance species are prevented and adverse ecological and economic impacts of species already present are minimized.

Strategic Actions:

- Promote application-oriented research in the areas of biology and life history, control and mitigation of ecosystem effects, prevention of introductions, socioeconomic considerations and analysis, and spread of aquatic nuisance species populations.
- Develop, implement and/or promote environmentally responsible and economically sound laws, policies, programs and practices that address biological pollution by preventing the introduction and limiting the spread of such species.
- Ensure an effective, systemwide approach to prevention and control through interjurisdictional coordination and consistency.

Objective: A well-informed and active public that contributes to the timely development and aggressive implementation of sound resource management and environmental protection programs.

Strategic Actions:

- Develop and implement information/education strategies to promote awareness of, and a response to, issue-specific problems and needs.
- Promote local, watershed-based solutions to systemwide issues (e.g., nonpoint source pollution, water conservation, land-use planning).

Transportation and Sustainable Development

GOAL: To promote sustainable, water resource-based economic activity and the use, development and maintenance of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence transportation system.

Objective: Strong and growing commercial navigation on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

Strategic Actions:

- Develop and advocate positions on U. S. and Canadian policies, programs and legislation that reflect the priorities and consensus views of the Great Lakes Commission membership.
- Promote consistency in the development, interpretation and application of public policies, programs, laws and regulations pertaining to commercial navigation.

- Develop the full potential of the commercial navigation system by advocating adequate Coast Guard services, dredging programs and infrastructure improvements (e.g., a second large lock at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.).
- Secure adequate federal funding for operations and maintenance activities.
- Ensure state and provincial leadership in the development of strategic plans and policies.
- Promote the efficient and cost-effective movement of goods and people at the domestic and U.S./Canadian levels by eliminating infrastructure and policy barriers.
- Advocate legislation, policies and programs that yield navigation improvements.

Objective: The incorporation of sustainable development principles into current and future economic activity.

Strategic Actions:

- Establish and promote a consensus-based definition of sustainable development and associated principles and guidelines for application by public and private sector interests.
- Identify and publicize case studies of promising sustainable development practices in a variety of business and community settings.
- Promote sustainable development practices through information dissemination, technology transfer, education and outreach.
- Advocate public policies that improve access to technology, offer a competitive environment and embrace principles of sustainable development.
- Demonstrate the interrelatedness of economic development and environmental protection goals and the importance of a well-managed resource to a prosperous and sustainable economy.
- Promote sustainable development and responsible land use through brownfields redevelopment and greenfields preservation, with an emphasis on coastal areas.

Objective: A prosperous economy that benefits from and protects the unique advantages associated with the natural resource, geographic and economic attributes of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Strategic Actions:

- Promote waterborne transportation as a lower cost, less polluting and more energy efficient alternative for moving goods and people.
- Document and publicize the importance of water-based recreation and tourism to the regional economy and quality of life, and ensure an adequate state, provincial and federal investment in such.
- Advocate federal, state and provincial policies that support and facilitate trade with international markets.
- Identify and publicize economic, environmental, natural resource and quality of life attributes as a means to promote business/industry recruitment, retention and expansion.
- Foster regional consensus and advocacy on transportation and sustainable development issues by supporting the International Association of Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Mayors and other relevant forums.

Communications and Information Management

GOAL: To promote informed public policy by applying communications and information management technology to the environmental protection, resource management, transportation and sustainable development needs of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Objective: Timely, accurate and objective data and information accessible by all members, interested parties and the larger Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community.

Strategic Actions:

- Develop, maintain or otherwise contribute to databases and inventories that permit broad access to comprehensive and consistent systemwide data and information.
- Inform and educate the citizenry through outreach programs that strengthen its interaction with researchers, policymakers, managers and other interests.

Objective: A state-of-the-art public information infrastructure that promotes an active and informed citizenry through electronic communications technology and conventional means.

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain and develop the Internet-based Great Lakes Information Network (GLIN) infrastructure, and explore new applications for public information and education.
- Through demonstration and training, promote the use and application of GLIN and other communications technology within member jurisdictions and the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community in general.
- Maintain and enhance a systemwide network of educators, both within and outside the classroom, to advance an understanding of, and solutions to, leading resource management and environmental protection problems.
- Advance Great Lakes-St. Lawrence information, education and outreach activities through the development, assembly and dissemination of relevant materials via electronic and conventional means.

Objective: A decision support system for policy research and development that offers data collection, storage and analysis services.

