



Fifty Years and Counting

The year 2005 marked the 50th anniversary of the Great Lakes Commission and of half a century of service to the Great Lakes states and the region itself. Founded in 1955 through the Great Lakes Basin Compact, the Commission was established in response to a perceived need for a regional organization to advise and assist its member states in the management of the region's water resources and to serve as an advocate for them on Great Lakes issues before the federal government. The Compact was granted congressional consent in 1968, thereby recognizing the Commission in U.S. federal law.

Navigation matters occupied much of the Commission's attention in its early years, and they continue to be an important concern to this day. As awareness of environmental concerns grew, the Commission's environmental mission grew as well, along with interests in tourism, recreation and land use. This embrace of both economic and environmental priorities has been one of the Commission's singular distinctions and strengths, as it strives to reconcile both interests and integrate them into a balanced approach to resource management.

At the time of its founding, a professional staff of four was adequate to address the material issues the Commission dealt with. Over the years, the issues facing the Commission have grown in both number and complexity, along with the sophistication of our tools for addressing them. Today, the Commission is supported by a professional staff of more than 30 specialists in such fields as resource management, policy, communications, data management, ecology, hydrology and more to meet those challenges.

Because the Great Lakes are a binational resource, the Commission has always sought to engage Canadian perspectives in its work. This relationship was formalized in 1999 through a "Declaration of Partnership" that established associate membership status for the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Québec.

After five decades, the Commission looks at its past accomplishments with pride and at the future with optimism. The specific issues facing the lakes and the St. Lawrence River will continue to evolve, but the role of the Commission remains the same as it was in 1955 – to be a source of accurate and objective information on public policy issues; a forum for developing and coordinating public policy; and a unified, systemwide voice to advocate member interests. As Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving."



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Celebrations Past, Celebrations to Come

Thomas E. Huntley,
Chair, Great Lakes Commission

By any measure, 2005 was a landmark year from the perspective of the Great Lakes Commission. First of all, we celebrated our 50th anniversary of service to our member states and the region as a whole. That's a significant achievement for any organization and one we can take pride in.

More importantly, 2005 was the year our entire region celebrated two major achievements in Great Lakes policymaking. First, the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration was convened and produced a comprehensive strategy to restore and protect the Great Lakes – something the Commission participated in and has long advocated. The year also saw the completion and approval, by the Great Lakes governors and premiers, of the Annex 2001 Implementing Agreements to protect the region's waters against overuse – again, an issue area the Commission has long been involved with.

With the Annex agreements, we now have the tools at hand to help us protect the waters of the Great Lakes basin. History is replete with examples of seemingly endless natural resources that were rapidly depleted once strong demand set in. Though few believe we could ever tap the Great Lakes dry, they could be significantly transformed by the drop of a few feet in their water levels. The Annex agreements offer us a way to guard against that possibility by establishing reasonable protections now before problems develop.

For many years, the Great Lakes Commission has been calling for our region to come together and form a consensus on a broad-ranging strategy to protect and restore the Great Lakes. Thanks to the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, we now have such a plan. More than 1,500 experts and stakeholders from our region answered a call from President Bush to develop a comprehensive assessment of the Great Lakes' restoration and protection needs and a clear set of consensus recommendations for meeting them.

Now it's Washington's turn to do its part, beginning with enacting the near-term priorities identified by our Great Lakes governors and mayors as an initial step in implementing the Regional Collaboration's Great Lakes strategy. We also need our state and provincial legislatures and Congress to ratify the Annex Implementing Agreements and make them legally binding.

Enacting the Regional Collaboration near-term priorities and ratifying the Annex agreements would give the Great Lakes Commission and the region as a whole even more cause to celebrate in 2006 than we had in 2005. Let's do all we can to work with our legislators and members of Congress to make it happen and keep the celebration going.

Thomas E. Huntley, Ph.D.

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2005 Board of Directors



Chair
Thomas Huntley
Minnesota

Chair Thomas Huntley, Ph.D., is a Minnesota state representative and an associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at the School of Medicine and Department of Chemistry at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He also is director of institutional relations for the School of Medicine.



Vice Chair
John Cherry
Michigan

Michigan Lt. Gov. John Cherry is vice chair of the Great Lakes Commission. With more than 20 years of service in the Michigan legislature as a state representative and senator, including the post of Senate Minority Leader, he has authored and co-sponsored several milestone laws dealing with environmental protection and conservation. He was named 2005 Conservationist of the Year by the Michigan United Conservation Clubs.



Immediate Past Chair
Samuel Speck
Ohio

Immediate Past Chair Sam Speck, Ph.D., is director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. He is chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governor's Water Management Working Group, which developed the Annex 2001 Implementing Agreements, recently signed by the Great Lakes governors and premiers. He also served as associate director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency under President Ronald Reagan.



