



# Great Lakes Commission des Grands Lacs

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Tim A. Eder

March 26, 2009

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Ms. Lisa Jackson  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Ariel Rios Building  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I am writing to convey the Great Lakes Commission's support for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative announced in President Obama's Fiscal Year 2010 budget. First, I want to thank you for speaking at the Commission's semiannual meeting last month. Your remarks were the highlight of the meeting and conveyed your commitment to strengthening the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) role in protecting our nation's water resources.

The Commission applauds the President's proposed Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which we welcome as a sign of the federal government's intent to become a full partner with the Great Lakes states and other stakeholders as we move forward to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration (GLRC) Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes Commission pledges our support to work together with the Administration to shape the details of the budget proposal, request full funding from Congress and effectively implement the Initiative.

The Commission urges you to consider several key principles as the Initiative moves forward. These recommendations reflect the views and experiences of the eight Great Lakes states.

- **Build on the existing GLRC framework:** The GLRC strategy is a comprehensive plan that reflects the priorities of the Great Lakes governors. It was launched with the support of the governors and was developed in close coordination with state experts and many other stakeholders. The President's Initiative can be seen as the first of a multi-year budget initiative to accelerate implementing the GLRC recommendations.
- **Emphasize on-the-ground implementation actions:** The Initiative should give highest priority to programs and agencies that can best achieve environmental and economic outcomes. Additional research, monitoring and planning may be necessary in some cases, but the bias should be on high-value restoration activities.
- **Minimize transaction costs:** Funding should be administered in a way that maximizes efficiency and results. It should not be limited to existing federal programs. The Initiative should consider block grants or similar mechanisms that could complement the states' and other stakeholders' existing budgetary commitments toward Great Lakes protection and restoration. The Initiative should avoid programs with high cost-share requirements or restrictions that will hamper our ability to efficiently apply resources to important activities.
- **Leverage the knowledge and abilities of the states:** The eight Great Lakes states are uniquely positioned to direct resources to high-value implementation actions. Several states have developed their own Great Lakes restoration plans reflecting local needs and priorities. The Initiative should be developed and executed in a way that builds on this partnership. We ask that EPA consult with the Great Lakes states as soon as possible on the development of priorities for implementing the Initiative, including the process for making future funding decisions.

*Ensuring environmental and economic  
prosperity for the Great Lakes-St.  
Lawrence region through  
communications, policy research and  
development, and advocacy.*

Ms. Lisa Jackson  
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- **Develop strategies to overcome obstacles to effective implementation:** EPA should work closely with the states to establish mechanisms to overcome obstacles and sustain effective state participation in the Initiative's implementation. The states face severe fiscal constraints and increased workloads administering funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. However, this should not preclude states from providing direction on the high-value implementation actions needed within their borders.
- **Ensure transparency and accountability:** Reporting and accountability mechanisms must be incorporated both to demonstrate results and to adapt new management approaches in the future.

We believe these principles will help advance the Initiative in a way that builds an effective federal-state partnership in the spirit of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, while making the most efficient use of our resources to help us achieve our common goal of restoring the Great Lakes and maximizing their benefits for our region and our nation.

We look forward to collaborating closely with you to move forward with the Initiative. The Commission's member states and the Commission staff are prepared to assist you in pursuing the Administration's goals for the Great Lakes. If you have questions, please contact the Commission's executive director, Tim Eder, at 734-971-9135 or by email at [teder@glc.org](mailto:teder@glc.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pat Quinn".

Governor Pat Quinn  
Chairman