



NEWS RELEASE

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Great Lakes Days in Washington: Feb. 23-25

Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress for long-term investment in Great Lakes protection, restoration

Ann Arbor, Mich. – Next week in Washington, D.C., the Great Lakes Commission will present recommendations to Congress to support job creation and stimulate economic development on a long-term basis by investing in Great Lakes protection and restoration. In its list of legislative priorities for fiscal year 2010, the Commission is urging Congress and the Administration to work together to create a sustainable funding mechanism for the Great Lakes and to increase support for several existing programs.

“An investment this year in Great Lakes restoration will improve our precious environment and yield solid economic returns for the region and the nation,” said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, Great Lakes Commission chair.

The economic stimulus package approved by Congress and the President included \$6 billion to help address the shortfall in funding to repair and upgrade wastewater and drinking water infrastructure; some funding for national habitat restoration programs; and funding that may support improvements to Great Lakes navigation infrastructure. However, the Commission says a sustainable funding mechanism, such as the \$5 billion trust fund recommended by President Obama during his campaign, is needed and justified by numerous studies.

“By joining with the Great Lakes states, cities and tribes to protect this resource, the U.S. government can make a positive difference in the economy of the Great Lakes region and the nation,” Gov. Quinn said.

A recent economic analysis by The Brookings Institution found that implementing the recommendations of the federally sponsored *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* would yield as much as \$50 billion in long-term benefits. In addition, some 25 metropolitan Chambers of Commerce have recognized the positive economic impact of Great Lakes restoration in calling for increased federal spending for Great Lakes programs.

The health of the lakes is vital to more than 35 million citizens who depend on them for drinking water; a recreational boating industry that generates spending of \$16 billion annually and supports over 100,000 jobs in the Great Lakes states; a commercial and sport fishery valued at more than \$4 billion; and a maritime transportation system that supports trade and manufacturing for the heartland of North America. A significant federal investment is needed to match the estimated \$15 billion annually that is invested by local governments.

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Great Lakes Commission

Gov. Patrick Quinn (IL), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director

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In its priorities for fiscal year 2010, the Great Lakes Commission calls on Congress to:

- provide sustainable, ongoing funding for Great Lakes restoration through a block grant, trust fund or similar mechanism as recommended by the President during the campaign;
- create jobs and protect water quality by providing the Great Lakes states with nearly \$500 million through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund;
- clean up toxic sediments by fully funding the Great Lakes Legacy Act with \$54 million in 2010 and an increased annual authorization of \$150 million;
- close the door on aquatic invasive species through strong ballast water treatment requirements, better regulation of organisms in trade, and continued funding for such existing programs as the sea lamprey control program; and
- restore valuable fish and wildlife habitat with full funding of \$16 million for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act.

These five priorities are consistent with those of the Council of Great Lakes Governors and shared by an alliance that includes the mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, the Healing Our Waters® - Great Lakes Coalition, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Chippewa Ottawa Resource Authority, Council of Great Lakes Industries, and Great Lakes Commission.

“Now, more than ever, we need our federal partners to match the commitment that states, provinces and cities are making to the future of the Great Lakes,” said Tim Eder, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission. “By working together, we have an unprecedented opportunity to create jobs, stimulate economic development and invest in our nation’s freshwater resources.”

Acting on behalf of the Great Lakes states, the Commission will present its annual federal legislative priorities to Congress on Feb. 25, 2009, at Great Lakes Day in Washington. The annual event, held in conjunction with the Northeast-Midwest Institute and the Healing Our Waters®-Great Lakes Coalition, is designed to convey a unified message regarding Great Lakes needs and legislation to address them.

The full list of the Commission’s FY2010 legislative priorities is available at www.glc.org/restore.

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The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Illinois Gov. Patrick Quinn, is a nonpartisan, binational compact agency established under state and U.S. federal law and dedicated to promoting a strong economy, healthy environment and high quality of life for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence region and its residents. The Commission consists of governors’ appointees, state legislators and agency officials from its eight member states. Associate membership for Ontario and Québec was established through the signing of a “Declaration of Partnership.” The Commission maintains a formal Observer program involving U.S. and Canadian federal agencies, tribal authorities, binational agencies and other regional interests. The Commission offices are located in Ann Arbor, Michigan.