Patrick Quinn
Illinois

Illinois Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn has served the people of Illinois, both as citizen and public official, for more than 25 years. A long-time consumer advocate, he spearheaded the 1983 drive to create the Citizens Utility Board and was elected Illinois State Treasurer in 1990. As lieutenant governor, he has taken a strong interest in supporting regional tourism, including the Great Lakes Circle Tour, and chairs the Illinois River Coordinating Council and the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council.



Kyle Hupfer
Indiana

Kyle Hupfer is director of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. A native Hoosier outdoorsman and hunter, he understands that our natural, historical and cultural resources represent some of the most significant assets available to all of us. He specialized in corporate law as a partner in the Indianapolis law firm of Ice Miller and brings to his post both a business sense and love of the outdoors.



Ken DeBeaussaert
Michigan

Ken DeBeaussaert is director of the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes, Department of Environmental Quality. A member of Gov. Jennifer Granholm's cabinet, he also serves on the board of directors of the Great Lakes Protection Fund and the Water Quality Board of the International Joint Commission. A former state legislator, this is his second appointment to the Commission, where he previously served as vice chair.



Denise Sheehan is Commissioner of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. She began her service with NYSDEC in 1998, overseeing implementation of the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act, and later became executive deputy commissioner. She also spent 11 years with the NYS Division of the Budget, where she was responsible for overseeing the budgets of the state's environmental, recreational and energy agencies.

Bill Carr is Western Hemisphere team leader, Office of International Relations & Protocol, Ontario Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. A former senior policy adviser and policy analyst in that office and at the Ministry of the Environment, his background is in the development and analysis of policy options on issues affecting international relations. He played an active role in the negotiations leading to the Great Lakes Charter Annex Implementing Agreements.

Cathy Curran Myers is deputy secretary for water management with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, where she is responsible for the protection of surface and groundwater and drinking water supplies, and represents the commonwealth on seven major interstate river or lake basin commissions. She brings to public policymaking more than 25 years of environmental law practice, split evenly between environmental agency counseling and private practice.

Michel Lafleur is the Québec Government representative of the Québec Delegation in Chicago, which seeks to broaden the institutional, economic, academic and cultural links between Québec and the 12 Midwest states. An economist by training, he has considerable experience in economics and international business, including serving as director of economic affairs at the Québec delegations in Brussels, Belgium, and Boston, Mass. He also led a team at the Québec Ministry of Finance.

Todd Ambs is administrator of the Division of Water, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and has more than two decades of experience working on natural resource policy issues. He serves on the boards of the Great Lakes Protection Fund and Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, and the Water Quality Board of the International Joint Commission.

Denise Sheehan
New York



William Carr
Ontario



Cathy Curran Myers
Pennsylvania



Michel Lafleur
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A Year of Change

Thomas R. Crane, Interim Executive Director

For nearly two decades, you have seen the name and the picture of long-time President/CEO Michael Donahue in this space. Mike, who left the employ of the Commission in early 2005, always had a special way of inspiring the reader to believe in the “greatness” of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region and made each coming year sound more promising and hopeful than the last one for the Great Lakes Commission and the region that we serve.

For this year’s report, my name and picture appear with the column. Writing it has given me pause to reflect on the challenge of the task and the privilege of sharing my views with you. It is with great humility that I endeavor to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Donahue to recap the past year and try to inspire your thoughts for the future.

As the pages of this annual report show, 2005 was a productive year for the Commission in terms of fiscal management, programmatic achievement and services to member states and provinces during a time of transition. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in September at our annual meeting in Ann Arbor, Mich., which provided an occasion to appreciate long-standing partnerships and reflect on the Commission’s half-century of building regional consensus, influencing public policy and providing substantive leadership and support to a variety of Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River programs and initiatives.

In the summer and fall, an organizational assessment and strategic review of the organization was conducted by a private consultant to provide guidance to the Great Lakes Commissioners as they begin the search for a new executive director and to inform future strategic planning efforts. The study was completed in December and can be found on the Commission’s web site, www.glc.org.

On the operational front, the Commission concluded FY2005 in sound financial condition, showing a continued ability to manage its general and restricted fund revenues to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization.

Gen. George S. Patton used to say “always do more than is required of you.” In 2005, this exhortation was certainly exemplified by the dedicated and hard-working men and women of the Commission staff and Board. My belief in the Commission’s bright future can be attributed to the high level of competence, enthusiasm and expertise of our staff and in the strong leadership of the Board, whose members are knowledgeable, caring and committed to the future of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River region and the Great Lakes Commission.

I look forward to being part of the Commission as it begins its next 50 years of service. The future awaits – let’s go meet it.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas R. Crane". The ink is dark and the signature is written in a fluid, personal style.

