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**Contact:** Tim Eder  
**Office:** 734-971-9135  
**Cell:** 734-604-7281  
**E-mail:** teder@glc.org

**Contact:** Gary Overmier  
**Office:** 734-971-9135  
**E-mail:** garyo@glc.org

## Watershed grants aimed at reducing sediment pollution to the Great Lakes

**Ann Arbor, Mich.** – Nine Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) watershed grants totaling more than \$4.3 million to reduce sediment pollution in priority watersheds in the Great Lakes basin are being announced today by the Great Lakes Commission and the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) at a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-hosted event in Toledo, Ohio. Funding for these grants – awarded under the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control – is provided by the GLRI under a cooperative agreement between the Great Lakes Commission and NRCS.

The projects selected for funding are:

- Blue Creek – St. Marys River, Indiana: Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District, \$448,115
- Little Elkhart River, Indiana: LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation District, \$190,000
- Pinnebog River, Michigan: Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, \$745,373
- River Raisin, Michigan: Michigan Dept. of Agriculture, \$438,033
- Shiawassee River, Michigan: Shiawassee Conservation District, \$536,000
- Poplar River, Minnesota: Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District, \$687,034
- Black and Oatka Creeks, New York: NY State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, \$536,000
- Old Woman Creek, Ohio: Erie Soil and Water Conservation District, \$137,552
- Sandusky River, Ohio: WSOS Community Action Commission, Inc., \$581,926

“Every year, millions of tons of sediments from soil erosion enter the Great Lakes basin, causing significant economic and environmental losses and damages in Lake Erie and basinwide,” says Sean Logan, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Great Lakes Commissioner. “This program strategically addresses this problem with a unique, targeted grass-roots approach, which awards grants to nonfederal agencies and nonprofit organizations in priority sediment-producing watersheds throughout the Great Lakes region to implement sediment control practices in cooperation with local entities and landowners.”

Among the projects funded in Ohio is a sediment reduction initiative at Old Woman Creek, the only Great Lakes estuary in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and one of the state’s few remaining

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### Great Lakes Commission

Gov. Patrick Quinn (IL), Chair; Tim A. Eder, Executive Director  
Eisenhower Corporate Park • 2805 S. Industrial Hwy. Suite 100 • Ann Arbor, Michigan • 48104-6791  
734-971-9135 • Fax: 734-971-9150 • Web: [www.glc.org](http://www.glc.org)  
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examples of a natural Lake Erie estuary. The Old Woman Creek project will focus on the major sources of sediment in the watershed including cropland and streambank erosion. A second Ohio project will promote soil conservation practices in the Sandusky River watershed and is expected to save more than 21 tons of soil from eroding annually.

Sediment is the most prevalent nonpoint source pollution by volume in Lake Erie. Sediment covers spawning beds, provides a substrate for bacteria to grow and carries with it nutrients that cause the excess growth of algae.

“This funding allows NRCS and the Great Lakes Commission to take an already effective partnership to the next level, with the goal of accelerating ongoing efforts to control soil erosion and sedimentation in the Great Lakes Basin,” says NRCS Chief Dave White. “This expanded investment in conservation on the region’s working lands will yield significant dividends for taxpayers and communities, in the form of decreased pollution and better water quality.”

In total, more than \$20 million was requested through this large-scale competitive grants program. The nine funded projects, selected by a regional Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Task Force made up of representatives of the eight Great Lakes states, are expected to save upwards of 24,000 tons of erosion on an annual basis.

The Great Lakes Commission has been involved in the reduction of nonpoint source pollution, specifically sediment reduction, since 1988. In 1991 the Commission established the Great Lakes Basin Program for Soil Erosion and Sediment Control. The program has funded 439 local small-scale projects, allocating over \$15 million to control erosion and sediment. These projects have reduced soil erosion in the Great Lakes basin by more than 1.6 million tons and phosphorus loadings by over 1.6 million pounds.

“Implementing watershed-scale projects in priority areas is a great step in furthering our efforts to reduce sediment from entering the Great Lakes,” says Tim Eder, executive director of the Great Lakes Commission. “Along with our federal partner (NRCS), these GLRI funds will put much needed resources at the local level to install conservation practices in critical watersheds.”

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*The Great Lakes Commission, chaired by Illinois Gov. Patrick Quinn, is an interstate 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.*