



## 2009 Annual Report

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View along the Lake Superior coast of Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore near Munising, Michigan.  
On the cover: running with the gulls at Pier Cove Beach on Lake Michigan, near Saugatuck, Michigan.

## The enduring power of unity



Threats to Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River ecosystem health have come in many forms since humans first populated this freshwater heart of North America. From the direct discharge of industrial byproducts and municipal waste, to wafting emissions creating toxic rain, to widespread runoff from farms and cities and disruptive non-native species invading from land and sea, the Great Lakes have endured numerous assaults.

The year 2009 may well be remembered, however, as a critical turning point. Long-fought efforts by the Great Lakes Commission, its Member states and Canadian provinces, and an army of partner organizations, agencies and individuals to secure a federal commitment to Great Lakes protection and restoration were rewarded in 2009 as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was put into motion.

With a first-year appropriation of \$475 million and hope for similar support over a five-year agenda, the Initiative's kickoff in 2009 represented the most comprehensive program ever enacted to restore and sustain the environmental integrity of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence ecosystem.

How was this landmark achieved? Focus and vision were certainly factors, and leadership. Without the commitment of President (and fellow Great Lakes denizen) Barack Obama, and the consistent, unwavering support of the Great Lakes Congressional Delegation, the GLRI could never have succeeded. We will be forever grateful to these true Great Lakes heroes.

Neither could it have succeeded, though, without the unity of the states. By working together to develop consensus priorities, and ultimately a strategic plan in the form of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, the states spoke articulately and forcefully with one voice, and were heard.

The need for such a voice was largely behind creation of the Great Lakes Commission in 1955. In the decades since, the Commission has demonstrated time and again that when the states can identify shared interests and priorities in Great Lakes-St. Lawrence regional policy, and pursue them with singular purpose, few problems cannot be solved. And when our Canadian associate members Ontario and Québec join us, the impact becomes even more powerful.

Now we face yet another serious environmental threat: the Asian carp. The situation reached crisis proportions in 2009 with this potentially devastating invader apparently reaching – and perhaps broaching – the last barriers before entering the Great Lakes.

Now more than ever, states and provinces must work together, along with our U.S. and Canadian federal partners, mayors, tribes and First Nations, non-governmental organizations and all other stakeholders to address this threat. As it has from its formative days, the Great Lakes Commission stands ready to support the broad collaborative effort the crisis will require.

We know such collaboration can work, having seen proof in the historic year of 2009 when a long-held dream of meaningful Great Lakes restoration became reality.

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn  
*Chair*

Tim A. Eder  
*Executive Director*