Thomas R. Crane

Who We Are

The Great Lakes Commission was established in 1955 with a mandate to “promote the orderly, integrated and comprehensive development, use and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes basin.” Founded in state law with U.S. federal consent, with membership consisting of the eight Great Lakes states and associate member status for the provinces of Ontario and Québec, the Commission pursues three primary functions: communications, policy research and analysis, and advocacy.

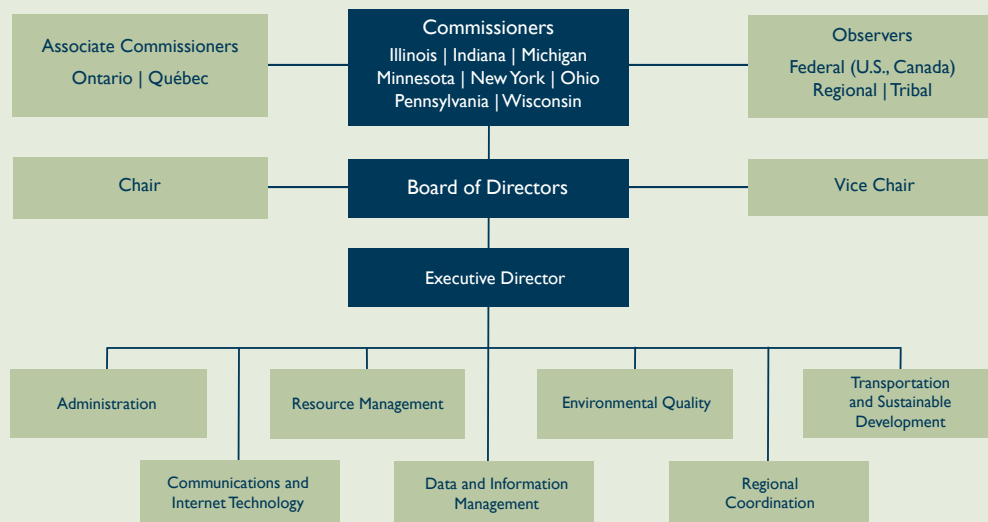
The Commission addresses a range of issues involving environmental protection, resource management, transportation and sustainable economic development. All activities are directed at realizing the vision of a prosperous economy, a healthy environment and a high quality of life for citizens of the region.

Each member jurisdiction is represented by a delegation consisting of three to five members who are legislators, senior agency officials or appointees of the respective governor or premier. A board of directors, consisting of the chairs of each delegation, is the Commission’s executive body.

In carrying out its initiatives, the Commission works in close cooperation with many partner organizations, including U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, binational institutions, tribal/First Nation governments and other regional interests. Representatives appointed by partner entities participate extensively in Commission activities through a formal Observer program.

The Commission is supported by a professional staff in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Commission Structure



Regional Initiatives

A number of major regional initiatives focusing on the Great Lakes were taking place in 2005, with ramifications for the Great Lakes Commission and its work. These activities illustrate some of the major challenges currently facing the Great Lakes and play a considerable role in setting the regional agenda, thereby establishing the issues the Commission and its partners will be addressing. The following are four of the most significant examples from 2005.

Great Lakes Regional Collaboration

This initiative, responding to an executive order by President Bush, brought together more than 1,500 Great Lakes experts and stakeholders to identify the most critical needs facing the Great Lakes. The result, the Great Lakes Strategy, outlines a comprehensive restoration plan organized around eight issue areas corresponding to priorities established by the governors. See the special supplement beginning on the opposite page.

Great Lakes Water Management

A major step toward preserving the waters of the Great Lakes basin for future generations was the completion of the Annex 2001 Implementing Agreements, including the signing of the Sustainable Water Resources Agreement by the Great Lakes governors and premiers. Upon the enactment of the accompanying Water Resources Compact by each state and with the consent of Congress, and other supporting legislation in Ontario and in Québec, these agreements will establish a review process and legal structure to guard against the depletion of the basin's water resources. Great Lakes Commission support for the process has included advocacy on behalf of the agreements and developing tools for water conservation and evaluating water demands.

Integrated Ocean Observing System

The Integrated Ocean Observing System is a NOAA initiative to develop a system for providing improved real-time and historical data on multiple aspects of U.S. coastal and ocean resources, including the Great Lakes. The system will feature 11 regional nodes, one of which will be the Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS). Benefits will include improved data integration and information on weather, waves, environmental health, beach conditions and more. The Great Lakes Commission is coordinating GLOS development.

Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study

The Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Study (LOSLRS), a five-year effort supporting the development of revised outflow regulation plans for Lake Ontario, was completed in 2005 and delivered to the International Joint Commission (IJC). A massive effort involving thousands of stakeholders, LOSLRS was established to identify outflow regulations that would provide net economic and environmental improvements over the current regulation plan. The final report is scheduled to be released in spring 2006, after which the IJC will hold additional public meetings. Great Lakes Commission involvement included working to assemble, standardize and disseminate data collected as part of the study.

