

For immediate release
February 1, 2010

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New Commission energy and water initiatives to inform Compact implementation

Ann Arbor, Mich. – In January 2010, the Commission launched two new initiatives that will engage regional and national talent to generate new information that can help the states collectively achieve the goals of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact and Agreement.

The *Great Lakes Energy-Water Nexus* initiative will advance integration of energy and water resource decision-making and inform next generation energy development and deployment that better reflects the impacts of power generation on the Great Lakes ecosystem. The Commission is partnering with the U.S. Department of Energy National Laboratories, Cornell University, and a host of other institutions and individuals who are leaders on the relationships between water and energy. “Many people don’t realize how much water is required to produce energy. This project will enable a better understanding of the connections between energy and water resources,” said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn, chairman of the Great Lakes Commission.

The first phase of this initiative is an 18-month project that aims to develop new tools and processes for integrating environmental considerations into existing energy planning and regulatory decision-making. This includes developing Great Lakes region-specific energy-water nexus maps, a modeling tool that can demonstrate water resource impact tradeoffs under different energy production scenarios, and a report on the region’s energy-water nexus that analyzes the relationships between energy and the Great Lakes environment and offers a new framework for analyzing power generation impacts on Great Lakes aquatic resources.

“I’m delighted to be part of the Great Lakes project team,” said Michael Webber, associate director, Center for International Energy and Environmental Policy, and prominent energy-water nexus expert. “It’s exciting to see the Great Lakes region, which has relatively abundant water supplies, proactively addressing this critical issue.”

A final objective of this phase is to design a follow-on pilot project that will test and refine the outputs from this planning phase. For more information, contact Victoria Pebbles, vpebbles@glc.org.

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Great Lakes Commission

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The *Value of Great Lakes Water* initiative will study the pricing of public water in the Great Lakes region and look at ways that pricing can be used as a tool to better manage this precious water resource. The first phase of this initiative engages regional and national experts on water conservation and efficiency. The project will try to answer questions such as: What is the importance of energy costs in a water bill? Does water use reflect the full costs of providing water, including ecological costs? Can water pricing incentivize water conservation in the region?

“Great Lakes states and provinces are eager for new information that can help them develop effective conservation policies and programs called for by the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact,” affirms Todd Ambs, Great Lakes Commission vice chair and Administrator for the Division of Water, Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources. “This project will answer important questions that states and provinces are facing as they design their water conservation and efficiency programs required by the Compact and Agreement.”

The project will also help inform public water utilities that are looking to implement more sustainable practices in providing water. An end goal of the 18-month planning phase is design of a demonstration pilot where efficiency-oriented public water rate structures could be compared to more traditional rates structures to determine their potential for broader application in the region. For more information, contact Becky Pearson, bpearson@glc.org.

The Great Lakes Protection Fund—a private, nonprofit corporation formed in 1989 by the Governors of the Great Lakes States—is providing funding for the two initiatives. The Fund is a permanent environmental endowment that supports collaborative actions to improve the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. To date, the Fund has made 229 grants and related investments, investing over \$57 million in projects to restore the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

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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.