Strategic Actions:

- Promote systemwide acceptance and use of common information sharing and research protocols and standards.
- Provide policymakers and managers with easy, user-friendly access to data and information needed for decisionmaking purposes.
- Identify data gaps that compromise informed policymaking, and promote actions that address these unmet needs.
- Apply Geographic Information System technology to policy and planning decisions through online spatial data sharing and integrated mapping initiatives.

Objective: A mechanism for the prompt and efficient development, publication and promotion of Great Lakes Commission policy positions, reports and related products.

Strategic Actions:

- Publish and distribute, in both print and electronic form, Commission reports, newsletters, brochures, policy documents, meeting announcements and other materials.
- Provide a response and referral service for all system-related inquiries.
- Establish and maintain a media relations program to ensure that Commission policies, products, activities and announcements are publicized to all relevant audiences in a timely manner.

Objective: Technology transfer and information exchange among Great Lakes-St. Lawrence researchers, managers, policymakers and their counterparts in other regions of North America and the world.

Strategic Actions:

- Strengthen the collective Great Lakes-St. Lawrence management effort by linking grant-seeking agencies and organizations with government, foundation and corporate grant programs.
- Promote the open exchange of information, ideas and technology at the interregional, international and global levels via electronic means, personnel exchanges and related mechanisms.

Regional Coordination

GOAL: To strengthen the collective Great Lakes management effort by providing regional leadership, generating consensus on regional priorities among diverse interests, and building partnerships for decisive regional action.

Objective: Strong linkages between the research, policy and management communities to promote informed public policy decisionmaking.

Strategic Actions:

- Support the development and use of research, policy and management program inventories as reference tools.
- Maintain a consensus-based process to identify research, policy and management needs and priorities.
- Inform all relevant funding entities of research, policy and management priorities and encourage programming that addresses these priorities.
- Institute or otherwise support procedures, conferences and special events that promote interaction among researchers, managers, policymakers and/or opinion leaders in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Objective: A forum for dialogue and decisionmaking on critical regional issues with input from all interested parties.

Strategic Actions:

- Encourage strong representation and participation from the community of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence interests in Commission meetings, task force and committee activities, policy position deliberations, and related functions.
- Through the Commission's Associate Member and Observer programs as well as other means, strengthen binational, multijurisdictional involvement in Commission programs and activities.
- Sponsor, or otherwise participate in, periodic "summit" meetings of regional agencies for the purpose of information sharing, coordination, issue prioritization and collective action.
- Establish and exercise leadership in a coalition of North American multijurisdictional river basin organizations for coordination, collaboration and joint advocacy purposes.
- Pursue issue-specific projects where exchange of information and viewpoints can enlighten public policy debate, and assist members in policymaking responsibilities.

Objective: Policies, position statements and management principles that provide guidance in implementing an ecosystem approach to Great Lakes-St. Lawrence management.

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain, update and disseminate a compendium of Commission policy positions and encourage its use as a reference guide in legislative, program development and policymaking activities.
- Promote the development, endorsement, distribution and use of multijurisdictional policy statements for the purpose of information/education, coordination and advocacy.
- Implement a congressional advocacy strategy featuring an annual statement on U.S. federal legislative and appropriations priorities.
- Foster a consistent and consolidated approach to shared goals and objectives by promoting application of the Ecosystem Charter for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Basin and other Commission coordinated agreements.

Objective: Support for both new and established organizations that share common goals and priorities with the Great Lakes Commission.

Strategic Actions:

- Strengthen and pursue partnerships with other Great Lakes-St. Lawrence agencies and organizations with compatible goals, and provide secretariat and other support services where needed.
- Promote and support the development of new organizations, or the expansion of existing ones, that can provide a collective voice for important sectors of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence community.
- Establish and manage task forces and councils — at levels ranging from local watersheds to the entire system — to provide for communication and collaboration on research, monitoring, management, policy and related matters.
- Encourage the appointment of Commission members and staff to leadership roles in regional/national associations, commissions and other organizations that share Commission goals and priorities.

Objective: A unified voice on critical public policy issues associated with resource management, environmental protection, transportation and sustainable development in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system.

Strategic Actions:

- Maintain a strong presence in federal, state and provincial capitals, using issue briefings, hearings and other special events as a means to present a unified regional voice to legislators and other policymakers.
- Provide advisory services and policy recommendations to clients within the region, including governors; premiers; legislators; federal, provincial and state agencies; and the larger community of policymakers, opinion leaders and the general public.

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