



Restoring and Protecting the Great Lakes **NONPOINT SOURCE** Congressional Priorities for Fiscal Year 2009

Prepared by the Great Lakes Commission, February 2008

Introduction

Water pollution from nonpoint sources is a substantial contributor to the impairment of waters across the Great Lakes basin. Strategies to date have failed to deliver widespread stream and lake restoration necessary for the protection and maintenance of the Great Lakes. Congress will make initial funding decisions for most major Great Lakes programs by spring 2008. Thus, the first three months of the year are a critical window of opportunity to advocate for federal programs that support soil conservation. Soil conservation districts and stakeholder groups are uniquely positioned to communicate nonpoint source funding needs to Congress. This fact sheet reviews key funding needs for nonpoint source programs and outlines strategies and timelines for conveying these to Congress.

Congressional Priorities for Nonpoint Source Programs

The following are key funding priorities for the nonpoint source program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. These reflect funding requests from the Great Lakes Commission and the Council of Great Lakes Governors and are consistent with the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration.

- **Farm Bill:**
 - Reauthorize and fully fund the **Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control** to maintain the current authorized level (\$5.0 million) and tie the program to the priorities of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration.
 - Reauthorize the Title II Conservation Program, including the **Conservation Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and Wetlands Reserve Program.**
- **Clean Water Act Section 319 Program:**
 - Appropriate \$82 million to the EPA for grants to Great Lakes states to address nonpoint source pollution controls.
- **Water Resources and Development Act (Great Lakes Tributary Modeling Program)**

Strategies and Timeline for Congressional Advocacy

Congress typically completes preliminary funding decisions by early spring. Therefore, to be effective, stakeholders must communicate with their Congressional representatives between January and early March. Below are recommended deadlines for key advocacy actions:

- **February-March – Write to your Congressional Representatives:** Letters from soil conservation districts and stakeholder groups are important for conveying local support for nonpoint source funding. Be sure to write both of your state's federal senators and each representative whose district covers part of your area. Urge others in your community to also write letters, including mayors, Chambers of Commerce, and community groups.
- **Congressional District Work Periods, February 19-22, March 17-28, May 24-31, and August 11-Sept. 5 – Meet with your Congressional representatives:** Request in-person meetings with your Congressional representatives during these district work periods to discuss conservation efforts in your area and highlight the need for continued federal funding for nonpoint source programs.
- **February 27-28 – Attend Great Lakes Day in Washington:** This annual event, sponsored by the Great Lakes Commission and the Northeast-Midwest Institute, includes legislative updates, advocacy training, a Congressional briefing, and office visits with Great Lakes legislators.
- **Arrange tours of your conservation districts/projects for your Congressional representatives:** District work periods and the August recess are good times to take Congressional representatives on tours of your projects. Point out areas where nonpoint source program work is under way.